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12.1 (2014): SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE ON  
COURSE-EMBEDDED  
WRITING SUPPORT  
PROGRAMS IN WRITING  
CENTERS

VOL 12, NO 1 (2014): SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE ON COURSE-  
EMBEDDED WRITING SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN WRITING CENTERS

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## GUEST EDITOR INTRODUCTION: REVISITING AND REVISING COURSE-EMBEDDED TUTORING FACILITATED BY WRITING CENTERS

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In the mid 2000s, Spigelman and Grobman's *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring* established groundwork for building bridges between writing programs and classrooms through course-embedded tutoring. A few years later, Hughes and Hall's special issue of *Across the Disciplines* on "Rewriting Across the Curriculum: Writing Fellows as Agents of Change in WAC" developed course-embedded approaches even further. Many writing centers have used these texts as foundations for expanding their initiatives beyond traditional one-to-one generalist tutoring—where writing centers are often physically, if not pedagogically, disconnected from the classroom. Via course-embedded work, writing centers have become more actively involved with and connected to classroom and curricular outcomes. This critical shift in writing center philosophy—moving from independent to integrated programming, moving out of the center and into the classroom—can be viewed, in light of Jackie Grutsch McKinney's recent work in *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers*, as a challenge to the dominant paradigm of writing center lore of the last three decades.

Highlighting the importance and complexities of going "on location," this special issue of *Praxis* examines course-embedded writing support programs facilitated by writing centers. As writing centers continue to develop and grow successful course-embedded tutoring programs, many others still struggle with establishing the foundational work for such initiatives at their institutions. To advocate for the long-term viability of course-embedded programs, directors need to provide administrators and faculty with programmatic and pedagogic rationales that outline the benefits of connecting writing centers to classrooms. They need to draw from models that have worked well at other institutions and learn from others that have been less successful. This special issue of *Praxis* seeks to curate recent contributions to the

conversation of course-embedded tutoring programs facilitated by writing centers—with an eye toward both theory and practice—in an effort to help directors develop strong, sustainable programs of their own.

### **Situating Course-Embedded Writing Support Programs Facilitated by WCs**

On many campuses, classroom and writing center geographies are seen as distinct, situating teaching and tutoring within different pedagogical landscapes. Classrooms are often viewed as the spaces where writing instruction takes place, while writing centers are spaces where writers receive *assistance*, not instruction. Course-embedded tutoring programs, such as Writing Fellows programs, attempt to bridge these distinct locations, as Hughes and Hall demonstrate:

Although Writing Fellows programs vary in the specifics of their implementation at colleges and universities across the country, all of these programs share several key features: they link students to specific writing-intensive courses; they encourage partnerships between a Writing Fellow and a course professor; and they promote collaboration between peers. Whatever the name for such a program (Peer Mentors, Writing Associates, or Curriculum-Based Peer Tutors), it unites in powerful ways ideas of collaborative learning, peer education, WAC, and faculty development.

The key features of course-embedded writing support programs described by Hughes and Hall often blur the boundaries between teachers and tutors, teaching and tutoring. Whereas more traditional writing center and composition theories may have suggested that each pedagogy stay on its own path, course-embedded programs encourage teachers and tutors to work at the intersections of writing center and writing classroom

spaces, creating unique opportunities and challenges for both parties.

These key features also map a trajectory for course-embedded writing tutoring. In course-embedded programs, tutors establish a voice both inside the writing center and the space of the classroom, including writing intensive courses where students often adjust to the amount of writing expected of them. Extending aspects of writing center work that resonate with their experiences in these spaces, Hall and Hughes note that similar to generalist “writing center tutors, Fellows learn how to ask smart questions of student writers, how to listen carefully, and how to structure a dialogue to help a student rethink and revise a paper” (31). Hall and Hughes also explain that Writing Fellows might be required to conduct conferences on papers they’ve commented on extensively and even address deeper writing issues (31), as these tutors are tasked with connecting classroom and writing center pedagogy. In addition to working one-to-one with students, course-embedded tutors often navigate the teacher’s territory. Course-embedded tutors often meet with faculty at the beginning of a semester to discuss course outcomes and syllabi and during the semester to review assignments and student progress, forming an ongoing partnership with faculty members. They often attend class and sometimes engage in teaching activities by conducting workshops, forming peer-response groups, and providing individual conferences during class time. In addition to navigating faculty territory, Carol Severino and Megan Knight contend that course-embedded tutors also serve as “ambassadors” for their writing centers or for the tutorials that take place in those spaces. They transport the intellectual work of the writing center to the classroom space, and as course-embedded tutors navigate classroom environments, they develop relationships—the forging of a “diplomatic partnership between the center and the instructors” as Teagan Decker explains (18).

Faculty teaching in course-embedded programs are provided unique opportunities and challenges as well. Inviting a peer tutor into the classroom adds an additional perspective to that environment, an experienced voice that can oftentimes develop less-authoritative one-to-one connections to other students in an attempt to assist faculty in achieving course outcomes. Faculty can use these connections to their advantage, hoping that the peer tutor can help students understand assignments and that the peer tutor will inform them when students are struggling with course concepts and tasks. In other cases, faculty may be presented with complications, especially when peer tutors provide students with writing advice that

does not help them earn better grades or goes against what the faculty member was looking for in an assignment.

The students learning and writing in course-embedded programs also help shape these academic spaces. Their willingness to participate (or not) in course-embedded initiatives—from classroom instruction to outside-of-class consultations—impacts relationships and the ongoing development of programs. Collaboration, and the willingness to engage tutors and instructors in the formation of productive relationship building and learning, contributes to the development of course-embedded initiatives. Cultivating the tutor-faculty-student relationship can be complex. Due to this complexity, these programs take a variety of shapes, sizes, and focuses within and outside of writing centers.

### Variations on Course-Embedded Writing Support Programs

We acknowledge the variations of course-embedded programs and the challenges that come with institutional configurations. As guest editors, our interest in course-embedded initiatives is engaged but varied, as each of our respective programs are in different stages of development. Our programs span three distinct but interconnected and overlapping perspectives: a regional comprehensive with a large first-year writer population, a small liberal arts college, and an independent private research university. Rusty’s recently established program at Eastern Kentucky University responds to a demonstrated need for increased feedback for first-year writers. Kevin’s program at Nova Southeastern University is grounded in fellows-style programming that is directly connected to a first-year composition program and WAC initiative. On the other end of the spectrum, Scott has been working to slowly build, via small pilot studies, a course-embedded program that supports writers in the “murky middle” college years, with an interest in faculty development that acknowledges the richness of the small liberal arts college experience. We are pleased to have a range of academic institutions and programmatic contexts represented in this special issue of *Praxis*.

Course-embedded peer-to-peer tutoring programs that are based in writing centers reveal complex issues related to identity for tutors, teachers, writers, and the programs themselves. Further, historical writing center issues take new shape. Collaborative relationships between these same entities become more varied and complex when tutors enter the classroom space—essentially a space that is not their own and one that

might be complicated by varying levels of disciplinary expertise and genre knowledge (a long-standing concern in the larger conversation about embedded work). The role of teacher and student, of authority and peer, become wrapped into larger pedagogical conversations about power and the best ways to achieve student writing success and whether that should be part of the equation at all.

Like many writing center projects, this collaboration began as a conversation at the 2013 Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) conference when we brought our three perspectives into public conversation for the first time through an interactive workshop. We asked how each other's programs were established and supported, and what we could learn by taking a broader look at the current status of programs both here in the US and beyond. We wanted to see what new theories have developed since Hughes and Hall and Spigelman and Grobman, but we wanted to emphasize the reflective praxis that comes with theoretically informed course-embedded work as well. The ideas and conversations resulting from that event helped us to bring questions back to our home campuses. We also realized how much we had left to do in the development of our own course-embedded programs, especially in light of institutional changes, student populations, and goals.

In the past decade, writing center scholars have considered such topics as program development, tutor training, genre and disciplinary knowledge, and assessment. The contributors in this special issue of *Praxis* not only draw upon these conversations but also move them forward in exciting ways that will help readers revisit and revise course-embedded tutoring theories, applications, and models.

### The Design of this Special Issue

This special issue examines the models, relationships, and structures of course-embedded writing support initiatives within writing centers. The articles contained in this special issue consider the theories, practices, and configurations of course-embedded programs. The authors in these articles also explore and theorize their own experiences with such programs by analyzing course-embedded tutoring from different perspectives, including:

- How do institutional contexts situate, enhance, or complicate the implementation of different course-embedded writing support program models?

- How do writing centers assess course-embedded programs, and how might assessments reflect best practices and writing center values?
- How might writing centers make the labor of establishing and maintaining such programs more visible to stakeholders and administrators?
- How should writing centers develop scholarly practices for course-embedded tutors, and in what ways do embedded tutors benefit from their experiences?
- What are the next steps in developing course-embedded writing support programs?
- How have course-embedded programs extended or expanded beyond WAC-WID conversations or FYW?
- Recalling Spigelman and Grobman, what does it mean to go “on location” in 2014?

This special issue features three main threads: Course-Embedded Tutoring and First-Year Writing: An Immersion in Academic Discourse, WAC/WID Course-Embedded Tutoring: Mapping the Terrain and Revisiting Content Knowledge, and Forward Motion: Professional Development and Institutional Context of Course-Embedded Tutoring. Each one highlights discussions that extend the conversations about course-embedded tutoring in writing centers.

Focusing on course-embedded tutoring and first-year writing, Scott DeLoach, Elyse Angel, Ebony Breaux, Kevin Keebler, and Kathleen Klompfen in “Locating the Center: Exploring the Roles of In-Class Tutors in First Year Composition Classrooms” offer a model of student-faculty collaboration with their first-year composition program at California State University Channel Islands. In “Dialoging a Successful Pedagogy for Embedded Tutors,” Megan L. Titus, Jenny L. Scudder, Josephine R. Boyle, and Alison Sudol offer insight into designing an embedded tutor training program that spans both writing center director and classroom instructor. Helen Raica-Klotz, Christina Montgomery, Christopher Giroux, Crystal Brinson, Zach Gibson, Taeler Singleton, Kramer Stoneman, and Ka Vang, in “Developing Writers’: The Multiple Identities of an Embedded Tutor in the Developmental Writing Classroom,” discuss the tutor identities in a course-embedded program that supports first-year writers. Addressing reading within the context of course-embedded programs, Melissa Bugdal and Ricky Holtz, in “When Writing Fellows Become Reading Fellows: Creative Strategies for Critical Reading and Writing in a Course-Based Tutoring Program,” discuss the creative methods employed in their program at the University of

Connecticut. In “When Center Catches in the Classroom (and Classroom in the Center): The First-Year Writing Tutorial and the Writing Program,” Francesca Gentile introduces “contagiousness” as a conceptual lens for assessing the centrifugal potential of writing-center work. Susan Pagnac, Shelley Bradfield, Cyndi Boertje, Elizabeth McMahon, and Gregory Teets, in “An Embedded Model: First-Year Student Success in Writing and Research,” then illustrate the importance of embedding tutors and partnering with librarians and course-integrated information literacy initiatives.

Turning our attention to WAC/WID course-embedded tutoring, William J. Macauley, Jr., in “Insiders, Outsiders, and Straddlers: A New Writing Fellows Program in Theory, Context, and Practice,” argues that writing fellows can put both writing and disciplinary knowledge to use in examining the factors involved in successful writing fellows efforts. Highlighting their Sidecar Project, Kelly Webster and Jake Hansen in “Vast Potential, Uneven Results: Unraveling the Factors that Influence Course-Embedded Tutoring Success” examine four factors that have had a consistent and predictable influence on their program’s success. Rebecca Hallman, in “Re-envisioning Course-Embedded Programs at the Graduate-level: A Tutor’s Observations in a Translingual, Graduate-level Marketing Course,” discusses her experiences embedding graduate-level tutors in a business course. In “Traction and Troublesome Learning: A Praxis of Stuck Places for Course-Embedded Tutoring,” Tara K. Parmiter and William M. Morgan explore a rationale for and an analysis of a praxis for tutor development and student learning in their embedded tutoring program. Offering their experience developing a course-embedded program out of the writing center, Steffen Guenzel, Dan Murphree, and Emily Brennan in “Re-Envisioning the Brown University Model: Embedding a Disciplinary Writing Consultant in an Introductory U.S. History Course” offer perspective on the challenges and opportunities of this work.

We then look toward the future of course-embedded programs as “forward motion.” Cecilia D. Shelton and Emily E. Howson in “Disrupting Authority: Writing Mentors and Code-Meshing Pedagogy” discuss their course-embedded writing mentors program that responds to the particular manifestations of language discrimination at their small, private HBCU. In “From Silos to Synergies: Institutional Contexts for Writing Fellows,” Jennifer Holly-Wells, Sandra Jamieson, and Maya Sanyal explore how they found that the presence of co-trained writing fellows facilitated the creation of a

coherent program and of the transfer of skills across courses and programs while still being able to maintain independent identities for the fellows working in the FYW and WAC programs. David Stock, in “Curricular Collaboration, Programmatic Collision: Challenges to Integrating Tutor Training for Writing Centers and Writing Fellows Programs,” reflects on a year-long development of an integrated training course for students in separate writing tutoring programs, a writing center and a writing fellows program, at Brigham Young University. In “Shifting the Center: Piloting Embedded Tutoring Models to Support Multimodal Communication Across the Disciplines,” Dustin Hannum, Joy Bracewell, and Karen Head explain the aims of an initiative developed at Georgia Tech and discuss the course-embedded pilot in their first two programs. Finally, Ben Ristow and Hannah Dickinson in “(Re)Shaping a Curriculum-Based Tutor Preparation Seminar: A Course Design Proposal” outline the structure of their curriculum-based peer tutoring preparation course at Hobart & William Smith Colleges.

As editors and educators alike, we hope that this collection of scholarship offers a rich possibility of paths ahead while connecting back to the foundational texts concerning course-embedded peer-to-peer writing support. We hope that this anthology—considering the Greek root of the word, “flower gathering”—will allow future conversations to bloom and grow at individual institutions, regional writing center gatherings, and national conferences. It has been exciting to work with each of the writers represented here, and we look forward to the future of further connections between writing centers and individual classes.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge Katie Beck, an undergraduate consultant in the Noel Studio for Academic Creativity, for her assistance during the editorial process. We would also like to express our gratitude to our institutions—Eastern Kentucky University, Transylvania University, and Nova Southeastern University—for supporting a project of this size and scope. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, thank you to the writing center directors and staff members who contributed to this special issue; their work is nothing short of inspiring. We were taken by the response to our initial call for this special issue, which speaks to the timeliness of this topic.

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## ABOUT THE GUEST EDITORS

**Russell Carpenter** directs the Noel Studio for Academic Creativity and Minor in Applied Creative Thinking at Eastern Kentucky University where he is also Assistant Professor of English. Carpenter recently co-edited *The Routledge Reader on Writing Centers and New Media*. He serves as President of the Southeastern Writing Center Association.

**Kevin Dvorak** is Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Writing Center at Nova Southeastern University. He is the President of the International Writing Centers Association and a past president of the Southeastern Writing Center Association. His book, *Creative Approaches to Writing Center Work* (Hampton, 2008), won the 2009 IWCA Outstanding Scholarship Award for Best Book/Major Work. He has also published articles in *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* (2004 and 2009), *The Writing Center Director's Resource Manual* (2005), and *The Successful High School Writing Center* (2011), as well as in *Praxis* and *The Writing Center Journal*. This is his second time as SI Chair and Leader. This year, Dvorak earned the 2014 SWCA Achievement Award, delivered the keynote address at the Northern California Writing Center Association Conference, and was named Professor of the Year at NSU.

**Scott Whiddon** serves as Writing Center Director at Transylvania University where he is also an Associate Professor of Writing, Rhetoric, and Communication. He is also the Kentucky state representative to SWCA. In 2010, he earned the Bingham Fellowship for Excellence in Teaching. In 2014, he earned an SWCA Christine Cozzens Research Grant. His research interests include writing center work within liberal education, assessment, and course-embedded tutoring programs. Scott is also an active musician with a range of projects, from film score work to session recordings to live performance and curation.

## LOCATING THE CENTER: EXPLORING THE ROLES OF IN-CLASS TUTORS IN FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION CLASSROOMS

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In “Diplomatic Relations: Peer Tutors in the Writing Classroom,” Teagan Decker contends that “one of the most crucial” things that defines a writing center is “the relationship it has with those who assign the writing in the first place” (17). Decker’s contention, that looking to the other can clarify the self, poses important questions that every writing center, and writing program for that matter, should ask itself: *who are we* and *what do we do*? Essentially, we conducted this study to answer these questions. As these things are wont to do, our initial questions led to other, more specific questions: *how do/should CI composition faculty view our in-class tutors (ICT)? What expectations do we have for each other? Do the Writing Center and the composition department have an understanding of the authority of the ICT within the classroom space?*

Before delving into the study, we want to provide some basic information about who we are. We are comprised of Scott DeLoach, former CSU Channel Islands ICT and current composition instructor; Kathleen Klompfen, CSUCI Writing Center Director, and three experienced undergraduate tutors in their senior years: Elyse Angel, Ebony Breaux, and Kevin Keebler. We are using the acronym ICT for both *in-class tutor* and *in-class tutoring*. Additionally, we are applying the terms *in-class tutor/in-class tutoring* synonymously with *embedded tutor/embedded tutoring*.

The ICT system was created to offer tutoring services to first-year composition (FYC) classes. Tutors are embedded in both introductory two semester “stretch” courses and advanced composition courses. Experienced tutors are typically assigned to the advanced writing courses. While all tutors receive some training about serving as an ICT, there is no

unified praxis by the composition faculty as to how ICTs should be used. Instead of starting the first week of tutoring, tutors are given a week to adjust to the new semester and get into the rhythm of working in the Center. During the second week, tutors are assigned anywhere from one to five composition sections. During week three, ICTs are embedded into their respective courses until the penultimate week of the semester.

While sessions in the center almost always last 30 minutes and are scheduled to begin and end on the hour and half hour, ICTs are embedded in the classroom for 45 minutes to an hour each week. To make sure that every student in an in-class session is seen and to enable the center to include ICT in its reporting on students served, tutors are provided with a class roster that they can refer to while helping students. After the in-class session, tutors put a mark next to the names of the students that they worked with that day and that data is kept by the Center.

At CI, composition classes last from 75 minutes to three hours. Each writing class has 20-30 students, and each of these students has a unique writing concern. These factors, coupled with the logistics of giving tutors time to make it across campus before and after the sessions, makes scheduling one of the challenges of ICT. Many times, tutors arrive when the class is mid-lecture or mid-activity. One of the realities of arriving mid-course is that there have been situations when the lecture continues for the rest of the class, leaving little time for the tutor to work with students. These challenges, amongst others, are what helped guide this study.

## Methodology

We collected both quantitative and qualitative data through anonymous surveys and interviews. The participants in this study consisted of thirteen tutors from the University Writing Center, 102 students enrolled in FYC courses, and six composition department faculty members at CI. Twelve tutors, five faculty members, and 102 students participated in the initial survey portion of our study. Tutors and faculty members were then individually interviewed to garner a deeper understanding of the expectations of in-class sessions from both perspectives. Although the three tutors collaborating on this study took the initial survey, they were not interviewed.

Three surveys were generated through *SurveyMonkey.com* and the links were distributed to the participants. One survey was geared towards in-class tutors, another for in-class faculty, and the last for in-class students. The surveys consisted of both scale and open-ended questions. For the scale section of the tutor survey, tutors responded to statements by choosing strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree. The following is an example taken from the survey: “I feel that faculty communicate effectively with me in terms of directions and expectations.” Some examples of the open ended questions include “What do you believe your role should be for in-class sessions?” and “Do your expectations align with the classroom reality?”

The faculty survey had a scale statement that read “I trust my in-class tutors to be on the same page as I am,” which also had five options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. An open-ended question used for this survey was “What are in-class tutors there to do, exactly?” Finally, an example of a scale statement from the in-class student survey was “I feel my instructor effectively encourages the use of in-class tutoring during class time” which again had five options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The questions used for the interviews were formulated in-part based upon the responses we received from the surveys. Scott interviewed all of the faculty members that were currently participating in the ICT program, and one faculty member that opted out for pedagogical reasons. Kevin, Ebony, and Elyse split up the interviews so that each interviewed three to four in-class tutors. After all of the interviews were conducted, the results were transcribed and coded to find any patterns and like-terms. The data we found served as a foundation for our analysis, which we will discuss later. Such a broad study resulted in a large data set. For the purposes of this article the themes we

discuss have been limited to: expectations, space, authority, time, and structure.

## Expectations

The complicated triangular relationship between instructor, ICT, and student is akin to the rhetorical triangle we teach in composition, with instructor, student, and ICT replacing writer, audience, and subject. As with the rhetorical triangle, each entity influences and is influenced by the other two within the ICT Triangle. Based upon our collective experience, our research team believes that most, if not all, of the problems that arise generally are rooted in incongruous expectations: student expectations of ICTs and faculty, ICTs expectations of faculty and students, and/or faculty expectations for their students and ICTs. The interconnectedness of this relationship necessitates an understanding of the other two participants. However, this understanding is easier to describe than enact, largely because participants bring with them their own unique sets of expectations.

When asked to define the role of ICTs, faculty members answered in numerous positive ways. One instructor stated that ICTs “provide another perspective on how a reader experiences the writer’s text,” another said their role is to “support students individually and in small groups at all stages of the writing process,” and a third argued that the role of ICTs is “to give students a taste of what tutoring will be like when they come to the writing center.” Statements like these certainly indicate that composition faculty have a well formulated understanding of embedded tutoring that is aligned with current writing center philosophy.

Tutors also expressed a keen understanding of not only their own role but also of what faculty thought of their role in the classroom. One tutor positioned the ICT as “the communicative bridge between the instructor and student.” Additionally, 11 of 12 tutors surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I feel that instructors understand what my role is and what I’m qualified to do as a tutor.”

Based upon this data, it seems that the expectations of ICTs and faculty are aligned. This is important, because our expectations frame how we interact with one another. However, even with clear expectations in place, we found that misunderstandings, ambiguity, and resistance are still present, particularly when it comes to the interaction between ICTs and students.

## Space

In their introduction to the *On Location* anthology, Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman argue that the presence of ICTs “helps to decenter” the notion of instructor as the sole authority in the class (8). In many ways, the question of authority is always in play in classrooms. Many students cling to the traditional narrative of teacher as sole authority in the classroom space. It has been my experience (Scott) that getting students, especially first year students, to wholly subscribe to the notion of *peer as authority* can be difficult at first. One reason that students cling to traditional notions of education is that it’s normative, and therefore easy to subscribe to. Tutors visiting the classroom can help disrupt this normative thinking by acting as emissaries, sharing their perspective on writing collaboration with instructors and students. If the relationship between writing centers and classrooms is built upon a diplomatic model, with careful negotiation and a mindfulness of the role of tutors, not only is the integrity of the writing center preserved, the classroom becomes a fertile ground, with writing center theory infusing the curriculum and instructors witnessing collaboration in practice (Decker 18-19). Our data shows that this collaborative spirit extends beyond the classroom and into the Writing Center. We found that bringing ICTs into writing classrooms directly correlates with classrooms entering writing centers, so to speak; of 102 students surveyed, 50 stated that they are more inclined to visit the writing center because of in-class tutoring.

Statistics like this indicate there are many positives to our system. However, understanding the challenges we face is just as important as understanding the benefits. Spigelman and Grobman assert that “on-location tutoring occurs in the thick of writing instruction and writing activity,” meaning that embedded tutors often “operate within complex, hierarchical, [and] contested classroom spaces” (1). The complex issue of ICTs in the classroom space was present for me (Scott) back in the fall of 2006 when I first began to be embedded in FYC courses. I continually asked myself *Where do I fall on the spectrum between teacher and student? How do students interpret my presence in the class?* As it turns out, our current tutors grapple with these questions as well, in part due to student attitudes.

Even though 83% of our tutors surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I feel instructors seek to establish rapport with me in-classes,” ICTs also acknowledged that their presence can be met with resistance from students. Some tutors revealed that their work at times “felt more forced”

than their work in the center, which is not surprising given what we know about writing centers and student agency. During the interview process, one tutor stated that “those who come to the writing center actually want help,” whereas in the classroom “tutors face students that aren’t willing to share or discuss their work.” This creates a challenge for the tutor and can translate to resentment from the students, making the experience “awkward and uncomfortable.”

Student writers reveal intimate details about themselves: abortions, sexual abuse, drug abuse, and other emotional hardships. The bond students develop with each other can feel stronger than with the ICT because students reveal something personal about themselves; they are, in a sense, “spilling their blood” together. The ICT, by contrast, does not complete the assignment, and therefore does not reveal any vulnerabilities about themselves; because the ICT “spills no blood,” uncomfortable students position ICTs as outsiders.

## Authority

As we can see, the question of space/authority within the peer-to-peer, tutor/writer relationship can be complicated within the confines of the writing classroom. When writing instructors invite ICTs into their classroom space, they participate in the “dismantling” of the teacher-authority/student-subordinate binary to which Spigelman and Grobman allude. Our research shows that by and large, the composition faculty actively strive to disrupt “traditional” classroom dynamics by acknowledging the authority of ICTs. Seventy-five percent of tutors surveyed felt comfortable expressing opinions and offering suggestions to their respective in-class instructors, evidence of an authoritatively decentered relationship.

And yet, we must remember that simply because they aren’t *the* authority doesn’t mean that instructors don’t embody *any* authority. At the end of the day, the instructor is still ultimately responsible for framing the assignments, structuring the class time, and deciding how the ICT will be utilized. This philosophy is generally shared by the composition faculty. On the one hand, faculty members see the value of having “an experienced peer” in the classroom, someone who breaks down barriers between instructor and student, someone who is a bridge not only between instructors and students, but also between the classroom and the center. In fact, 100% of faculty surveyed agree or strongly agree that in-class tutors are helpful and that faculty communicate expectations and directions to

them effectively. Furthermore, each faculty member stated they felt like mentors to the tutors.

On the other hand, faculty members acknowledged that they could perhaps put a little more forethought into how ICTs are utilized. One faculty member admitted “[I] don’t give it as much thought as I should.” Another described their past approach to ICTs as “you do your thing and I won’t get in the way.” When placed side by side, these two pieces of information signify our current position as a composition program: we’re keen participants in the process, we acknowledge the authorial position of the tutor, but we’re not entirely sure how much energy to invest in the process, or perhaps where to invest it.

## Time

As noted earlier, the time frame of ICT is usually 45 minutes to an hour, depending on the length of the class. The questions that we formulated concerning time refer to the period in which the tutor is present in the classroom. Of the students, tutors, and faculty involved in the embedded-tutoring program, there are varying standpoints concerning the effective use of the tutor’s time. Even though 40% of faculty agreed or strongly agreed that the tutor’s time is used effectively, 25% of tutors disagreed or remained neutral on the matter. One faculty member expressed they needed “to organize class time better so that the tutors’ time is put to better advantage.” As experienced tutors (Elyse, Ebony, and Kevin), our perception of effective time usage may vary significantly from that of the faculty and newer tutors who participated in our study. The structure of the writing center allows for a one-to-one interaction between tutor and student for a thirty-minute period. Many times in ICT, a tutor may only be able to work with each student for a few minutes, which may skew the expectations of how time should be used.

When asked how our current program can be improved, 26 students mentioned they would like for the tutors to be in the classroom for a longer amount of time. A suggestion we (Ebony, Elyse, and Kevin) received from one of the students was, “Have more tutors in each class, and have them spend more time in the class each week.” While it would be wonderful to be able to hire additional tutors, this is not entirely feasible. Our center is lucky enough to include a small classroom where many sections of ICT are held. Additional tutors from the center are able to pop in and help out if they aren’t seeing a student. However, popping in and out really isn’t possible when classes are held across campus. Another question I (Kathleen) would like to ask tutors is how effective time use

differs from one site to another. I would even argue that it is a *good* thing that tutors are not able to “make it through” a paper in a five-minute session. Being able to tempt a student to come to the center for more help could be what success means for in-class.

## Structure

Structure, in this sense, refers to the way in which the faculty member has arranged the class, which in turn affects the interaction between ICTs and students. We discovered that our composition program mainly utilizes three different in-class structures: roaming, one-to-one, and small groups. Roaming involves floating around a room of students while they are given a writing task. ICTs provide help when students request it. With the roaming method, the tutor may work with one student extensively or multiple students briefly. The second model is a one-to-one, condensed tutoring session with individual students. Usually, only 2-3 students are seen during each class period for about fifteen minutes each. Small group work involves the ICT joining 4-5 students to moderate their discussion and model effective peer feedback.

The questions we formulated about structure pertain to what structure students and tutors prefer most and why. Based on our data, structure preferences are varied among tutors. Of the ten tutors interviewed, three prefer to roam the classroom, two prefer one-to-one sessions, four prefer a mix of one-to-one sessions and roaming, and one preferred working with groups. According to our survey data collected from students, approximately 65% preferred one-to-one tutoring and 30% preferred a group setting, while the rest of the participants did not have a preference. One student noted a preference for “small group[s] because the flow of ideas goes around easier than just one on one;” however, this same student also stated that “when it comes to...really looking for help on a specific topic, one-on-one is better.” Our data suggests that roaming may be best for brainstorming activities, one-to-one sessions seem to be effective during the students’ first or second drafts, and working with groups is best during polishing stages.

Roaming seems to have the benefit of establishing a more comfortable classroom. Tutors in favor of roaming think that the role of a tutor is to establish personal connections with students in order to open communication, which leads to better conversation about their papers. Two of the three tutors who support roaming provided critiques of a one-to-one scenario. It seems that for these tutors, students need *connections* more than *corrections*. Those who believe one-

to-one sessions are superior feel that this structure best uses tutors' time in class. Although sessions during in-classes are constrained by time, more work is accomplished in this setting. For those with mixed preferences, responses indicate that the benefits of both models are experienced as long as professors are clear about their expectations for the day. Whatever method employed, faculty and tutors would ideally meet and discuss daily objectives at the beginning of in-classes (unless the tutor arrives mid-lecture). Some of these daily objectives may consist of discussing specific issues the students are working on, and/or focusing on certain students that need guidance in the theme(s) being taught.

### Moving Forward

Spigelman and Grobman contend that classroom-based writing tutoring "operates amid contradictions within the productive chaos of writing classrooms," "confuses the nature of classroom authority," and, evoking Beth Bouquet's rich discussions of writing center space, "encourages noise and active collaboration at the very scene of writing" (219). Spigelman and Grobman offer a few strategic approaches as a means of negotiating this arrangement, strategies that apply directly to our own system. In fact, we are already working to integrate many of these strategies. One of their suggestions is that any writing program that seeks to incorporate writing center tutors into the writing classroom should *train tutors differently*. At CI, we have been working to make ICT an integral part of both the tutor orientation meeting (one per semester) and the tutoring course (weekly for new tutors). In the past year, we have had new tutors pair with veteran tutors during the first few in-class sessions. Once the new tutors get their bearings, their partners would leave them to tutor solo in the classes, occasionally checking in to see how things went.

Another suggestion from Spigelman and Grobman was to *prepare the teacher for the program*. At CI, we've worked to prepare our own faculty in a few ways. I (Kathleen) always raise the topic of best practices for faculty working with ICTs and make time for faculty (like Scott) to talk about what works best in class. In fact, at the 2014 fall meeting we were able to share results from our study with the other faculty. I (Kathleen) also send each ICT faculty member a copy of a guide for faculty on the dos and don'ts of ICT. Upon reflection, we are clearly doing the right things when it comes to preparing both tutors and faculty for ICT. This study reveals, however, that both faculty and tutors at CI want and need time to interact with

one another to bring the promises, lore, and theory of ICT they hear from me (Kathleen) into the context of the "productive chaos" of each instructor's actual classroom. Whether or not this desire for more communication between tutors and faculty is one of the best practices of all ICT programs is yet to be determined. However, in a setting where our composition program is still small (25 sections), and there is no uniformity from one instructor's courses to the next, the communication between faculty and tutors--without me (Kathleen) as an intermediary--is working well.

This study is also an excellent reminder of the importance of feedback and assessment of any program. As it stands, I (Kathleen), as director of the program, currently have mechanisms in place to receive feedback from all stakeholders--faculty, ICTs and students. I make it a point to check in with faculty about how their tutors are doing (especially the new tutors). Additionally, new tutors taking the class have weekly sessions to troubleshoot their tutoring, and I receive written evaluations from the students. Spigelman and Grobman would likely approve of this emphasis on feedback. And yet, the study shows me (Kathleen) that if the information gleaned from this feedback is not shared between the groups, then that information cannot help to improve the program. When I think about why this feedback is not getting cross-pollinated, I wonder if it is really about my need for control as the center director. Establishing rapport between faculty and tutors takes work, and it can't all be my responsibility. Variables exist beyond my control, and I have to trust that these interactions will go well without me there to mediate or nuance them.

The process has been a rich one for all involved. The perspective of the tutors' themselves is obviously invaluable when discussing course embedded tutors, and Ebony, Elyse, and Kevin were instrumental throughout the entire process, from planning the initial scope of the study, to conducting surveys and interviews with their colleagues, to designing our presentation at the 2014 IWCA workshop in Indianapolis and writing this article. As with any project of this type, we are left with much more work to do than we imagined when we started out. The study has encouraged us to carry on with researching how we implement ICT. And although we are still working through the data and its implications, we do know a few things. First, by and large, our system works. Second, most of the feedback received was positive: students are getting help with their writing, they understand what tutors do, and some of them come to the center for help with other writing assignments. Tutors are affirmed that their work in

classes not only helps students, but it provides them new challenges, the opportunity to see what classroom teaching is really like, and a chance to forge deeper bonds with faculty. And for faculty, the program offers them another set of eyes, an opportunity to work with upper division students who are excited about writing. This is, to harken back to Decker's initial proclamation, how we define ourselves.

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## DIALOGING A SUCCESSFUL PEDAGOGY FOR EMBEDDED TUTORS

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### Introduction

Over the past three years, Rider University's Student Success Center Writing Lab has implemented an embedded tutor program for composition courses. Tutors attend class, participate in class discussions, facilitate writing workshops in class, and hold drop-in hours for students (in addition to tutors' Writing Lab hours). The Embedded Tutor (ET) program, facilitated by Jenny Scudder (who is also the Writing Lab Director), has been successful in helping students complete skills-based courses and connect to academic support services. Initial assessment of the ET program supports the inclusion of the tutor in a skills-based course. While an ET's training is similar to a tutor who works solely in the Writing Lab, there are key additions that are vital to the tutors'—and the program's—success.

We argue that, in order for embedded tutors to be successful in the classroom, tutor pedagogy needs to be developed and reinforced by both the Writing Lab Director and the course instructor. The core pedagogical approach in the Writing Lab is student-centered and facilitative. As with their Writing Tutor training, ETs are trained to integrate *what to learn* with *how to learn*, guiding students to identify the content (the writing skill) with the process (the strategy). The focus in an ET workshop is toward higher-order concerns. Most importantly, the ET uses questioning and modeling as students work through the writing process for an assignment. In this article, we will explore through a series of dialogues how the tutors reflect on particular pedagogical strategies Jenny developed for the ETs, and how composition instructor Megan Titus reinforced those strategies in the classroom.

Specifically, we focus on two sections of CMP 115: Introduction to Expository Writing that Megan taught during the Fall of 2013.<sup>1</sup> Jenny assigned two ETs—Josephine Boyle and Alison Sudol—to Megan's courses. Megan encouraged Josephine and Alison to facilitate peer-writing workshops and model questions

that students should be asking during those sessions. In addition, Megan, Alison, and Josephine created a series of writing workshops that emphasized higher-order concerns for the students, such as developing a thesis, organizing ideas, and analyzing evidence. In particular, both color blocking and a Venn diagram assignment that helped students compose comparison essays demonstrated how the ETs could bring their knowledge from the Writing Lab into the classroom by marrying content with skill. Over the course of the semester, Josephine and Alison gradually took the lead on these workshops. The ET program is very much a conversation among the Writing Lab director, instructors, and tutors; all three must communicate successfully in order to best meet the needs of the students in each ET classroom. We mirror that dialogue here to demonstrate how the ETs work as liaisons between the Writing Lab director, instructor, and students.

### Course-Embedded Tutors as Mentors

Course-embedded tutoring is often implemented across the disciplines (see, for example, Hendriksen et al.), but, as this special issue of *Praxis* suggests, it is becoming more utilized in composition courses to help underprepared students develop critical writing skills. Over the course of the last decade, much literature has discussed the rising role of course-embedded writing tutors (sometimes called “writing fellows” or “writing mentors”) in first-year writing courses. The literature suggests that students who work with ETs earn higher scores than students who do not work with ETs (Dvorak, Bruce, and Lutkewitte; Hendriksen et al.). Studies show that the presence of a peer tutor in the composition classroom provides useful academic support for students; for example, Henry, Bruland, and Sano-Franchini argue that students who participated in their “Writing Mentors” course-embedded tutoring received significantly more “academic knowledge support” and “psychological/emotional support” due to the tutor's

presence in the classroom (6-7). In addition, the authors found that students' "predispositions as a mentee" (9) were a factor in creating a successful mentoring atmosphere; as we will discuss, students' predispositions also became a factor in the success of our program as well.

In the following section, in the form of a dialogue, we reflect on questions we asked our ETs, Alison and Josephine, about their experience tutoring for Megan's classes. We were most interested in the following:

- how Jenny's ET training made its way into the classroom
- specific strategies that resonated the most with the ETs, and why
- specific theories that the ETs were able to apply, and how

Throughout the dialogue, we reflect on the ETs' answers, and consider the extent to which our own teaching (both in the composition classroom and in the training of tutors) can be informed by the ETs' experiences in both environments.

## **Dialogue with Embedded Tutors**

### *Impact of Training on ET/Instructor Pedagogy*

First we will discuss the impact of ET training on ET/instructor pedagogy. Alison and Josephine clearly utilized this training, especially the concepts of modeling and scaffolding, in both classroom and group sessions with the students. Megan's decision to allow the ETs the freedom to create and lead workshops gave Alison and Josephine a role in the conversation on classroom pedagogy, thus strengthening the relationship between the instructor and the tutors, as well as the tutors and the students.

**Megan:** How did ET training through the Writing Lab work its way into the classroom? Were there specific training sessions/strategies that you were able to apply to classroom work?

**Josephine:** ET training was helpful because we went over specifics such as how to contact the professor, what to do in the first class, how to set up the review sessions, and how to communicate with the class through Canvas. I used some things from the initial trainings in the class and sessions, such as answering questions with questions, encouraging participation by explaining how strategies we covered had improved my writing, and how transferring those strategies to other classes would help the students get good grades.

**Jenny:** Through the questioning and modeling approach, the tutor can assess where the student is developmentally and model the specific next step to help the student advance. In heightening the students' metacognitive awareness, cognitive strategies become stronger tools and gain transferability (Mackiewicz 61). The skills, whether it be drafting a thesis or searching for supporting evidence, become tangible content for the student.

**Alison:** I believe the intent of ET was to take the strategies learned in our training sessions and share them with students. In my sessions, the students needed help with specific aspects of what was learned in class. Instead of just teaching them strategies they could use, such as quote sandwiches, color blocking, graphic organizers, etc...I found it helpful to model the strategy and apply it to their specific assignments.

**Jenny:** Alison accomplished one of the biggest goals of the Embedded Tutoring program by modeling to a specific assignment. ETs provide the scaffolding for the student to learn how to strategize about an assignment, reflect on a reading, or communicate with a professor. While a tutor can describe or model ways to accomplish each of these in a session in the Writing Lab, in the classroom, the ET is able to be the metacognitive voice for the student (Vygotsky 86). The strategy is modeled within an authentic context.

**Megan:** Like Alison, Josephine also points to the benefits of color blocking for students, as many of the students in our course struggled with organizing their essays. We modeled color blocking in class with a sample essay, and Josephine walked the students through how to apply the model to their own writing.

**Josephine:** The color blocking exercise seemed like a good one to do for the workshop that I facilitated because it was easy to do as a group but still allowed the students to work individually. One of the difficulties of ET is balancing individual attention with group attention. The color blocking was easy to modify into instructions for the students to follow both on their own and with a peer. Dr. Titus had already led different writing workshops, which were a great template to follow, but I also used specific strategies from the ET handbook such as "incomplete" handouts with parts the student had to fill out.

**Megan:** The ETs and I worked together on developing workshops for the students; although I decided the workshop's subject, I increasingly gave the

ETs freedom to create materials. By the end of the semester, Josephine and Alison were both drafting materials and leading writing workshops in class. Together, we worked on assignments that encouraged cognitive scaffolding, which “includes strategies such as pumping questions...that prod and help students to think” (Mackiewicz 61). The Venn diagram assignment we created for the compare and contrast essay (an assignment based on the incomplete handout from Jenny’s ET training), in particular, utilized both closed and open questioning, and forced students to choose a location in the diagram for their ideas (Mackiewicz 61-62).

**Alison:** There were several assignments throughout the semester where students were asked to compare and contrast. I always came to our sessions with Venn Diagrams...I found it necessary to fill in my Venn diagram or chart before trying to help students create theirs. I believe students worked better when they had something to use as a model.

**Jenny:** Some of the benefits of Embedded Tutoring are the connections developed between the tutor and professor and between the tutor and students. The ETs gain insight from the professor’s perspective on assignments and are able to bring that to the Writing Lab for stronger individual sessions. The professor can gain perspective on a “typical” student’s approach from the ET’s experiences in the Writing Lab. Sharing those perspectives creates a new dynamic for the approaches utilized in both the Writing Lab and the classroom (Bruland). Using a strategy within the classroom is then reinforced in the weekly group session, or possibly in an individual session at the Writing Lab.

**Alison:** I think the teacher-tutor relationship is key to the program being a success. Dr. Titus and I exchanged e-mails, spoke frequently, and agreed on methods for instruction. I also found it beneficial when Dr. Titus outlined exactly what she wanted me to go over with students. In class, Dr. Titus asked for our opinion on certain class topics. This enhanced the program because the students got to know us, and us them.

**Josephine:** The methods of encouraging students to participate from the [tutor training] handbook were also useful (Mackiewicz 64). I found that some students who didn’t participate in class would open up in the ET sessions. The ET program was a good doorway to the other Writing Lab services; students made individual writing appointments to build on the

review sessions (Bruland). It was also helpful to attend the classes and see what the professor required; many students come to tutoring sessions without being able to explain their assignment.

#### *Impact of ET on Students*

A vital aspect of ET is the impact it has on students. Here we examine the changes Alison and Josephine observed in certain students, and highlight the connection between the students’ improvement and ET training. Alison and Josephine also discuss the difficulty they experienced in addressing a wide variety of student needs in the group sessions. Other challenges they experienced were reaching a balance between teaching content and teaching writing, and working with students who attended sessions infrequently. Finally, we consider the importance of the program for student success, and consider why more students aren’t consistently taking advantage of the program.

**Jenny:** Did you notice a shift or change in a particular student that you worked with, perhaps with some regularity? Can you track the shift or change to something from a session, link it back to training?

**Josephine:** I worked with Student A more regularly than the rest of the students, because she came to the most review sessions. The ET [drop-in] sessions benefited her in terms of clarifying instructions and specific writing expectations. However, review sessions where we were going over rough drafts or doing serious revision work tended to have a much higher attendance rate, making it difficult to give her the individual attention she needed. I think, though, that such sessions were beneficial, because the students were all working through the same problems and reviewing the same material.

**Megan:** Even though Josephine notes that Student A’s writing did not improve as much as we might have anticipated given her attendance at the drop-in sessions, I noticed a significant difference in her communication skills. Early on, Student A would come to my office for help with an essay, and while I tried to employ a facilitative approach with her, she was reticent and I was more directive than I preferred. However, as the semester progressed, Student A became more forthcoming and was able to indicate where in her writing she needed help. I credit her sessions with Josephine for this change. Josephine worked with Student A on clarifying instructions and expectations, and I would argue that as Student A came to a deeper understanding of academic writing,

she was able to take more agency over her own writing.

**Josephine:** Someone who I did notice a change in was Student B. She remembered and utilized strategies that I went over in the review sessions or suggested in class (and that I had learned in ET training), especially organizational tactics. Her outlines and notes for initial revisions became more detailed and targeted as the year went on...[and in the case of color blocking,] Student B used the technique while we went over it and again in the review session when she showed me her draft and revisions.

**Jenny:** That the student was applying a strategy on her own and had drafts with revisions is a prime example of the anecdotal evidence that provides key support for an embedded tutoring program. The student was able to internalize the strategies and began to understand that writing is a process.

**Alison:** There were two students that attended my session every single week: Student C and Student D. I believe there was a shift in both Student C and Student D. Student D had some family issues toward the end of the semester so he fell behind, which is why I think the sessions benefited him more than Student C. Student C...utilized the Writing Lab to the fullest extent. After she left the ET [drop-in] session, she would make an appointment with me in the Writing Lab. Student C was already a decent writer; she just needed to refine her skills. Graphic organizers truly benefited her when she didn't quite know where to start, and the reinforcement and more in-depth use of them in Dr. Titus' class helped her too. Initially, Student C's papers were full of hanging quotes that were followed up with little support. But by the fourth essay, Student C was receiving high Bs on her papers and grasped the idea of synthesizing information from multiple sources and implementing them in her writing. Perhaps the greatest difficulty was in differentiating instruction. Student D was not at the same level as Student C and I often struggled to give them equal attention at sessions. If one or two other students showed up it became even more difficult. I also knew exactly where Student C and Student D were in drafting their essays, but if Student E or Student F showed up I had to devote time to seeing where they were in the process. I think the inconsistency of attendance made it difficult for me to help. If Student C was familiar with the quote sandwich strategy but Student E was not, I had to spend time with Student E going over it while Student C was left to her own devices. (Which wasn't always a

bad thing). Student D, on the other hand, needed the entire hour of my undivided attention, which I often couldn't give to him.

**Josephine:** On that note, the ET program seems to be what the student makes of it. The students who really experienced growth and change in their writing were the few that came to more than one or two review sessions. Of course, attendance at the sessions is voluntary and it was difficult to convince many of the students that had yet to attend a session that it would benefit them even if they didn't have a rough draft or a final due next day. While the sessions were meant to help students learn the strategies to complete their work effectively, some of them did not understand the work enough to even learn the strategies. Sessions fluctuated between teaching strategies and teaching content; again, it was about being prepared. If I didn't read every story and every assignment, the students suffered. And, if they didn't read every assignment, we had to spend time reading during sessions. I had a strict policy that if students came into my session having not read, I wasn't spoon-feeding answers.

**Alison:** Embedded Tutoring is a fantastic and rewarding program. I believe that it should be implemented in every composition course. However, I am not sure how to get more students to attend the weekly sessions. I noticed a lot of students needed the extra help after looking over their work in class, but they never came to get it. This was the most frustrating aspect of Embedded Tutoring: to see a change in several students, knowing there could be more.

## **Assessment and Conclusions**

Assessment of the impact the ET program has on student success and retention has been challenging. Success for a student is not black and white, and, like the impact of writing center work, is not immediately internalized by the students. The assessment initially applied to the ET program was modeled after Supplemental Instruction (SI), but Jenny quickly learned she needed to separate it because of the key differences in the coursework. SI courses are content-based, while ET courses are skills-based. SI assessment does not address that skills are not finitely learned like specific content for a history or science course ("SI Summary Report"). This differentiation has impacted assessment. Additionally, we still face the same three assumptions identified by Lerner that drive the need to individualize our assessment based on our

understanding of our students' academic needs and our institution's assessment needs.

Initial assessment of these two sections of CMP 115 shows that the students did better academically than students who were not in courses supported by the ET program. In the section Josephine supported, the ET group had a GPA .40 higher than the non-ET group. In the section Alison supported, the ET group had a GPA .72 higher than the non-ET group. We believe that the reinforcement of pedagogy from both Jenny and Megan helped Josephine and Alison succeed as ETs and helped the students in Megan's classes succeed as well. While this is promising, simply looking at successful course completion does not include the other measurable benefits of ET. As we have continued to "establish [embedded tutoring] as a 'formalized process'" and review the tools used, we discovered our "pitfalls" in assessment and work now toward developing our "best practices" (Henry 12). With these lessons learned, we continue to "think broadly about research on [ET] effects, not just about how many students came through our doors or if those students were satisfied, but about how does our [ET program] contribute to the teaching and learning goals that our [composition program] holds dear?" (Lerner 64). Over the next year, ET assessment will retain student evaluations and course grade assessment, but will now include draft-to-final essay grade comparison, a revised faculty evaluation, and analysis of impact of classroom contact compared to number of weekly group sessions attended.

As Alison and Josephine both note, the real difficulty in our ET program is convincing students to attend the weekly out-of-class sessions. This issue is mirrored in Henry, Bruland, and Sano-Franchini's study with the observation that students' predisposition to being mentored is a factor in the extent to which students and ETs recognize student growth. The authors ask: "How are students predisposed to mentoring, how do these predispositions shift over the course of mentoring, and is there a resultant attitude change that lends to behavior conducive to succeeding in and beyond a course" (10)? In our own work, we would agree that the students who attended regularly saw real value in the sessions, and were perhaps predisposed to see Alison and Josephine's mentoring as beneficial; however, as we have noted, that number was quite small. The question of how to gauge students' predisposition to mentoring, and the extent to which students who are not predisposed to mentoring can shift their attitude, is one that we plan to target and assess in Fall 2014.

In addition, group sessions will now be sign-up only, in order to encourage students to register ahead of time. We also have ideas to incentivize the sessions; for example, Megan is offering two bonus points per session attended to the writing assignment covered during that session; two points will hopefully motivate students to attend multiple sessions and thus, raise their grade incrementally, with the rationale that bonus points will eventually become secondary to the value of the sessions.

In order for our ET program to be successful – that is, to help our students improve their writing skills as well as to heighten their overall comfort with academia – the Writing Lab director, tutors, and instructors must work together to develop a pedagogy that will benefit each particular composition course. As Josephine and Alison show, the tutors need to pull from their ET training and act as supportive and knowledgeable mentors for the students. In turn, instructors need to utilize the ETs' training and add the ETs' skillset into their pedagogy. The dialogue on writing must expand from instructors, directors, and ETs, to the students becoming more actively engaged in the conversation about writing. Students can become part of this conversation in the ET classroom by regularly attending both in- and out-of-class workshops, and by doing their part to come to those workshops prepared and ready to engage in dialogue about both the writing and the course content.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more on the connection between embedded tutoring and the first-year writing classroom, see Spigelman and Grobman's edited collection *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring*, as well as Osche, McMillin, and Hafer, among others.

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## “DEVELOPING WRITERS”: THE MULTIPLE IDENTITIES OF AN EMBEDDED TUTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING CLASSROOM

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In her essay “When Basic Writers Come to College,” Patricia Bizzell explains that writers placed in developmental courses “are asked to join an academic community ... united almost entirely by its language” (296). Specifically, students are asked to learn “new dialect and discourse conventions ... [and] the outcome of such learning is the acquisition of a whole new world view” (297), which requires not only a different way of writing and communicating but a different way of thinking. This is no small task. Therefore, some of the problems that developmental writers face “are best understood as stemming from the initial distance between their world views and the academic world view” (297). James Paul Gee further defines these communities as “Discourses” where students can create an “‘identity kit,’ which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize” (7). Many of us would agree that most writing center tutors have successfully negotiated these different communities and Discourses, adapted alternative viewpoints, and even created various identities through their work in our centers, which results in tremendous change and growth. As Hughes, Gillespie, and Kail have demonstrated through the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project, the work of tutoring has a profound impact, changing the way tutors perceive writing, learn critical thinking, value the power of collaborative

learning, and develop a new-found sense of personal confidence.

In Saginaw Valley State University’s (SVSU’s) program model, where the tutors embedded in the developmental writing classroom are former developmental writers themselves, the ways these tutors change and grow becomes particularly relevant. Our embedded tutors are positioned with a unique world view: through their past experiences in the developmental writing classroom, they understand the students, the course expectations, and the demands of being a first-year developmental writer at the university in ways that traditional writing center tutors cannot. In addition, these tutors, whose primary work occurs not in our writing center but in the classroom, are asked to operate in multiple Discourses or communities, so they are constantly moving in and out of the identities of student, tutor, and instructor. The world view our embedded tutors bring to the classroom based on their past experience as developmental writers, along with the various identities any embedded tutor must negotiate, raises some interesting questions. Can one be inside one community or Discourse without being outside the other? Or, as Etienne Wenger might suggest, do these different identities not negate each other, but actually build on one another as tutors shape their identities through their work in different communities? And most importantly, how do these different identities

shape the tutors' world view: how do the tutors think and understand their shifting sense of themselves as students, tutors, and people? This essay will examine preliminary answers to these questions informed by the voices of the embedded tutors themselves.

## **SVSU Embedded Tutor Program Overview**

The embedded tutoring program for our developmental writers at SVSU began as an intervention strategy. Although over 300 students enrolled in English 080, Developmental Writing, in 2010, the Writing Center completed only over 120 tutorial sessions with this same group of students (see Tables 1 and 2). In addition, the pass rate in this course was extremely low: only 65% of the students passed the course in the fall semester, with only 45% passing in the winter semester. The pass rates are not surprising, considering the demographics of these students. At our regional Midwest university, students are placed into English 080, Developmental Writing, if they score a 15 or below on the English portion of the ACT (or if they have a SAT writing subscore of 380 or lower). In addition to struggling in writing, about two-thirds of English 080 students are concurrently enrolled in other developmental reading and/or math courses during their first semester. These students (40-45% of whom are students of color) are often first-generation college, Pell-eligible, and from literacy-poor backgrounds.

The English 080 embedded tutoring program was developed in fall 2010 to begin to address issues of student success in English 080. For the past four years, the Writing Center has recruited, trained, and coordinated students who successfully completed English 080 and English 111, Freshman Composition, during their first year of college to return as embedded tutors in English 080 the following year. These tutors support current English 080 students in two ways: by providing individual tutorial sessions to English 080 students inside the Writing Center once a week, and by working inside the English 080 classrooms with the students and the instructor one day a week. Our Writing Center has collaborated with the First-Year Writing Program and the English 080 instructors, so every English 080 course (typically 10-14 sections in the fall and 2-3 in the winter semesters) now includes an embedded English 080 tutor. Since the program's inception, we have seen an increase in the number of tutorial sessions provided for English 080 students; combining both tutorial sessions provided in the classroom and in the writing center, our embedded tutors provided over 400 tutorial sessions for English

080 students each year for the past two years (see Tables 2 and 3). More importantly, although a number of factors contribute to student success, the embedded tutoring program has been a critical component for the steady increase in pass rates in English 080, with 21% more students passing the course in fall 2013, and 48% more passing in winter 2014 when compared to the pass rates prior to the start of the program (see Table 4).

Although the impact of this tutoring program on developmental writing students is clear, the impact on the tutors, all of whom were former developmental writing students themselves, was not as easy to quantify. To understand the benefits—and challenges—of this program for the embedded tutors, we decided to ask the tutors themselves.

## **Embedded Tutors' Perspectives**

During the academic year 2013-14, the English 080 embedded tutors were asked to keep online discussion posts. During the fall semester, these tutors were asked to respond to questions about the process of tutoring: what was working, where they were struggling, and what questions arose during their time in the classroom and the Writing Center. During the winter semester, the tutors were asked questions about their perception of tutoring: how they saw their role as both a tutor and former developmental writer in the classroom, in the Writing Center, and as a student in the university. Here, their responses became instructive for the program and for English 080 students, so much so that we captured each of them in subsequent videotaped interviews, which are shown to current English 080 students at an orientation session every semester. Their answers to these questions told us a great deal about the multiple identities embedded tutors negotiate based on the given discourse community in which they find themselves and, perhaps more importantly, how these identities have shaped the tutors' trajectories to form their overall identity.

First, it became clear that these embedded tutors reside in a dynamic space, their work forcing them into what Mary Louise Pratt calls a "contact zone" inside different discourse communities, all with different and competing power relationships. For example, as at most writing centers, our traditional tutors are proven to be successful students, often scholarship winners and campus leaders who position themselves for advanced degrees beyond their undergraduate education. Moreover, these tutors are students who have always seen themselves as "writers": possessing the innate skills to write well and

using writing to demonstrate their intelligence and acumen. In contrast, most of our embedded tutors are students who entered the university labeled as developmental writers, who often began college uncertain of their ability to be successful. Typically, these embedded tutors came from high schools that did little to prepare them for the demands of college writing, and many of these tutors saw themselves as poor writers. Yet these embedded tutors find themselves having successfully completed developmental writing and freshman composition courses in their first year, and returning to the university as sophomores with the label of “writing tutor”: a rapid movement from one very different discourse community to another in a single year’s time. Although these embedded tutors are brought into the Writing Center, they sometimes feel a sense of disconnect from the community of the traditional tutors, whose skills at speaking, writing, tutoring, and “student-ness” seem to give them more power and authority in the Center. And by being embedded in the classroom, the tutors are put in another location with very distinct discourse communities: those of the students and the instructor. Although the instructor typically holds the power here, the tutors themselves are not part of the students’ discourse community in that specific classroom context. Because of their role as an embedded tutor, they truly belong to neither community; thus, the embedded tutors’ power—or lack of power—in the classroom is often amorphous, constantly shifting in and out of focus. These various competing contact zones in the Writing Center and the classroom can problematize the identity of the embedded tutors. In fact, it is sometimes easier to define our embedded tutors by what they are not, rather than what they are.

However, it is possible to move away from this simple paradigm. Perhaps the focus should move away from what the embedded tutors are or are not, and we should consider instead what they are becoming. The responses below come from our embedded tutors when the reflection on their practice—and its influence on their own shifting identities based on the various communities in which they reside—had just begun. As their comments show, much of the work they do as embedded tutors is (re)discovering the multiple identities of student, tutor, non-instructor, and overall self, and reflecting on how these identities shift, change, and build upon one another.

### Student Identity

The first identity the embedded tutors examined was their *identity as a student*, specifically as a student

who belonged to the “developmental writer” community. All the tutors commented on their ability to relate to the current community of developmental writers: the lack of confidence and sense of disengagement, or even futility, from being labeled as “developmental.” Acknowledging membership in this community was an important aspect of the embedded tutors’ identity, not only to build relationships, but to demonstrate the ability of moving beyond this initial community into other identities and other possibilities.

In his video interview, Kramer Stoneman discusses his identity as a former developmental writer with the English 080 students directly: “When I was a 080 student, I was the guy that sat in the back of the class. I decided I’d show up, and do the minimum, you know. And then my teacher said, ‘I think you could be a good writer,’ so I started to apply myself. And now I ended up here, as a tutor for this class. So you know, if you apply yourself, you never know—maybe you could be in my shoes someday.”

In addition, many of the embedded tutors talk about the importance of entering into the developmental writers’ community by getting to know each student in their class personally, acknowledging the importance of connections based on shared experiences. In her discussion post, Taeler Singleton wrote:

Embedded tutors connect with the students on a more personal level because we are in the classrooms every week, getting to know each student individually. We have a better understanding of how well each student works, and we learn to figure out each writer’s weakness and strengths .... As embedded tutors, we have developed the skills to identify with the students we work with, since all of us have taken that class, and we know what it feels like to have a concern about the class or our overall writing ability.

In fact, she argues her work in the classroom is “much more intense and much more personal than a regular one-on-one session. You have to take the time out to understand who the students are, where they are coming from, and what their struggles are to really be able to help.”

Clearly, the importance of membership in what Gee might call this “primary Discourse” community is a central tenet of the embedded tutors’ identity. He claims, “aspects of one Discourse can be *transferred* to another Discourse” (9). In Kramer’s and Taeler’s comments, we see this kind of transfer. The tutors understand the attitudes and beliefs of this community. Moreover, the tutors’ genuine interest in

recognizing the individual student's needs, or, as Taeler says, "understanding who the students are and where they are coming from," is critical to the tutors' own identity as students who resided in this community in the past. By transferring their past experiences into their new identity as an embedded tutor, they are able to engage more readily with the current developmental writing students.

## Tutor Identity

The embedded tutors also discussed their *identity as a tutor* based on the two distinct communities: the classroom vs. the Writing Center. Gee claims, "all reading and writing is embedded in some Discourse .... You cannot teach anyone to read or write outside of a Discourse" (11). For English 080 students to have more opportunities to engage in the Discourse of the academic community, the embedded tutors worked weekly in the classroom and provided individual tutoring for their students in the Writing Center. Therefore, all the embedded tutors had experience working in both communities, which provided several benefits to the students. Taeler explains:

My role as an embedded tutor is to work with the students in the classroom and in the Writing Center. My duty is to provide assistance in helping students develop a writing process that fits their individual thinking structure. In the classroom, my work is more active and hands-on because I work with multiple students at a time to help brainstorm ideas, to take detailed notes for later reference. The entire time, I work on getting an overall feel for what my students are like and observe ... how they learn. In the Writing Center I provide one-on-one services tutoring English 080 students. The Writing Center is a quieter setting for the student to concentrate and to feel more at ease at talking about their problems with writing in a private conversation.

Crystal Brinson acknowledges that she prefers her work in the classroom, where she sees her role as more focused on establishing connections with individual students:

I have the opportunity to assist students in the classroom during every stage of the writing process .... This is very important because every class that I spend with the students, I am learning their writing styles: their weaknesses and also their strengths. Being in the classroom helps them open up to me. They have many opportunities to sit

with me and discuss their writing, and their lives, versus having thirty minutes in the Writing Center.

However, she realizes this community comes with the challenges as well, one of which is very different than tutoring students individually in the Writing Center:

You have to learn to be okay with seeing the student more than once, whether you liked that person or not. When I worked in the Center it was easy to help a student, complete a task, and leave the Center. Working in the classroom is different because when you have a "bad session" or become frustrated, you have to learn to take a step back and then re-approach the situation another day. It is critical that you do not offend a student and walk away, because that student will be there the next week. You have to be patient.

Taeler and Crystal recognize the importance of working in these two different settings, the Writing Center and the classroom, which for the embedded tutor seem to remain dual and distinctly different communities. And these two communities can be challenging to negotiate, as they define the embedded tutors' identities as multi-faceted, identities that require constant changing depending on the situation and context.

## "Non-Instructor" Identity

The tutors also examined their *identity as an instructor*, or, more specifically, a "*non-instructor*," exploring the ways they were placed in the contact zone between the instructor and the student in the classroom. Recognizing that tutors are not an instructor—nor are they attempting to be—the tutors examined how this "anti-role" could be helpful to the students. Again, Taeler explores this idea:

Part of my job is to connect on many different levels so the students feel comfortable discussing any problems that they might not express to the professor. Because I am not teaching the class, I am able to observe and take mental notes on what the student struggles with the most in class, even if they don't discuss it with me. That information helps during a one-on-one session to get straight to the root of the problem.

However, placed "in between" an instructor and a student, embedded tutors work to define their roles in different ways. Zach Gibson writes, "In the Writing Center, the tutoring sessions are independent: you, the

tutor, run the session. In the classroom, you work with the instructor to improve the learning process. The instructor runs the classroom, and you have to adapt to what that instructor needs. And each instructor is different.”

And sometimes this identity can be confusing to the students as well. As Crystal points out,

I believe that being in the classroom helps students relate to me more. When I am in the Writing Center, I am usually dressed professionally, and this sometimes puts students off. Many times last semester, students would ask me if I was a student here at SVSU, since they thought I was a teacher! But being in the classroom has helped them realize that I am a student, someone who was put in English 080 just like they were, and it shows they can be successful as a 080 student too.

Here, as Crystal emphasizes her past role as a developmental writer, she redefines what she sees as a critical part of the embedded tutor’s identity, one more affiliated with student than instructor. Crystal’s comments mirror Gee’s claim that “[s]omeone cannot engage in a Discourse in a less than fully fluent manner. You are either in it or you’re not” (9). All of the tutors saw themselves as most removed from the community of the instructor/authority figure in the classroom, not fluent in this Discourse nor pretending to be. Although it is not clearly articulated in these responses, the tutors’ past identity as a developmental writer may actually remove them more completely from the identity of an instructor. This posture helps negotiate the tendency for the developmental writers in the classroom to look at a tutor as a “surrogate teacher,” according to Candace Spigelman, and repositions the tutor more firmly in the community of student and tutor.

### Self-Identity

Finally, when asked about how being an embedded tutor *shaped their identity of self*, several tutors wrote about the identities as students: the ways they saw themselves as more capable and confident, specifically focusing on their abilities in writing. But a few tutors also talked about seeing themselves in a larger context, specifically how they were not only helping themselves, but others as well—a part of their identity in which they took great pride. This expanded world view connects the tutors more closely with the academic community in which they now reside. Ka Vang discusses this idea:

Being an embedded tutor, I am always learning new strategies, skills, etc. This has improved areas of my writing and personal life in multiple ways.... I've been able to build more confidence in my writing and develop an academic voice (which is still a work in progress). I've learned great ways to manage my time and developed better researching skills that will help me in the future. Mostly, I understand I have the ability to help others, not only in the center or in the classroom, but outside of it as well.

Zach adds:

This job has had a significant impact on my success as a student. I have learned how to perform research if I do not know the answer to something. Also, by helping students see their mistakes, I am able to identify my own mistakes in my writing.... The most important change I have noticed is I am able to be more assertive as a person. This is especially important to me, since I have the dream of being a manager one day. What I like most about my job is that I have had a role in these students’ success in college. I know when I was a 080 student, my tutor was the reason for my success, and why I am able to be a 080 tutor today.

Bizzell notes, “Basic writers’ ‘outlandishness’ in college strongly suggests that the difference is great and that for them, to a much greater degree than for other students, acquiring the academic world view means becoming bicultural” (298), or being able to operate in two different cultures: that of their home environment and that of the current academic community. Surely the acculturation that occurs for these embedded tutors is not complete. Yet by engaging in these various communities and by playing multiple roles as embedded tutors, these former developmental writing students have found a stronger sense of themselves built on negotiating these multiple identities. More importantly, our tutors acknowledge the impact that this experience of tutoring has had on their sense of themselves and on their vision of the future beyond college, developing skills that will serve them well in their future careers. And, as Zach and Ka tell us, this is a world view they seem to embrace.

### Discussion

Although writing center administrators work to make their writing centers a safe space for our

students, as Hughes, Gillespie, and Kail stressed in their 2014 keynote address at the European Writing Centers Association Conference, it is not always a safe space for tutors: it is a place fraught with challenges, risks, and even failures. For an embedded tutor, these risks may be even greater. Their work is defined by a series of high and often competing expectations from writing center administration, faculty, students, and fellow tutors. Arguably, the stakes are even higher in the classroom, where embedded tutors are expected to negotiate the needs of multiple students and adapt to instructors' expectations, which can vary from instructor to instructor and class to class. And in the classroom, this complicated work is done alone, where success and failure is very visible. However, as these tutors demonstrate, success is possible, even for—or perhaps because of—their past identities as developmental writers themselves. Indeed, the very act of negotiating these varying discourse communities creates a sense of self-efficacy and confidence that matches—or even goes beyond—that of a traditional tutor.

Based on the efficacy of SVSU's program not simply with the students, but the tutors themselves, writing centers could benefit from hiring and training former developmental writers to work in developmental courses. Not only do these tutors expand their world view and understanding of their own identities, but they bring to the classroom their own experiences of negotiating challenging contact zones and different discourse communities, experiences traditional tutors are often lacking. The presence of former developmental writing students in the classroom and the writing center is a powerful demonstration of the ways at-risk students can move into the academic discourse community and expand their possibilities for success.

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#### Appendix: Tables

Table 1: English 080 Number of Students Enrolled

AY	Fall	Winter	Total
2009-10	232	74	306
2010-11	213	52	265
2011-12	212	29	241
2012-13	153	19	172
2013-14	147	30	177

Source: SVSU Office of the Registrar

Table 2: English 080 Writing Center Individual Tutoring Sessions

AY	Fall	Winter	Total
2009-10	102	22	120
2010-11	189	27	216
2011-12	297	32	329
2012-13	223	25	248
2013-14	149	45	194

Source: SVSU Writing Center Database

Table 3: Number of Classroom Tutorial Sessions

AY	Fall	Winter	Total
2012-13	203	35	238
2013-14	189	29	218

Source: English 080 Tutor Classroom Logs

Table 4: English 080 Pass Rates

AY	Fall	Winter
2009-10	65%	45%
2010-11	75%	60%
2011-12	82%	72%
2012-13	84%	79%
2013-14	86%	93%

Source: SVSU Office of the Registrar

## WHEN WRITING FELLOWS BECOME READING FELLOWS: CREATIVE STRATEGIES FOR CRITICAL READING AND WRITING IN A COURSE-BASED TUTORING PROGRAM

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We learn from Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman in their introduction to the edited collection *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring* that course-embedded fellows programs “must be understood by all stakeholders as a distinct form of writing support” (2), and that a writing fellows program is designed “with its dual emphases on peership and the social construction of knowledge” (4). Spigelman and Grobman also point out that

Like writing itself, this scene of writing rehearses the often uncertain, recursive operations of discourse production, from inventing to composing to reviewing to revising. Like other writing acts, classroom-based tutoring is apt to be chaotic, even messy. Yet within this turbulent, hybrid classroom tutoring space, students, teachers, and tutors can locate themselves as writers. (6)

This “turbulent, hybrid classroom tutoring space” became readily apparent to Melissa, the fellows coordinator of the program discussed in this article, and the five undergraduate writing fellows during the fall 2013 semester when, in a weekly meeting early in the semester, one of the fellows noted, “I knew I would be spending a lot of time as a writing fellow, but I didn’t realize how much of my time would also be spent as a *reading* fellow.”

Initially, this comment left us all perplexed. Melissa served as a course-embedded writing fellow when she was an undergraduate student, Ricky served as a writing fellow in the University of Connecticut (UConn) program the previous fall semester, and all of the fellows were experienced tutors prepared to graduate that academic year. With our various majors, experiences, and involvement as tutors and fellows, we began giving serious thought to the role of discussing reading during fellows’ sessions. Thus began a semester-long driving question for all of us: How can writing fellows work with students to think about reading in ways that will lead to deeper engagement with writing?

In response, the fellows began utilizing creative methods for engaging students in critical reading practices while also working to translate those practices into writing. These methods, which we came to call *pivot points*, encouraged students to understand how their own ideas and voices can converse with the voices of others as part of a broader academic Burkean parlor. While we might typically think of pivot points as being mechanical, in our fellows program, we use the metaphor of the pivot in the most literal sense—the act of turning and approaching from a new angle. Consequently, these pivot points challenged students to think about reading and writing in holistic ways by exploring texts from both inside and outside the First-Year Writing (FYW) classroom during fellows workshops.

Here, we provide a brief description of the course-embedded fellows program at UConn, an overview of the training and support network provided to fellows working in this program, and a more detailed explanation of how these pivot point sessions evolved and helped students engage with the critical reading, writing, and thinking they were being asked to do in their FYW courses.

### The University of Connecticut Writing Fellows Program

The course-embedded Writing Fellows program at UConn began in 2008 as a partnership between the University Writing Center, the FYW program, and the Student Support Services (SSS) office. According to the SSS website, this “is a TRIO program that increases access to the University of Connecticut for first-generation, low-income and/or underrepresented students with the goal of their retention and graduation. Each year, approximately 300 students are accepted to UConn through SSS” (Center for Academic Programs). Many students in the SSS program also enroll in a six-week summer program prior to their freshman year, and several complete a basic writing course. While all students enrolled at UConn must meet a FYW requirement, students in

the SSS program are enrolled in FYW courses designated with an “S” (i.e. English 1010S), which indicates these as classes with embedded writing fellow support. During the fall 2013 semester, five sections of the course were offered, each paired with one fellow.

In our program, each fellow attends one FYW class per week and then leads three mandatory, 50-minute small-group workshops each Friday that function like labs or discussion sections—the fifteen students in each course enroll in a five-person section, and the fellow runs the same workshop for each of the sections. These workshops place fellows at the intersection of an instructor and peer tutor, having a degree of autonomy to devise lesson plans for workshops while also striving to extend dialogue about course texts and projects.

#### *Institutional Context*

Each undergraduate student who serves as a writing fellow has worked at the University Writing Center for at least one full academic year. During fall 2013, the five undergraduate fellows had majors in Political Science and Human Rights, Political Science and Anthropology, Biology and English, Molecular and Cellular Biology and Music, and Individualized Studies in Social Interaction and New Media.

Prior to the start of the semester, the fellows coordinator paired each instructor and fellow based on each individual’s schedule for the semester, and the pair communicated their expectations for the role of the fellow in the course. While the writing center prepares an internal handbook addressing questions instructors and fellows might have about their roles, the ways in which this involvement develops over the semester is largely up to the discretion of the classroom instructor and fellow. At UConn, FYW instructors, primarily graduate students enrolled in the English MA or Ph.D. program, have the opportunity to choose their course themes and design their syllabi, so fellows were embedded in courses with wide ranging content.

Support for fellows in the program remains ongoing, with an orientation prior to the start of the semester and weekly meetings with the fellows coordinator. Fellows also check in on a weekly basis with the course instructor, and the fellows coordinator stays in touch with the instructors throughout the semester, holding an extended, in-person meeting around midterm. Fellows compose summaries after each discussion session, summarizing the goals and outcomes of that particular workshop, and share their summary with the course instructor, students, and fellows coordinator, adding an additional layer of communication.

## **Discussing Course Texts**

During their weekly sessions, fellows found that their first-year writers had plenty to say about that week’s readings; however, a difficulty arose when students were asked to articulate a stance on a piece that didn’t present a clear dichotomy of good or bad. Students would often overlook the nuance in a text as they sought out a correct answer; rather than embracing complexity or developing a critically informed opinion, they seemed more interested in reading for the purpose of providing clear, widely accepted answers. As one fellow explained in her end-of-the-year fellows’ reflection, “as Writing Fellows, we were preparing lessons on thesis statements and transition sentences, but quickly realized that many of the writing issues were actually rooted in a lack of comprehension of the assigned readings. We then shifted our focus to critical reading before moving on to the mechanics of writing.”

Initially, fellows observed that students wrote homogenous texts manifesting some degree of groupthink from the early fellows sessions. Fellows also noted that students were eager to polarize and develop a cohesive opinion on an issue, but didn’t seem to value the process of challenging the group’s initial opinion or their own. This resistance highlights a number of interesting issues in the teaching of FYW: first, the deification of instructors as arbiters of academic excellence; and second, the acceptance of authors as oracles of truth. Rather than challenging the texts under consideration, students passively absorbed the information, and seemed to view texts as flawless.

This lack of engagement made sense, to an extent. Writers were faced with complex texts written in unfamiliar styles. Coupled with a lack of confidence in the writers’ own voices, a writing style emerged that was dutiful but trite. Writers seemed eager to emulate the voices to which they were being exposed, because it seemed natural to assume that the works they were reading exemplified academic writing, regardless of whether this was actually the case. In some sense, writers seemed to devalue their own voice because they did not perceive themselves as equal authorities with the voices to which they were being exposed.

The myriad issues surrounding reading presented the writing fellows with a variety of challenges. The challenge of developing critical reading skills also extended to assignment prompts, where writers often found themselves unclear on what a prompt was asking them to do. Rather than getting directly to the typical skills of writing—that is, as rhetors generating texts—the fellows more often found themselves focusing on critical reading skills and encouraging

students to assume an appropriate degree of confidence and writerly authority. This consideration of reading ensured that, when students prepared to pivot to the role of a writer, they could produce content that was true to the prompt, honest to their perspective, and relevant to broader conversations with and around these texts. Perhaps most importantly, however, this idea of a conversation made the concept of voice particularly salient as, from workshop to workshop, writers worked to navigate the divides between the voices and ideas of published writers and their own.

### Early Fellows Sessions

While many of the students had already spent several weeks in a collegiate environment with the SSS summer program, they were still making the transition from high school to college, in terms of both campus life and academic achievement. Students were starting to think critically about challenging, complex issues, but often lacked a sense of agency and full control over that thinking. Fellows noted that in discussion sessions, this lack of a sense of agency resulted in a superficial and cautious engagement with course texts. Rather than fully engaging and challenging the ideas and texts presented to them, writers would try to find a way to deal with texts in the “right” way. They were less interested in their own thinking as it related to the text, and instead wanted to find the one right answer, the definitive form of thinking about the text. For example, fellows often found their writers combing texts to find select quotes or passages around which they could craft an argument. Rather than treating course texts holistically, writers would resort to cherry-picking quotes or ideas to simplify their sources and align their papers to be in perfect agreement (or disagreement) with the text.

Initially, this analysis appeared to be a great opportunity to discuss writing techniques like counterarguments or adding layers to a thesis. While discussing the program in weekly fellows meetings, however, we started to understand that this issue could also be appropriately addressed by empowering the writers to develop arguments that demonstrated complexity and originality—and, by extension, empowering the writers to read critically and respond honestly. The fellows’ job shifted from attempting to instruct writers in the methods of “academic writing” and instead showing them that good academic writing relies on reading critically, thinking in ways that embrace complexity, and assuming some degree of writerly authority.

### Pivot Points

At mid-semester, fellows were continuing to think through ways to work with writers on the complexities of reading, writing, and finding their own writerly voices. Fellows began considering pragmatic ways that they could show, and not just tell, students how to work in the ways academic writing requires. Sometimes, this move involved extending discussion of classroom texts, but often the desire to show students how to make rhetorical moves in their writing both enabled and required fellows to bring new materials to discussion sessions. At this mid-point in the semester, a series of what we came to call *pivot points* emerged. When fellows brought to discussions the types of session plans we discuss below—thought experiments, multimedia materials, power freewrites, and mini field trips—students were asked to consider their topics and class discussions anew, and to pivot in order to consider ideas in different ways, and thus add layers of complexity to their writing.

#### *Thought Experiments*

Sometimes, fellows started the workshop with a philosophical thought experiment. These thought experiments served as a sort of mental sandbox in which writers could think about problems that very clearly had no good answer and no immediately clear connection to the content of the course, but that could still be applied in abstract, productive, and relevant ways.

Examples of these exercises can be found in armchair philosophy books such as *The Pig that Wants to be Eaten* and *The Duck that Won the Lottery*. One popular experiment was the U-View project, in which a person perceives color on an inverted spectrum—her red is everyone else’s blue. Yet, she only realizes it after putting on a machine that allows her to see precisely as another person sees. After presenting this thought experiment, fellows pointed out that it serves as an excellent frame of reference for the concept of a literary lens, in which a Marxist author and a feminist author will both read the same text and have wildly divergent—yet equally valid—understandings of that text.

Such thought experiments were ideal for framing the workshop content on a few different levels. First, they encouraged students away from the stress of their grade and trying to interpret the text “correctly.” The aforementioned thought experiment had nothing to do with the course texts, and so students could comment on the assumptions and claims being made in it without fear of getting it wrong, as no right or wrong answer exists. When students pivoted to

consider thought experiments in relation to the positions they were taking in their own papers, these activities helped ease into that critical space. When the workshop then moved towards the classroom concepts, students had a theoretical point of reference over which they had control, and a willingness to take risks in their writing that they otherwise might have avoided.

### *Multimedia*

Fellows also frequently incorporated multimedia into their workshops, with a heavy emphasis on pop culture. Multimedia could be used to provide new texts to examine and new examples to apply to classroom discussions. Fellows asked writers to explore multimedia in a number of ways, from synthesizing six-second clips from the video site *Vine*, to investigating the objectification of women in Super Bowl ads, and even considering the epistemological quandary and Foucault.

For example, one fellow modeled the concept of a thesis statement using an opening sequence of the TV show *Grey's Anatomy*. At the beginning of each episode, a main character offers an insightful commentary that foreshadows what issue the viewer is going to face, which also proves useful when attempting to convey the idea of a thesis to a group of first-year writers. By noting how this commentary steers the episode of the show, students constructed similar steering sentences as working thesis statements to explain the direction of their own projects.

The inclusion of multimedia uses a source that feels familiar and then expands the relevancy of a particular rhetorical move. The above example, for instance, shows how the thesis isn't just a technique used when writing a paper for English classes—it's a powerful rhetorical technique that guides audiences and gives them context for any media they're going to consume. This pivot strove to demonstrate that critical reading was a skill that could be applied to any idea—and by extension, writers started to understand the importance of engaging in good analysis.

### *Power Freewrites*

In a startlingly obvious yet effective approach, some fellows turned to freewriting exercises as a way to encourage their writers to produce unfiltered content. While freewriting itself is not a new concept in FYW classrooms, and students engaged in freewriting activities during class time, reinforcing the value of freewriting and the rhetorical canon of invention in fellows sessions was a meaningful experience for students and fellows alike.

One particularly effective power freewriting activity asked students to take a few minutes to describe the argument presented in a course text in writing. Then students were asked to construct a counter-argument. Next, students were asked to construct a rebuttal of that counterargument. This activity helped students think through their critical reading practices while also allowing the writing fellows to provide real-time feedback in process.

While some fellows used more or less structured approaches to freewriting in sessions, students were consistently challenged to go with their gut and just start writing. Furthermore, this exercise translated to even broader concepts in writing, like the power of revision; writers got a closer look at the process of writing, and began to understand that the seed of an idea didn't have to be as polished as the course texts. Instead, writers learned that they needed to focus on taking those ideas and developing them into a compelling argument.

### *Field Trips*

The writing fellows also began to think outside of the classroom space itself and embarked on various mini campus field trips for their workshops. These excursions helped to create salient experiences around writing by leveraging space and getting writers fully immersed in the workshop. It was no longer a classroom experience, but a full-body one.

One such field trip was a walk around a well-known part of campus, which served as a way of breaking away from the classroom and creating an environment that could spark conversation. Other field trips were to UConn's Greek Amphitheatre (Paideia Theatre) and the campus art museum. In these cases, the location was tightly integrated into the subject of the workshop (relativistic thinking and finding sources, respectively). These trips were also important because of the relative unfamiliarity these students had with their campus. Again, the students were in their first year at the university, and so the fellows worked with students to establish a connection with their school.

In the context of writing, mini campus field trips revealed that academic thinking, and by extension writing, happen everywhere. There's no one time or place, and there's not even necessarily a right answer. Instead, there's a conversation that persists across time and space and across big and small ideas, and encouraging students to explore their new campus helped to show students, rather than tell them, that these conversations could truly happen anywhere.

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## Late Semester Sessions

While our pivot point discussion sessions began several weeks into the semester, they did not have a discrete end-point. Rather, fellows continued to employ pivot point workshops, strategically aligning them when relevant for course content, goals, or clarification during the remainder of the workshops in the semester. What we discuss here are the changes fellows noted across the chronology of fellows sessions from the first weeks to the final weeks.

Most noticeably, the fellows began to see writers developing a personal investment in their ideas, and students' writing began to deal with subjects of personal interest while engaging conversationally with course materials. The writers began to realize that writing wasn't an isolated endeavor, and as their investment in their own ideas grew, they began to see themselves as active contributors to conversations in which they were previously spectators. Many fellows noted that their writers' work began to take on more distinct flavors, and bits of the writers' personalities began to flow into their writing.

The personal interest that writers were taking in their writing also demonstrated that they were beginning to formulate their own questions, which were often offshoots of questions found in the assignment prompts. The sophistication of writers' questions was particularly evident because it evolved from, "What is the correct answer to the prompt?" to "How does this text have the potential to change the way we think about the world?" Furthermore, the writers began producing more elegant arguments and counterarguments, and formulated ideas that accounted for varied points of view. Rather than cherry picking from the texts, writers wrestled with contrary evidence and synthesized disparate sources. It became evident that the writers were willing to critique their texts in productive and conscious ways.

## Implications for Writers and Fellows

During the fall 2013 semester, we explored fellows discussion sessions that presented reading and writing as overlapping and complimentary activities, and this aligns with Spigelman and Grobman's points about fellows' "dual emphases on peership and the social construction of knowledge" (4). Furthermore, this social construction of knowledge extends beyond the productivity of the classroom-based tutoring situation or fellows discussion sessions and into the experiences the fellows themselves derive from this work. As Melissa's conversations with the fellows spilled into the spring semester, long after the tutors' obligations as classroom fellows had ended, the productive space

of the pivot points highlighted here was becoming increasingly apparent.

The fellows' lesson plans for pivot point discussion sessions were included in our fellows handbook to share with future writing fellows, creating a space for considering critical reading practices during weekly fellows meetings from the outset of the semester. Additionally, conversations surrounding reading assignment prompts became an added layer of discussion between the writing center and FYW when fellows and other writing center tutors began talking with FYW instructors on the types of questions students have about assignment prompts. Conversations about critical reading and writing in response to assignment prompts are continuing and extending into cross-disciplinary spaces, encouraging additional moments of pivoting to occur for students, fellows, and instructors within and beyond the program.

At the end of the academic year, Melissa asked fellows to write a reflection on their work. In their responses, fellows noted their experiences as synthesizing moments in their work as writing center tutors, and more broadly, as undergraduate students. Here, we quote from Ricky's reflection, noting how his college experience seemed to come full-circle in working as a fellow:

Working alongside the writing center staff and the course instructor plays a key role in the writing fellows experience. I found myself engaged with a course, which gave me moments to reflect on my own introduction to college courses. Then, I got to work behind the scenes with people who were actually in charge of the coursework that I previously consumed. I didn't need to develop a full curriculum (my workshops were generally reactions to problems that arose in the course) but I was still challenged to create content, and the whole process was fulfilling. It's great to see multiple philosophies, and to act as a link in the bridge between a university service and an actual university classroom. Furthermore, this created a synergy between the writing center and the department of English as ideologies spread between tutors and instructors.

Spigelman and Grobman discuss the classroom-based tutor as existing in a "hybrid classroom tutoring space" where "students, teachers, and tutors can locate themselves as writers" (6), which is just the type of experience Ricky articulates here. At the same time, Ricky's reflection also speaks to the bigger metacognitive experience serving as a writing fellow

can have for a tutor. As a graduating senior going on to graduate school, he had the opportunity of knowing the instructor's side of the classroom, but also the more esoteric applications of concepts gleaned from writing. Developing and discussing the workshops established an understanding of rhetorical strategies that will serve him in future professional and academic contexts.

While Melissa and the fellows spent most meetings discussing pivot points for students enrolled in the FYW course, equally as important are the benefits of writing fellows designing, employing, and reflecting upon their own experiences making pivots in their own tutoring practices. We continue to look to the act of pivoting in moving forward with our fellows program. We hope to continue exploring methods for strengthening the link between reading and writing practices while creating spaces for writers' voices to emerge in creative and dynamic ways.

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# WHEN CENTER CATCHES IN THE CLASSROOM (AND CLASSROOM IN THE CENTER): THE FIRST-YEAR WRITING TUTORIAL AND THE WRITING PROGRAM

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## Introduction

In the first issue of *College English* from 1939, the editors reference a letter written by Davida McCaslin to the President and Dean of Millikin University and published earlier that same year in the *Journal of Higher Education*. From her perspective as the Head of the Department of English, McCaslin describes the “ideal teacher of English”; her list covers even his romantic life and leisurely pursuits. Eventually, she arrives at a single trait symptomatic of the rest but significant enough to name: “contagiousness.” McCaslin’s teacher “will be able to project himself in all the richness and variety of his interests and of his wisdom and of his nature; and will at the same time be able to do something more, something that does not produce imitation but sets up many kinds of activities with people around him” (319). I begin with McCaslin’s ideal not solely because of its charm, but also because it speaks to the centrifugal potential of course-embedded tutoring models for first-year writing classes when these models are designed to work with composition teacher training. Integral to the success of such models is a force akin to McCaslin’s “contagiousness,” a pedagogically resonant transanimation born of the course-specific experiences shared within and shaped by the student-tutor-instructor nexus. Importantly, though, the infectious character of these mutually informing points of contact should not aspire to instructional homogeneity or encourage a drag-and-drop approach to the teaching of writing. Rather, this infectiousness must be directed toward the cultivation of fluid and adaptive pedagogies attentive to the individual needs of first-year writers. (Think “contagious” less in terms of a zombie apocalypse and more in terms of the laughter that spreads through a room on the heels of a kairoic quip). When approached in this way, course-embedded tutorials become rich sites capable of productively informing the everyday practices of first-year writing programs from the center out.

## Outside, Between, Among: Placing Course-Embedded Tutors in Writing Programs

Within the context of WAC programs, writing fellows or tutors otherwise assigned to specific courses have been described as “invigorating agents” or “agents of change” (Soven 201; Mullin, et al.), phrases which emphasize their capacity to transform the teaching of writing in ways that extend beyond a writing center’s walls. As Brad Hughes and Emily B. Hall note, work on this subject contends with “the complexities and contradictions inherent in the role of Writing Fellow” while revealing “how the interstitial position of Writing Fellows affords new ways to view these contradictions.” Similarly, Jill Gladstein refers to the “symbiotic relationship” that emerges from writing fellows’ efforts to bridge specialist/generalist and WAC/WID discourses for the mutual benefit of students, faculty, and departments. Central to these discussions is the tutor’s ability to navigate diverse instructional realms and, in the process, open discursive channels that contribute to the teaching of writing as a flexible set of skills and practices. When tutors are embedded specifically within first-year composition courses, they are not bridging disciplinary boundaries, but they are moving among the multiple discourse communities that constitute a writing program. Tutors act as agents of change to the degree that their movements facilitate increased contact among these communities, such as when they move from writing center to writing classroom and back. Steven J. Corbett offers a parallel assessment of classroom-based tutoring in the disciplines, arguing that as “tutors move into closer instructional orbits with classroom instructors,” the increased proximity “leads to all participants—tutor, student, instructor—becoming co-inquisitive students in the rhetorical game of learning to write, communicate, and collaborate” (94). The conceptual shuttling (between tutor/teacher, center/classroom, or teacher/student, for example) that course-embedded models encourage offers writing programs, too, a chance to actively engage and, hopefully, complicate existing divisions in ways that instead emphasize shared goals and efforts.

Gladstein's symbiosis is one example of the ecologically minded schemas common in discussions of Writing Fellow and WAC programs, schemas which helpfully remind us of writing centers' larger institutional environments (Devet; Dobrin and Weisser). As a conceptual lens, contagiousness similarly highlights the relational dynamics informing writing-center work, but it also emphasizes the transformative potential of the individual contact at the heart of tutorial interaction. This one-to-one instruction is, as Muriel Harris states, "very different from traditional classroom learning because it introduces into the educational setting a middle person, the tutor, who inhabits a world somewhere between student and teacher" and who can "work effectively with students in ways that teachers can not" (27-28). The value of tutoring lies in the particularities of its pedagogical situation and cannot be understood in terms of a supplemental or corrective relationship to classroom teaching, even in the context of course-embedded models which might otherwise blur traditional lines of instructional authority. Thinking through contagiousness, however, reveals that tutoring does influence classroom practice, especially when tutors move through a writing program's multiple instructional spaces. Exposure alone is not enough, but when conditions are right, the writing tutor becomes an agent of change by being an agent of contact. As Elizabeth E. Boquet and Neal Learner argue, "our field can no longer afford, if it ever could, to have forged a separate peace between classroom and nonclassroom teaching," and course-embedded tutorials firmly situated within both writing centers and first-year writing curricula can go a long way toward establishing a less precarious and more productive agreement.

In what follows, I describe efforts to cultivate contagiousness in a first-year writing tutorial developed by the University of Oregon's Center for Teaching Writing. Affiliated with the Composition Program and housed within the Department of English, the Center is regularly involved in efforts to encourage the teaching of writing across campus, efforts which have included WID workshops for faculty and individualized consultation for writing-intensive curriculum development. Now in its fifth year, the first-year writing tutorial has directed some of the Center's attention back toward its home community, a focal shift which has given us the opportunity to consider how the relationship between Center and classroom can most effectively address the specific needs of first-year writers. Because our tutorial is staffed by graduate tutors who are training to be writing instructors, it requires that we attend to the

relationship between tutoring and teaching and to the influence that this relationship has on the writing program overall. Tutorials without these specific conditions, though, can similarly cultivate contagiousness by integrating themselves more fully into first-year writing programs, and even peer-based tutoring models could have comparable effect if efforts were taken to connect the tutors' training and experiences to the program's other instructional discourses.

### **Decentering to Recenter: Course-Embedded Tutoring and Classroom Teaching**

The claim that tutoring experience benefits tutors as much as students is now supported by a range of empirical data (see Hughes, Gillespie, and Kail), and that these benefits might be gauged in relation to specific professionalization programs is not a new concept, particularly not within the realm of teacher training (Clark; VanDyke; King, et al.). In most situations, though, the connections between tutoring and professional development remain passive. We train our tutors, we oversee their work with students (to varying degrees), and we hope that something sticks when they move into the classroom or workplace. Tutorials embedded within first-year writing courses, however, activate these connections. When tutors have opportunities to move among the multiple pedagogical spaces structuring a first-year writing student's experience and are encouraged to do so in reflective ways that draw on the perceptiveness that their position affords them, writing-center work is more likely to become contagious, spreading as tutors move through the writing program as students, as teachers, and as colleagues.

Past work on the relationship between tutoring and teaching emphasizes how specific skill sets and experiences translate from writing center to classroom. Janet Alsup, Tammy Conrad-Salvo, and Scott J. Peters, for example, contend that tutoring strengthens pre-service training "by providing additional, authentic field experiences that reflect constructivist, student-centered philosophies" (328). Given that these philosophies are difficult to enact without practice, teachers with no prior experience might be left susceptible to less desirable alternatives. Jane Cogie explains that the unpredictable nature of student-centered pedagogies can drive first-time teachers to adopt more traditional classroom models (76), and Irene Clark notes that when new teachers are uncomfortable or unsure, there is a "tendency for old pedagogical patterns to re-emerge" (347). Both

assessments speak to the danger of a theoretical knowledge of educational methods that does not easily translate to classroom practice, but in order for tutoring experience to productively intervene in this tragic and too-common trajectory, tutors must be aware of the instructional crossings they navigate in their work with individual students. Ensuring that tutors have an active knowledge of program and classroom pedagogies is one way of animating this awareness. If a tutor carries her work in the center with her into the classroom, the transition from tutor to teacher is more likely to preserve the practices most beneficial for individual students, and when these practices are already informed by course and program pedagogy, the transition is all the more seamless.

Still, Cogie, and Clark describe situations in which crises of authority subvert student-centered philosophies and goals, and Harris's understanding of the tutor's unique middle position might suggest that tutoring does not equip would-be teachers to confront these crises any more skillfully. Within the context of course-embedded tutoring, however, models making use of specialist tutors do require that tutors attend to the authority associated with their knowledge and position. Specialist tutors cannot ignore the larger institutional structures informing their work with individual students, but specialist knowledge need not be antithetical to one-on-one tutorial interaction. According to Sue Dinitz and Susanmarie Harrington, in fact, disciplinary expertise can increase a tutor's directiveness in ways that facilitate rather than hinder effective collaboration (92). The potential for greater degrees of authority to be deployed in the service of student-centered instruction suggests that course-specific tutoring models might help tutors find strategies for negotiating authority in ways that respond to individual needs in the classroom, too. As one former tutor and current instructor explains, "tutoring helped me to see what our program's pedagogy looked like in practice, but it especially made visible possibilities for a differentiated approach to the classroom, one that would ensure communal instruction attended to the range of students in front of me." Ultimately, it is by cultivating conditions capable of sustaining such mutually informing associations that course-embedded tutorials like the one developed by the Center for Teaching Writing begin to make writing-center work contagious.

### **A Local Outbreak: The Center for Teaching Writing's First-Year Tutorial**

Currently, the Center for Teaching Writing's course-embedded tutorial is open to students enrolled

in College Composition I. Priority is given to students whose entrance exams suggest that they might benefit from additional writing support, but the tutorial is available to others when capacity allows. Students who complete the tutorial with College Composition I may re-enroll along with College Composition II. In either case, students register for a one-credit course, and to earn the credit, students meet with a tutor at least seven times in the ten-week term, keep a log of their sessions, and turn in a final assessment reflecting on their work in the tutorial. At this initial level, the tutoring model supplements the classroom-based instruction first-year writing students receive and offers these students a resource designed to reinforce program-specific learning outcomes. Already, the tutorial is a space in which center and classroom, tutor and teacher interact, and the students' assessments of the program reveal the influence of these interactions on their learning.

When asked to identify the most helpful aspects of the tutorial, most students point to some combination of the tutor/student relationship and the course-specific nature of the program. Students appreciate the "personal relationships" and "intimate connections" they form with tutors in the process of reviewing and revising their work. They find that the tutors "make it feel like you're not talking to a teacher, but to a friend" and that the Center provides "a safe, helpful environment where students don't feel judged." At the same time, students note that the tutorial takes learning the material covered in the writing courses to a "new level" and that it helps them adapt to "the expectations of college writing" and navigate the writing classroom. A number of students point to aspects of the writing course's pedagogy that the specialist tutors are able to help with and wish that the same tutoring model was offered for other courses. These assessments of the tutorial's strengths suggest that the instructional benefits associated with tutors' disciplinary expertise in WAC/WID models also apply to writing-program specific expertise. As noted above, Dinitz and Harrington found that disciplinary knowledge "enabled tutors to ask good questions that helped students to identify and address key issues," increased tutors' confidence, and empowered them to "push back against student misunderstandings about the assignment or material or attempts to gloss over faculty expectations," all of which made sessions more successful than those in which disciplinary knowledge did not factor (93). Just like students working in the disciplines, first-year writers respond positively to tutors' specialist knowledge, and this knowledge strengthens the tutorial's work. Ultimately, reviewing three years worth

of student responses confirms that the intersection of the one-on-one tutoring dynamic and the course-specific instruction is what makes the tutorial a success from students' perspectives.

Given that participation in the tutorial triggers these associations for its undergraduate writers, tutors are expected to make productive use of the Center's connection to the classroom and have this connection as a ready point of entry for every session. Within our program, the tutor's work with individual students is also informed by the tutor's anticipation of entering the classroom as an instructor the following year. This two-fold investment in the relationship between tutoring experience and course-specific instruction asks tutors to think about how their individual interactions with students can inform their classroom teaching, and our tutors' training reinforces this dual perspective. Before the academic year begins, tutors are initiated into the larger tutoring community with readings on writing center theory and presentations by past tutors. Other components of the training familiarize tutors with the Composition Program's pedagogy and with the texts and materials used in classrooms. Recent efforts have more fully integrated tutor training into the Composition Program's fall activities, and tutors now attend the Program's fall teaching conference, which includes panels on teacher-oriented topics of interest ranging from grading strategies to ELL instruction. In addition to exposing tutors to the conversations taking place in the Composition Program at an administrative level, having them attend the conference introduces them to the range of pedagogical perspectives deployed in the day-to-day teaching of writing, and their presence at the conference contributes yet another perspective, one attentive to the needs of the individual students they will shortly encounter. Before their first day in the Center, tutors are embedded within tutor and teacher discourses, and they are encouraged to consider how the combined force of these discourses will inform their work with individual students.

Following these initial training efforts, our tutors are embedded within yet another of a writing program's discursive realms: the classroom. The teacher training requires an apprenticeship during which graduate students observe a veteran teacher to strengthen their sense of overall course design and to see the program's pedagogy in action. Tutors working in the Center now complete their apprenticeship in the fall so that it coincides with the first term of the tutorial. The graduate tutors work with students enrolled in composition classes other than the one they are observing, but aligning the apprenticeship with a tutor's first term in the Center means that he or

she shares in the students' classroom experience. The tutors see a version of the classroom-based instruction students receive and can apply this knowledge to their work with individual students. Pairing these two experiences encourages tutors to move between Center and classroom in ways that connect them to the experiences of both student and teacher. While they might assist in classroom activities, they are largely observers reacting to the teachers' presentation of material, a classroom experience that aligns with the students'. Apprentices do, however, lead two class meetings over the term and are in contact with mentor teachers while planning these meetings, so they also encounter the classroom from the perspective of teacher. Aligning the apprenticeship with the tutors' first term in the Center capitalizes on these mutually informing experiences for the benefit of both students and tutors, and tutors who have completed the training with this timeline report that the apprenticeship helped them to understand the larger educational contexts structuring their work with individual students while encouraging them to think about how their tutoring experience might influence choices made in the classroom.

While I am considering the influence that tutors might have on a writing program as they move beyond the writing center as agents of contact, it is, as Harris argues, tutoring's specific pedagogical situation that makes these movements meaningful. The tutor's work with students is the point at which all the discursive communities constituting a writing program collide and where tutors first become responsible for their productive synthesis. Within the context of our program, there is one further point of contact responsible for the spread of tutor-oriented philosophies and practices and which makes the tutors' contributions most visible. Given that not all prospective teachers work as tutors and that tutors have not worked with students prior to the Composition Program's conference, it might seem that the influence of the tutoring experience on the Program at large is limited or that the flow of information favors Program and classroom-specific instructional discourses over tutoring discourses. By the time tutors enroll in the teacher training sequence's pedagogy course, however, they have worked with students for a term and have completed their apprenticeships, meaning that they have performed some version of the discursive synthesis outlined above. All prospective composition instructors take the pedagogy course together, so tutors attend alongside graduate students who have not tutored. The fact that tutors come to course discussions having been exposed to student writing and having worked

one-on-one with the students whom the other prospective teachers might only be encountering as faceless abstractions shrouded in theory-talk significantly influences the course itself. Tutors help bridge the theory/practice binary that can emerge in discussions of composition pedagogy and theory because they offer their work with students in the Center as raw material for all prospective instructors to consider alongside course readings and assignments.

As Miriolina Rizzi Salvatori and Patricia Donahue have observed, the “student as a conceptual center” has largely disappeared from much composition scholarship, and student writing is itself rarely the subject of scholarly scrutiny. The student is, however, the conceptual center of tutorial work, and the tutorial itself consistently puts the student’s writing into “productive dialogue with the reading, writing, and thinking practices of other authors and theorists” (27). Tutors, therefore, bring an important perspective to pedagogy courses, perspectives that are not necessarily represented in the relevant literature. By using their work in the Center to put course-specific discourses into conversation with tutoring discourses and then carrying this conversation with them as they interact with instructors and administrators and move, finally, into the classroom, tutors working in first-year writing tutorials help to keep writing programs accountable to individual students.

At the beginning of this essay, I claimed that course-embedded writing tutorials have the capacity to inform the practices of first-year writing programs “from the center out.” While this phrase certainly refers to writing centers themselves, it also emphasizes the student as conceptual center for the work writing centers do; when all goes according to plan, the student is at the center of the Center. In this sense, course-embedded tutorials linked to first-year writing courses offer models focused not primarily on disciplinary expertise or cross-curriculum skill sets like those associated with WID or WAC programs. Rather, they are models that emphasize what writers learn from meeting and talking with other writers and that work to channel the natural contagiousness of such exchanges. This one-to-one interaction is what can transform a teacher training course, a classroom full of students, and, ultimately, a writing program. Irene Clark and Dave Healy contend that writing centers contribute to their own marginality and silencing “by being so careful not to infringe on other’s turf—the writer’s, the teacher’s, the department’s, the institution’s” (254). The writing center, though, is one of the few places where the interests represented by these entities meet, and they do so in tutors’ work with individual students. When we encourage tutors to

engage classroom, program, and institutional discourses through the naturally contagious lens of their tutoring experience and vice-versa, the writing center centers itself in the process of re-centering students.

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## AN EMBEDDED MODEL: FIRST-YEAR SUCCESS IN WRITING AND RESEARCH

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First launched in 2003, Central College's first-year seminar, *Intersections*, has introduced thousands of first-year students to the college's liberal arts tradition, writing across the curriculum program, and information literacy initiatives. This course, one of four writing-intensive courses required of all Central College students, is characterized as "a glimpse into the critical thinking and rigorous research and writing typical of the liberal arts...it explores the complex relationships between the sciences, arts and humanities" ("*Intersections*"). The course also introduces students to the college's recently adopted Integrated Learning initiative, a practice through which classroom content is linked to "the learning taking place outside it" ("*Integrated*").

In *Intersections*, each course section addresses the common theme, "Perspectives on Human Nature;" in addition, each instructor prompts students to investigate a sub-theme ranging from pop culture and creativity to scientific approaches and sustainability. The first-year seminar at Central College exists as the first step students take into the writing across the curriculum program. As Gretchen Flesher Moon explains, one purpose of the first-year seminar is to "demonstrate to students that writing, conversation, and critical thinking identify the intellectual work of all disciplines, not merely the humanities" (106).

While *Intersections* shares many characteristics with other first-year seminars at liberal arts colleges—small course sizes, faculty instructors, and a variety of subtopics—it also embodies several distinctive characteristics. An examination of these unique features—embedding writing tutors and pairing librarians with each section of the course—reveals how the first-year seminar, when paired with writing tutors and librarians, can better prepare and empower

students for success in writing and research in their first year of college. In this article, we present the perspectives of the Director of the Writing Center, Tutoring Coordinator, Head Librarian, and one faculty-tutor team as a means of demonstrating that embedding these entities helps ensure student success in first-year writing and research. By examining our embedded model through a case study approach from the experiences of a first-time *Intersections* professor and writing tutor, we discuss the challenges and benefits of training faculty and peer tutors in the practices of writing and information literacy pedagogy.

### Our Embedded Model

In 2009, tutors were first paired with sections of *Intersections* after librarians were embedded within the course. The intent is to help students build relationships with services supporting student success; by embedding librarians and then tutors in the first-year seminar, students can begin to establish relationships with the library and writing center. The integration of information literacy into this first-year seminar, and intentional partnerships between librarians, tutors, professors and students, acquaint students with research strategies and citation practices and has been an integral part of *Intersections* since its inception.

Initial student learning outcomes for the information literacy component closely mirrored the then-current ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. These standards define the "information literate individual" as one who is able to:

Determine the extent of information needed,  
access the needed information effectively and

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efficiently, evaluate information and its sources critically, incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base, use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, and understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally. ("Information Literacy Competency")

While this understanding of information literacy is undergoing significant revision within ACRL, these standards informed the design and the goals of the information literacy instruction program for the first-year seminar. The college document that describes the role of information literacy in the first-year seminar draws on these standards to orient information literacy among the student learning outcomes and to build information literacy instruction into the core course activities:

The first year experience course *Intersections* specifies the incorporation of reading, writing, speaking and "information literacy components" to develop students' reasoning and critical thinking skills. Through collaboration between librarians and faculty colleagues, information literacy instruction is woven into course content, structure, and sequence of *Intersections*. This fits logically with reading, writing, and speaking assignments that require seeking, evaluating and managing information gathered from multiple sources. The information literacy components are designed to promote responsible and ethical use of information, enhance students' ability to evaluate information, and foster stronger relationships between students and librarians. ("Information Literacy Components")

To develop these stronger relationships with students, the program is based on an embedded librarian model in which a librarian is partnered with each course section. The embedded librarian model depends on effective collaboration with faculty and tutors to ensure that the goals and sequence of the information literacy components are in alignment with writing assignments and other course objectives.

At the same time, information literacy pedagogy highlights several characteristics shared by both writing centers and libraries, suggesting an organic collaboration. First, tutors and librarians share common ground in understanding writing and research as processes rather than solely as products or content (Elmborg; Jacobs and Jacobs). Second, both share an interest in critical literacy and the ways in

which meaning is made. Last, and perhaps most important, at Central College, the library and writing center both seek to engage faculty, staff, and students across disciplines rather than within a particular department. For many faculty, teaching a multidisciplinary course like *Intersections* is somewhat outside of their comfort zones. Through this collaboration, faculty, who may be expert researchers themselves but do not typically teach in the information literacy and first-year writing frames, gain insight into new information literacy and writing pedagogy and tutors get to sharpen their own research skills while supporting their students' own development as writer and researchers.

In recent years, *Intersections* librarians have been embedded in both the physical environment of the classroom and the virtual environment of the course management system (CMS). Embedding in the CMS enables librarians to communicate directly with the students regarding preparation for class sessions focusing on information literacy, deliver content, and also keep abreast of news and developments in the course. Tutors have not participated in the online course environment, but their participation in the classroom often exceeds the librarians' in terms of time invested with the students. Several reasons explain this disparity. From an organizational standpoint, the Director of the Writing Center has successfully recruited sufficient numbers of student tutors so that almost every course section has its own dedicated tutor. Further, the implementation of a common teaching time resulted in librarians being spread even more thinly across multiple course sections scheduled on the same days and times. Conceptually, however, librarians also recognize the value of the peer expert in this learning environment.

Addressing the student learning outcome pertaining to ethical use of information offers an opportunity to legitimize the tutors' expertise, present them as authoritative members of the teaching team, and make the most of their position as peers. Part of that effort is an in-class exercise called "Become A Citation Pro," developed a few years ago by the *Intersections* program director and librarians. The exercise is designed to teach responsible use of quotations and attribution of sources in formal writing. "Citation Pro" involves out-of-class preparation including a reading assignment and practice quiz in addition to the interactive game. Its learning outcome is ultimately assessed by student performance in formal writing. Embedded librarians and tutors lead the game together. Co-leading "Citation Pro" became an early opportunity for the writing tutors to take an active role in class in order to

showcase their knowledge and expertise, in turn positioning the tutors as academic role models for students. Working together with the tutors on this fun and interactive activity enables librarians to build stronger relationships with these high-performing and academically talented students who often become library ambassadors among the wider campus population. These students come to the tutoring role from a variety of academic backgrounds and experiences, but all are recognized for their own writing abilities. Through their partnerships with both librarians and professors, they also add to their research and academic leadership abilities.

Writing tutors are recommended by professors across the curriculum as part of the work-study system on campus and are matched to sections of Intersections considering a few factors. Such factors include the tutor's and professor's departments, their level of expertise with Intersections, and their personalities. When pairing tutors and professors, the Tutoring Coordinator prioritizes the disciplinary interests of the tutors and professors. Although this pairing is not always possible, it does provide tutors and professors with a common language. Another factor considered when pairing is the level of tutor and professor experience—if the tutor and the professor are new to or returning to Intersections. If possible, and given the tutor's schedule, experience has shown that matching a returning tutor with a new professor, and conversely, a new tutor with a returning professor, strengthens the tutor/professor relationship. A returning professor can help a new tutor learn to work with students both inside and outside of class while returning tutors can be a useful resource for the new professors as they become familiar with Intersections. In addition, each professor uses writing tutors to varying degrees within Intersections, so a professor's past use of the writing tutor is also a consideration when pairing tutors and professors for Intersections. Personalities are also considered but are not the overriding factor in pairing tutors and professors, even though balancing introverts with extroverts is helpful to both students and professors, as they may find it easier to adjust to and work with certain personalities.

Embedding tutors in Intersections has advantages in addition to asking students to work with a tutor one-to-one. These benefits include students learning to use the Tutoring and Writing Center early and often and becoming comfortable seeking help with their writing throughout their four years. In addition, faculty can “share” the burden of teaching writing with the tutor by collaborating with the writing tutor on class activities. One faculty member noted, when surveyed by the Director of the Writing Center, that her tutor

was able to “communicate concerns” he had with the students he met in the Tutoring and Writing Center (“Fall 2013 INTX Survey for Faculty”). The tutor's role in the classroom became one of support for the instructor, illustrating Ken Leighton's observation: “...in the past, when I was working with one student, there were 25 others who were not being engaged. With [the tutor] in the room, students have many more opportunities to ask questions and interact with an instructor. In other words, the students get two instructors for the price of one” (3).

Like any collaboration, our embedded model also accentuates a few problems and difficulties that need to be addressed. For example, some faculty are not accustomed to working with a tutor during class, or they tend to collaborate with the tutor only on peer review or information literacy days. Additionally, miscommunication does occur between professors and tutors; for example, sometimes email is not checked regularly by tutors or faculty. Finally, tutors can struggle with huge “gluts” of students requesting meetings with them around essay due dates.

To prevent some of these issues, the Director of the Writing Center schedules meetings with faculty and writing tutors prior to the start of the semester to motivate contact and ensure that expectations—on both sides—are clear. In addition, the Director provides faculty with information about other activities the writing tutor can support in the classroom, like small group work and discussions of readings. While tutors do have some set hours in the Tutoring and Writing Center, they are also able to adjust their hours to coordinate with in-class responsibilities. Embedded writing tutors serve both students and professors in and outside of the classroom and are a significant component of the uniqueness of Intersections and the successful introduction and support of student writing in their first year.

## **Contributions and Challenges: A Case Study**

A case study approach from the perspectives of a first-time Intersections professor and writing tutor, as well as from the experience of an integrated librarian, presents the contributions and challenges that an embedded model offers to faculty and students in promoting writing and research as a process. New to the program, both the professor and tutor were committed to the opportunity to support each other and students in the first-year seminar. As a result, the tutor attended class sessions in which the professor introduced writing assignments to students, the

professor and tutor developed grading rubrics together, and met to discuss writing conference practices and feedback before and after these conferences.

The professor also collaborated with the librarian in planning when and how to introduce research and citation skills, and the tutor assisted the librarian with both lessons, thereby further integrating expert resources into the program at multiple points during the semester. The librarian and professor's collaboration began well before the course started, when both attended the Intersections teaching workshop held in early summer for all faculty teaching the course in fall. In this workshop, the librarian introduced the information literacy component of the course and the embedded model to faculty, and the professors had the opportunity to participate in a condensed version of the "Become a Citation Pro" game to experience the lesson from the students' perspective. Shortly before the semester began, librarians completed the process of matching each faculty member with a librarian partner, and planning began in earnest.

Communicating by email at first, followed by meetings in person, the librarian and professor discussed ideas for one writing assignment and, importantly, began to develop a schedule for information literacy activities over the course of the semester. The professor shared an early version of the course syllabus and incorporated the librarian's feedback on how to best profile both the writing and information literacy components. Consequently, the professor scheduled the librarian and the tutor to introduce themselves in class; additionally, the librarian and tutor met to coordinate their leadership of the "Become a Citation Pro" game. More importantly, the professor shared a description of the research assignment with the librarian, and they exchanged ideas about how to introduce the research component, utilizing library space and resources, so students also were introduced to using the library, online and offline. The writing tutor helped the librarian with the research presentation, and all three professionals circulated in the room while students started their search for popular and academic sources to research race and pop culture. As a result of this collaboration and the integration of expertise, the tutor, professor, and librarian together created more effective assignments and rubrics, students could utilize several experts to improve their research and writing practices, and experts could rely on each other to buttress their attempts to improve student writing and encourage students to understand writing as a process.

Much of the peer review literature addresses the value of utilizing peer review practices to help students improve their writing (Bean; Bouton and Tutty; Karegianes, Pascarella and Pflaum). Students benefit from receiving feedback at multiple points in the writing process and from multiple reviewers, more effectively comprehending the assignment criteria, and modeling their own writing on excellent peer examples (Rieber; Topping). Although there is plenty of evidence affirming peer review practices, the literature also addresses the challenges of incorporating and teaching these peer review practices as part of the writing process. Students complain that they do not receive valuable feedback from their peers who are not good writers or only offer vague feedback, and instructors are loathe to use valuable class time to engage in peer review (Rieber). In recuperating the importance of peer review to student writing, Linda Nilson differentiates between a descriptive and an evaluative role that she recommends instructors teach students to take. Nilson suggests a directed peer review approach, at least initially, where students are asked to identify specific components in their peers' writing assignments such as a thesis statement, topic sentences, and sentences of review (36). Peer reviewers can then comment specifically on the presence or absence of these components and give pointed feedback about their effectiveness. In other words, students are not expected to evaluate the overall strength of an assignment but instead identify whether the assignment meets particular criteria outlined in a checklist.

Referring to this peer review literature, the instructor and tutor developed a system of peer review that prompted students to objectively assess the presence of assignment criteria before meeting individually with writing experts to improve the quality and practices of writing. Students were asked to work through a checklist of items such as whether the essay incorporated a thesis, description of a media artifact, a clear argument in the conclusion, and a list of references in APA format. During class, students were paired as peer reviewers based on their demonstrated writing performances, and each pair exchanged manuscripts and filled out the checklist while they were reading the essays. The criteria for the checklist were not discussed at this point, as each had been explained and modeled in class prior to this exercise. After completing the twenty-minute task, students exchanged papers and reported back to each other. Based on this feedback, students were then expected to revise their drafts. Several students commented that they had been inspired to revise based on reading their peer's draft with good examples of several criteria.

Other students commented that they had not received helpful feedback or that the feedback mirrored their own knowledge of the paper's weaknesses. One student did not bring a draft to class and two other students did not attend class, leaving three students without feedback.

After revising their drafts, half of the students met with the professor and the other half with the tutor for a writing conference during class time. By sharing the conferences between the professor and tutor, students could spend more quality time with the expert, and less class time was taken in meeting with students. The professor and tutor invited students to identify one area of concern they had with the paper, and after reading that section of the paper, the professor/tutor offered suggestions to help the student revise and improve the draft. If the revision was minor, the student completed it during the writing conference. More involved revisions were discussed but left for the student to address in her or his own time. A second concern was addressed as time allowed. After meeting with students, the professor and tutor shared the writing challenges they had addressed and discussed the quality of assignments in broad terms, including reflecting on how effectively students understood and executed the assignment. Students were invited to meet again with either the professor or tutor with concerns not addressed in the writing conferences. Finally, the tutor and professor met to develop the grading rubric, even though the professor graded each of the final papers. Subsequently, the professor and tutor discussed and revised the assignment based on the difficulties that students faced in meeting the criteria of the assignment.

Using an integrated collaborative approach, the professor and peer tutor provided feedback at the point of need in the writing and research processes. A similar process of embedded research skills were introduced in the course by a librarian, assisted by the writing tutor, as discussed earlier. By integrating the tutor into both the writing and research processes, students could feel confident that they were receiving expert help outside of class when they met with the tutor in the writing center. In addition, students could be confident about asking the tutor for help with APA style, how to write topic sentences, or use signal phrases, because the tutor had demonstrated expertise in both writing and research skills.

Three-quarters of the class who integrated feedback from the peer review and writing conferences saw improvement in their writing and their grades. The professor and tutor kept track of feedback offered and compared this feedback to the final, graded manuscripts, noting that most students

did improve their papers between the first and final drafts. Added benefits included instructional support for a first-time Intersections professor and tutor, the opportunity to resolve student resistance to treating writing as a process rather than a product, and the chance to reflect on how students were responding to the writing and research components of the course.

While students who integrated feedback from this model into their writing and research experienced immediate benefits, more attention to students who were not motivated through this process is needed. By not bringing a draft to class, at least one student opted out of the writing process, and several other students did not integrate feedback from their peers or the professor or tutor. Although the professor shared her own experience of professional writing as a process of drafts and revisions, many students tended to view writing as an end product and demonstrated irritation and resistance when they were invited to revise, expand, or rework sections of their assignment.

This case study invites a consideration of the implications of teaching writing and research by using embedded tutors and librarians. Broadly, how might these same practices be applied in other courses across the curriculum, beyond standardized first-year courses? In addition, would faculty be more likely to integrate the resources offered by writing tutors if tutors and professors negotiated their relationships and expectations before the beginning of the semester? Finally, will students come to view writing as a process more readily through this peer review and writing conference model, allowing them to focus more on improving their writing and research?

### **Broader Implications**

Although the case of Intersections demonstrates the effectiveness of our embedded model, several aspects need to be considered before creating and adopting such a program. One aspect is scheduling. Originally, Intersections was offered at a variety of times on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday or Tuesday and Thursday. Recently, our institution has offered all sections of Intersections in four specific time slots. By loading so many sections in such a limited schedule, both the writing center and librarians have encountered difficulties with scheduling. In addition, tutor training needs to specifically address tutoring in the writing-intensive course. The Director of the Writing Center devotes a small amount of class time in the tutoring practicum to addressing specific Intersections assignment types and activities with the tutors so they are prepared when they are asked to tutor in the first-year seminar.

However, with these resources already part of the Intersections curriculum, students at Central College are better able to, as David Bartholomae describes, "...speak our language, speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways to knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" through accessing people who are available and ready to assist them (60). As part of their first-year seminar, students at Central College already begin to build relationships with the library and the Tutoring and Writing Center, relationships that are necessary for success in the first year of college and beyond. A next step for our program is designing and implementing a double-blind qualitative study to better measure the efficacy of embedding tutors and librarians in the first-year seminar; the information in this case study is limited to one dyad. Our experience, however, illustrates that embedding tutors and librarians makes a significant difference to our students, the end goal of the faculty at Central College and the impetus behind the development of Intersections.

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## INSIDERS, OUTSIDERS, AND STRADDLERS: A NEW WRITING FELLOWS PROGRAM IN THEORY, CONTEXT, AND PRACTICE

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There seems little question that writing centers have been increasingly visible and accessible (Jablonski; Nagelhout and Rutz; Spigelman and Grobman). The University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) University Writing Center has raised its profile on campus and become more accessible by providing tutoring and other options, too. We provide in-class workshops on topics ranging from avoiding plagiarism to successful peer review. In addition, we have made efforts toward disciplinary writing through workshops in Social Work and Education; academic boot camp sessions in Community Health Sciences, Engineering, and Psychology; and faculty development in various fields and disciplines. These efforts are well supported by both our campus and the literature (Barnett and Blumner; Macauley and Mauriello; Mauriello, Macauley, and Koch; Nelson and Evertz).

It also seems now that writing centers should draw students to themselves and extend outward toward campus communities and sometimes beyond (Childers, et al; Eodice; Harris; Mullin, et al; Pemberton). Writing Fellows (WFs) are popular in these efforts. They can bring valued practices to places that are not writing centers. WFs can also access a wide array of disciplinary discourse communities; they can thrive in these kinds of conditions (Cairns and Anderson; Haviland, et al.; Leahy). UNR's WFs program has been operating a relatively short time but, in our two years, we have come to understand more of the complexity of WFs. Put simply, WFs do focused work in unique conditions and require focused understanding.

I am certainly not the first to think of WFs as a useful and meaningful way to extend the reach of a writing center (Conroy; Harris; Striker). Neither am I the first to think about the contexts into which they are appointed. I suppose it isn't really news, either that there is no one-size-fits-all WFs program. However, a discussion that brings together our beliefs about WFs, the real contexts for their work, and the demands made by those contexts can inform successful deployment of WFs across contexts.

This article will begin with an essential theoretical conflict around WFs: expertise. Beyond this question, we have found at UNR that there are other critical

considerations: the context for the work and the WF herself. Together, these facets of WF work can shape, reshape, and misshape the comparatively autonomous and isolated work of WFs. This article will then describe recent UNR WFs. The article will end with brief reflections and possible directions for further scholarship. Writing fellows can be wonderful; understanding them thoroughly can bring their best efforts to full fruition.

### Theoretical Conflict

Conflicting theories remain at the center of this work. Researchers argue that only those who participate directly in a discourse can really understand it fully (Bazerman; Detweiler and Peyton; Prior; Waldo). From this contextualist perspective, writing centers are the only appropriate place for inter/multidisciplinary writing support because they are the spaces freest of individual disciplinary influences (Waldo). Soliday argues that disciplinary writing represents disciplinary thinking and, without access to the thinking, the writing is much more difficult to support. Hers are not unfamiliar claims; similar arguments have been made at many points across the past 40+ years to abolish first-year composition, in no small part because of the lack of compelling evidence (decried in myriad ways) that the writing students learn in FYC translates or transfers successfully to disciplinary writing. These arguments are frequent in the contextualist scholarship considered here.

Other scholars argue that WFs should bring only rhetorical and analytical expertise to their WAC/WID assignments (Mullin, et al; Zawacki, et al). Mullin, et al is particularly compelling in her 'centrist' (centered on writing and/or the writing center) argument that values highly the rhetorical, process, and analytical options that such a fellow can bring to other disciplines. In some ways, this is a more equal exchange of information and expertise than the contextualist perspective. Zawacki, et al. also successfully argues for the bringing of writing studies, Rhetoric and Composition, to other fields. It is a very commonsensical approach in many ways because the

basic idea of a WF is bringing another field to the disciplinary writing that students are doing.

At the core of any WF's activity is confidence that the support provided will be relevant and specific. For 'contextualists,' this means that WFs are knowledgeable not only in working with student writers but in the writing required. It's a hard sell, at least early on, to convince faculty that someone from outside, with limited disciplinary expertise, will be able to move disciplinary student writing ahead.

The 'centrist' perspective focuses on work with discourse, writing, and writers that transcends discipline. The centrist WF is knowledgeable in theory and practice that informs but works from outside of disciplinary discourse. Exporting most valued theories and practices adds a range of critical perspectives to the work of student writers (and, by extension, their instructors). Thus, for these WFs, essential is the understanding that these are not local experts but experts that can offer complementary insights and approaches to inform and improve student writing regardless of the discipline or document.

Certainly, each of these positions on disciplinary expertise is an informed, well-argued perspective for writing fellows. Every WF works in the spaces between one field and another. Not unlike so much of writing center work that is ambiguous, situational, and responsive, the UNR writing fellows have had to pay deliberate attention to the contexts for their work. This does not solve the disciplinary expertise problem, but paying attention to context and the participants does provide a range of understandings and options for working responsively and acting on informed writing center theory.

### **Context is Something**

Our experiences at UNR have suggested that there are at least three essential contextual factors to think about when making a WF commitment, alongside the relationship of the fellow to the discourse or writing center community. One factor that has made a difference in our WF placements is where the course is within the curriculum. We have found that, generally, the higher the course number, the more disciplinary expertise the fellow must have in order to be successful. This is about the WFs being respected and valued, to be sure, but it is much more about being able to work with writers in the discourses that they use. In one UNR curriculum, there is only one required class devoted to writing and communication, at the 300-level, and many students put it off until their senior years. Thinking and talking about writing has been a stretch for those students

because they have not really done so elsewhere in their major and are closing in on graduating and careers. Certainly, such a curricular arrangement can communicate a number of messages to students about how their chosen major values writing, not the least obvious of which is that it is a hoop through which they must jump but not one that is probably essential to their career goals.

Another contextual factor that has influenced the success of our fellows has been the instructor's agenda for writing. In courses where form or correctness are the primary focuses, UNR WFs have been less successful than where the emphasis was on increasing the writers' understanding of discourses or processes for writing, argument, or audiences. When accurate reproduction is the point, it is much easier for writers to see their work as either right or wrong, especially when the instructor engages it as such. WFs can be expected to correct, edit, and evaluate, which makes them much more vulnerable to critique and complaint if they don't agree with faculty. However, when writing processes, rhetorical choices, audiences, or reader experiences are emphasized, the WF can have a great deal more to offer because, along with her expertise, she is a unique audience and a specific reader. The opportunities for collaboration, rather than correction, are increased exponentially. Thus, the success and impact of a WF can depend a great deal on where the instructor is turning her and her students' attentions.

A third factor that has impacted UNR WFs has been the student writers' levels of matriculation through their majors. It makes sense that, as students matriculate through their majors, they should gain experience and expertise with disciplinary discourses. But, just as students accumulate this knowledge and experience, so too do they leave behind what seems less or not immediately relevant. Thus, WFs have an easier time, generally, when they are working with students who are newer to their majors because those students are less surefooted and, by extension, more welcoming of whatever resources are made available to them. With more advanced students, the appropriateness of the WF depends much more heavily on her participation in the disciplinary discourse. In the absence of that common ground, the writers simply have to spend too much time translating from and toward their writing for the fellow to be effective.

These factors, by themselves, are essential to understanding what the work of the fellows will actually look like. It is incumbent upon administrators to clarify as much as possible before the fellow begins, and these are good points of discussion with both

faculty and fellows. Faculty from other disciplines may be prone to seeing WFs through the lenses they know, such as lab assistant, intern, TA, or adjunct. The director's blanket confidence in her staff may encourage the fellow to think that she should be able to take on anything that comes her way. Careful discussion of contextual issues such as these can be important additions to the WF's professional development, if not her work within the disciplines. The lack of such discussion can create troubling ambiguity, conflicting expectations, and even exploitation in some cases. It seems obvious that expectations should be clarified, but clarity is doubly important for WFs because they often operate outside of the writing center, often in isolation, and their responsibilities are to at least two people who may not be on the same page.

### **Insider, Outsider, and Straddler**

In the short time that the UNR University Writing Center has been offering WFs, we have had a surprisingly wide array of experiences. Some of what I will describe may seem like rookie mistakes, and they were. However, I see great value in looking at our best and least successful fellow assignments alike. In each of these three cases, the discipline will not be mentioned specifically and a pseudonym will be used for the fellow. I will give a brief description of the fellow (insider, outsider, or straddler) and discuss factors influencing the WF-ship at hand (course level, instructor agenda, and student level). In each case, comparative affordances and limitations will be discussed toward a broad evaluation of the fellow assignment.

### **The Insider**

Our first "insider" WF came to us well recommended by his STEM professor. He had worked closely with the faculty member to whose class he would be assigned. He was a new graduate student in the discipline and a successful one, so he had also completed the capstone course he would be supporting only the semester prior. In fact, his experience was essential to his ability to meet capstone students where they were. His having completed his undergraduate degree stood him in good stead with the capstone students; it gave him credibility based on his knowledge of the field, knowledge of the curriculum, and knowledge of that specific professor's emphases for writing. The professor was calling for a somewhat unique emphasis on narrative flow in project proposals and product development reports, but this was familiar to Randy.<sup>1</sup> The students were a

step behind him in terms of matriculation, and he already understood what seemed to the students a strange way to think about writing in that discipline, so they respected Randy and his expertise.

Because Randy had never worked outside of his home department, he struggled with the structure and requirements of the WFs program, which was run from the University Writing Center. We asked him to participate in ongoing training, report regularly on his work, and complete a biweekly timesheet (se he could be paid). Continuing and escalating points of tension developed around my expectations. Eventually, I called him into my office to discuss the issues, where he told me that the training I provided was a waste of his time. He had worked enough with the professor to know what he wanted and how to tell students to do that work. He felt as though I doubted his integrity and competency because I had him report his hours. By midterm, he had disappeared almost entirely and eventually resigned.

It was easy, at first, to blame him for what seemed like arrogance, as much as it was easy for him to point to my shortcomings in his generous and thorough letter of resignation. However, in retrospect, there was a larger explanation that has become much more satisfying and workable. The cultures of the writing center and that department were dramatically different. In the former, collaboration was valued and, in the latter, independence; double-loop problem-solving was usual in the writing center and single-loop in the department;<sup>2</sup> linguistic interpretation was a priority in the writing center and mathematic certainty in the department. One potential explanation is that Randy was so immersed in the culture of his major and department that what was necessary for the writing center was dissonant, to the point of his feeling as though he was being unduly scrutinized and criticized. In short, Randy may have been too much of an insider to be a WF for us outsiders. He was great for the professor and we are not sure how helpful he was for the students, but his relationship with the writing center never really got off the ground.

### **The Outsider**

Amanda had already completed an undergraduate degree in another field when she was selected as a WF for a natural sciences professional studies course. It was a special topics course at the 400-level, focused specifically on writing, and the professor was trying to address ongoing concerns about what she and others of her colleagues saw as too frequently very poor writing among their students. Amanda was new to that particular field, and her connection to the writing

center was new as well. We provided her with ongoing training, hours in the writing center, and opportunities to develop her practice as both a Writing Fellow and a Writing Consultant in the center.

The professor wanted to focus her attentions on what she saw as the most essential issues related to writing, which tended to be mechanical issues or lower/later-order concerns. Amanda was fine with this and, truthfully, a bit relieved because the topics that she would be dealing with seemed much more concrete than others. Thus, she set about developing workshops for the class, resources and support materials that she could use with students in individual or small group consultations. Her work with the students was very well received and her tutoring hours were always full.

Meanwhile, because many of the students in the course were seniors, there was growing negativity toward the course. Students were telling Amanda that the course goals were too rudimentary. Their frustration with the course and professor could not be ignored, and Amanda felt as though she had to discuss them with the professor. The professor was open to hearing the students' concerns but, because students continued to make the same mistakes, was unwilling to change her focus or approach. If Amanda had been more deeply involved in the discipline or discourse, she could probably have saved herself a lot of stress by offering to work with students on other things. Those other options could have helped to reduce the students' frustrations as well. The course has not been offered again, so no one seemed to be very happy with the results. However, had Amanda been a bit less of an outsider, she might have been able to provide more feedback and options for the faculty member and the students as well.

### The Straddler

Melanie had been asking for an opportunity to do WF work in her major, checking in with me periodically to see if any new options had presented themselves since her last check-in. She wanted to be sure that I didn't forget her, which was unlikely anyway. When an opportunity to be a WF arose, she was eager to get started. Her work as a WF has been, to date, by far the most successful (based on both student satisfaction with the support and the professor's satisfaction with the writing). She had worked in the writing center for some time and was well-versed in our theories and practices. What made her a particularly successful WF was that she was also a successful major in that field. She was tested by the all-male students with whom she worked, to be sure,

but she knew exactly how to push back and when to do so. She had (at least then) an unusual combination of expertise in the writing side and the discipline side as well.

Curiously, Melanie was a year behind the students with whom she worked and that never seemed to matter to them. The instructor was focused on flow within the documents his students were preparing and, because Melanie was seen as having a foot in both worlds, the students seemed to trust that she would not lead them into 'fluffy' writing but, rather, enable them to meet their professor's expectations from a fully-informed and disciplinarily-relevant perspective.

Thus far, Melanie is the only WF with whom we were not forced to choose between disciplinary knowledge and writing-focused knowledge. Melanie was by far the most successful of our 15 WFs thus far, in terms of positive feedback and number of students impacted. It is not yet clear how often scholars writing about WFs have been able to see/explore a circumstance such as this nor how often we will be able to provide this kind of WF here at UNR. Certainly, to date, though, this seems like the most productive solution, even if it is based on an "n" of only one.

### Looking Forward

Certainly, there are any number of other potentially contributing factors involved in WF success and failures. We have had some success with our choosing WFs and with cooperating faculty doing so. Timing is an issue, as well, including but not limited to the sense of urgency and timing of WF appointments. More specifically, our budget is proposed/approved in early April and most faculty don't ask for WFs until July, at the earliest. Another key factor could be what different faculty and majors mean when they discuss teaching writing; sometimes, that has meant assigning it, other times laying out sections of a document and point values attached. We have asked that all WFs be assigned to courses with rigorous writing requirements (per our Core Curriculum guidelines), and that has meant a range of things, too. Sometimes rigorous has meant that more than three errors on the first page earns an F. Sometimes rigorous has been defined by how many weekends a faculty member spends grading papers. Sometimes rigor has been about page length or grade value, too. And these are some of the more obvious factors that could contribute to the success of a WF. There is clearly room for clarification, if not a need.

One constant in UNR's deployment of WFs has been the vigor and seriousness with which the WFs

have approached their duties. Faculty, no matter how satisfied they were with their students' writing, have consistently commented positively on the WFs' flexibility, resourcefulness, and dedication. These qualities have certainly generated a strong sense of stability even when each WF assignment is different in some significant ways. Recognizing that fact, considering the theories chosen to inform WF practice, and thinking carefully about context and the people within them can only help to increase our understandings of this work and what makes it work. Future research should certainly consider these factors, and it might also consider others:

- What can best support the developing agency and self-efficacy of WFs?
- How can WF research lead to new insights about how writing centers support writing in the disciplines?
- What factors translate easily from Writing Consultants to Writing Fellows, and vice versa?
- How might a centrist or contextualist perspective interact with writing center theory?

Certainly, Writing Fellows can seem like a next step forward for writing centers, as those centers become even more overtly activated resources for their campuses. Writing Fellows, as representatives of writing centers, offer a number of new options for both theorizing and practicing writing center work.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> All names included are pseudonyms.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Argyris makes this differentiation. Single-loop problem-solving includes a problem and a solution. Double-loop problem-solving includes asking why the problem occurred.

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## VAST POTENTIAL, UNEVEN RESULTS: UNRAVELING THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE COURSE-EMBEDDED TUTORING SUCCESS

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At the University of Montana Writing Center, we enter each semester encouraged by the promise of academic renewal: another chance to make our writing center a gathering ground for positive change. As writing center administrators, we also begin the semester uncomfortably aware of past less-than-successful institutional collaborations, and we look forward, determined to try again. Ideally, our collaborations should allow for the “possibility of mutual learning” and “a pedagogy of becoming” (Geller et. al 59), leaving room for students, tutors, and faculty to reach new insights and question old assumptions.

Pursuing this pedagogy of becoming, the Writing Center administers a classroom-based, course-embedded small-group tutoring model, the Sidecar Project (SP). Each semester, we link SP to one or two writing-intensive undergraduate or graduate courses across the disciplines. In SP-linked courses, we arrange for small groups of students to exchange drafts of class writing assignments with one another and with a tutor assigned to each group. Group members read and respond to the drafts prior to each of at least four in-class SP sessions. During these sessions, tutors facilitate small-group discussions, providing feedback to students and soliciting feedback from them about their classmates’ drafts. SP tutors are experienced and current Writing Center tutors, and we, as administrators, routinely tutor alongside them as they work in the Writing Center and in the SP classroom.

We aim for SP to produce a trifecta of changed students, faculty, and tutors, a goal inspired by the natural relationship between writing center work and writing across the curriculum efforts (Mullin 184-185). WAC programs that enact course-embedded tutoring commonly identify changed student writing behaviors as an explicit goal (Soven 202). While aiming to shape student writing behaviors, SP collaborations also seek to influence faculty teaching practices, perceptions of the Writing Center, and views of writing pedagogy, constructive outcomes Carol Severino and Megan Knight identify in their own writing fellows program. Equally vital, SP should provide tutors with a potentially transformative “developmental experience”

(Hughes, Gillespie, and Kail 2) that will inform their future work as tutors and as writers.

SP collaborations are thus far always worth our effort, with participants often citing the experience as among the most valuable they have had as students, teachers, and tutors. But writing instruction is messy business in its most conventional formats; course-embedded writing tutoring only more so. SP success is striking in its uneven and unpredictable nature, reflecting the oft-reported inconsistencies and challenges of other course-embedded tutoring programs (Hall and Hughes; Soven; Zawacki). Sometimes SP tutors and students learn plenty, but the professor remains unaffected by the collaboration. Other times, the students gain less from the experience, while the tutors and professor are dramatically shaped by each other’s expertise. As tutors, we seem to muddle through a tensely unproductive session for every productive one; for every changed professor, another one smiles, nods, and resists new approaches to the teaching of writing. Our experiences demonstrate that at the intersection of students, faculty, and tutors, the potential for change confronts the knotty realities of collaboration and shared authority. When SP collaborations are less than optimal, the missed opportunity for student, faculty, and tutor growth haunts us.

In this paper, we unravel and examine the complicated factors that account for this variance in SP success. At the conclusion of each SP collaboration, we circle back to create local knowledge for ourselves. Engaging in what Sarah Liggett, Kerri Jordan, and Steve Price identify as “pragmatic inquiry,” we “proceed cumulatively and recursively” (62) to arrive at “useful knowledge” that “best resolves the dissonance” (61) we experience across SP collaborations. This effort has led us to identify four factors that have had a consistent influence on a SP collaboration’s level of success: management of collaboration logistics, demonstrated faculty buy-in, faculty-tutor integration, and student and faculty willingness to consider and respond to feedback. We hope examining these factors will both illustrate their important roles in our version of course-embedded tutoring and invite others to take a similarly reflective

stance in analyzing their own course-embedded tutoring models.

## Course-Embedded Tutoring and the Messiness That Ensues

Sometimes in concert with and often in the absence of formal WAC and WID programs, writing centers have long taken on de facto WAC and WID roles, embarking upon the deeply satisfying and inescapably fraught work of institutional change. Expanding their approaches (and reach) beyond one-to-one tutoring to include course-embedded tutoring, writing centers take on the exigent project of influencing not only students but also faculty. As early as the late 1970s with Harriet Sheridan's use of peer tutors in Carleton College's WAC program and the early 1980s with Tori Haring-Smith's vibrant curriculum-based peer tutoring program at Brown University, student *and* faculty growth have been explicit objectives of some programs (Soven 202). A cursory look at the literature on course-embedded tutoring confirms that when writing tutors enter the classroom aiming to foster this growth, students, faculty, and tutors re-negotiate their roles, pursue common and sometimes conflicting goals, and struggle to make room for multiple voices. As in WAC programs where "pockets" of writing-intensive experiences across the curriculum can "appear erratic and fitful" (Blummer, Eliason, and Fritz 22 & 24), the outcomes of course-embedded writing support programs can seem irregular. Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman argue that this "hybrid instructional genre...operates amid contradictions within the productive chaos of writing classrooms; it confuses the nature of classroom authority; it encourages noise and collaboration at the very scene of writing" (219). Examples abound of the more vexing noise generated by course-embedded writing support programs. Tensions between tutors and faculty sometimes prevent faculty growth in teaching with writing (Zawacki); faculty may resist fully integrating the tutors, a situation Emily Hall and Bradley Hughes aptly describe as a willingness to 'date' rather than commit (26); and participants may ineffectively negotiate their shared authority (Hall and Hughes 27; Soven 206).

Although noise and collaboration are necessary conditions of Geller et. al.'s "pedagogy of becoming," so much chaos sometimes clouds writing center administrators' ability to accurately account for the factors that contribute to the successes and failures of course-embedded writing support. Andrea Lunsford calls for our humility in such collaborations, reminding

us that "[w]e shouldn't fool ourselves that creating new models of authority, new spaces for students and teachers to experience nonhierarchical, shared authority, is a goal we can hope to reach in any sort of straightforward way" (71). And so we loop back at the conclusion of each SP collaboration, patiently mining our growing collection of successes and missteps, hoping to learn how we might try again with a wiser, more purposeful approach.

## The Sidecar Project: The University of Montana's Course-Embedded Writing Support Model

### *The Sidecar Project Model*

We describe the University of Montana's SP model here in some detail primarily for context, but also with the hope that other programs might borrow useful aspects. SP is one version of course-embedded writing support in which tutoring sessions take place during class time—what Spigelman and Grobman categorize as *classroom-based writing tutoring* (1). We have integrated SP into fifteen undergraduate and graduate courses across the disciplines, including the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and professional programs. SP tutors, who also tutor in the Writing Center, usually have a graduate degree and some prior experience teaching academic writing. As administrators, we also tutor both in the Writing Center and in SP collaborations. Tutors are "generalists" who have no formal expertise in the course material of the SP course except by happy coincidence.

Before each SP collaboration begins, we and our tutors meet with participating faculty to design course assignments, outline a schedule for submission of drafts and revised work, and discuss faculty expectations and discipline-specific writing conventions. The instructor divides the students into small groups and assigns a tutor to each group. Tutors and faculty decide how to collect and distribute drafts (e.g., via group email, an online course supplement platform, or paper copies) and devise a checklist for tutors to track student participation.

At the heart of SP is the in-class session, usually four or five per course. Prior to each session, students exchange and read the drafts of all members in the group, making notes for workshop discussion. Tutors do the same for the students in their groups. All arrive to class prepared to exchange oral and written feedback, offer advice, and troubleshoot writing challenges. The professor is minimally present during these sessions, usually beginning the class with a few comments and checking in once either during the

workshop or at the end of class. Over the course of the semester, tutors check in with the professor formally and informally to exchange impressions. Tutors also debrief with one another, both before and after the sessions, to reflect on the dynamics of group tutoring, share newly gained discipline-specific knowledge, and discuss especially constructive or problematic aspects of their experiences.

#### *Potential Benefits of the Sidecar Project*

The intended benefits of SP for students are multiple. Students receive more timely and frequent feedback on their writing than they would in an otherwise similar class. They are exposed to other students' writing, gradually learning to recognize effective and ineffective choices other writers make when addressing the challenges posed by a particular writing task. They also witness real audiences respond to their writing in real time, authenticating the writing assignment as a communicative task, not just a transaction wherein the student submits an assignment for a grade. The vacuum between the individual-student-as-writer and individual-professor-as-reader becomes less pronounced as students experience the benefits of feedback without the associated risk they often perceive in the student-faculty transaction.

SP also generates "the power of collaborative learning...to create educational change among the tutors themselves" (Hughes, Gillespie, and Kail 13 & 25). Tutors encounter opportunities to learn about the methodologies of biologists, economists, and historians, and to grapple with those instances when the literacy practices of one discipline do not map onto another. In short, tutors become students of the SP collaboration.

Faculty become students of the SP collaboration as well, learning new ways to respond to writing and to discuss their students' experiences as writers. By checking in with tutors, faculty also gain intimate knowledge of how students interpret their assignments and the unexpected cognitive and logistical challenges their assignments pose. Like the tutors' assessment of students' writing, this assessment happens before it's too late—faculty have time to address emergent concerns while students are engaged in the assignment. For faculty, this feedback can shape writing instruction both during the SP collaboration and in future courses, fulfilling the potential for SP to influence how writing is taught across the curriculum (Zawacki) and how faculty perceive a writing center's role on campus (Severino and Knight).

### **Accounting for Uneven Success**

Mindful that course-embedded writing support should contribute to incremental progress toward these benefits, we isolate for consideration four factors that have reliably influenced SP collaboration success: management of collaboration logistics, demonstrated faculty buy-in, faculty-tutor integration, and student and faculty willingness to consider and respond to feedback. The systematic, dialectical, and recursive efforts of pragmatic inquiry have thrown these four factors into sharp relief. We have examined each new iteration of SP through dialogue with all participants, allowing us to "test and validate the knowledge" (Liggett, Jordan, and Price 57) accumulated in previous collaborations. We have worked with fifteen professors in the context of fifteen courses, each with an enrollment of eleven to twenty-five students. Each semester, we gather information through post-SP student surveys, mid-semester faculty-tutor discussions, mid-semester and post-semester tutor-tutor conversations, and post-semester faculty-writing center administrator discussions. The four factors we isolate, then, represent "dialectically-tested truth" (Liggett, Jordan, and Price 78) in the context of one course-embedded tutoring program.

#### *Management of Collaboration Logistics*

Like any classroom-based tutoring model, SP involves the tedium of additional logistics and deadlines. With our guidance, faculty must strategically integrate SP sessions and revision deadlines into the course timeline, form student groups, match groups with tutors, and establish some method for sharing papers. Scrupulous attention to these details is indispensable. For SP sessions to benefit participants, students must submit papers twice—once before each SP session so that group members and tutors can read submitted drafts prior to meeting, and once after students have revised their drafts in response to group/tutor feedback. Tutors and students note that missed deadlines significantly hamstringing the small-group sessions, much more than an individual writer's missed deadline might impact a class.

The number of parties involved further complicates the effort to keep logistics unambiguous; tutor, faculty, or student mistakes can derail a significant portion of the collaboration. Students report becoming understandably confused if tutor and instructor representations of SP differ, regardless of whether this variance occurs as the result of a simple deadline misunderstanding or a fundamental disagreement regarding the students' and tutors' roles. Mismatched expectations muddle the purpose and potential productivity of SP sessions.

To minimize these glitches, we, as administrators, engage faculty in up-front and explicit logistical planning. We share with new SP faculty logistical patterns that have worked in the past, we create deadline grids for tutors and students, and we meet with students at the beginning of the semester to orient them to the SP experience. While this deliberate attention to logistics helps SP collaborations run more smoothly, tutors also have had to develop tolerance for disoriented students and unexpected misunderstandings—tutors accept their role in happily reiterating and translating logistics—and we try to remain attuned to ways we might better clarify logistics in future collaborations.

#### *Demonstrated Faculty Buy-In*

Even with well-managed logistics, SP produces only limited success without faculty participants who manifestly demonstrate support for the goals of course-embedded tutoring. Course-embedded tutoring inherently involves the risk that students will treat the work as an extraneous supplement to the course, or worse, an empty stand-in for the “real” work that happens when the professor facilitates class time. To cite some egregious examples, when professors use SP sessions to cover their planned absences, list sessions as optional, or fail to show interest in the feedback generated by tutors and students, tutors report that students are less likely to take SP session feedback seriously. Demonstrated faculty buy-in helps create the conditions for student buy-in.

Experience has taught us that at the beginning of a SP collaboration, adequate faculty buy-in does not require a full understanding of the pedagogical theories that underpin SP—this more nuanced understanding emerges from the collaboration. Of fifteen participating professors over the course of seven semesters, only two began the collaboration with an already deep appreciation for the integral role of writing and reader feedback in students’ learning. Of the remaining thirteen professors, twelve used the SP collaboration to develop new understandings of writing as a tool for learning, of the role of reader feedback, and of their own ability to help students learn the literacy practices of the discipline. We accept that these understandings are more likely to grow out of the SP experience than to motivate a professor’s initial desire to collaborate. Still, we have become finicky about the faculty with whom we invest our SP time. Like Hall and Hughes, we use preliminary conversations with faculty to identify potential partners who demonstrate they are “willing to collaborate with [tutors] as teaching partners,” “willing to experiment with teaching,” and “open to building

process and revision into paper assignments” (24). Faculty who are willing to invest time and thought into upfront logistical planning and to adapt their courses to SP goals are those whose level of initial buy-in likely will buoy the collaboration.

As administrators, we also encourage the professor to broadcast to students their reasons for valuing the SP experience. To head off the danger that students will perceive SP as a mere postscript to the course, the faculty participant should explicitly link SP to the goals of the course by discussing the role of writing in the discipline, stressing the importance of reader feedback, and enumerating the added value of the tutors’ presence. At minimum, the professor must refer to the SP sessions during regular class time, consciously integrating them as part of the course. At best, the professor, as a fellow learner, should outline for students personal insights gained from the collaboration. Some professors have also emphasized the importance of SP work by assigning points for participation in SP sessions or tracking that participation in other formal ways. Whatever the method, faculty participation should be genuine and evident to students.

#### *Faculty-Tutor Integration*

A third factor influencing SP success is the degree to which faculty and tutors share mutually respected interactions. While potential missteps abound when faculty and tutors attempt to share authority in the classroom (Hall and Hughes 27; Kail and Trimbur; Soven 206), siloed faculty and tutor roles preclude shared insights and opportunities for faculty and tutor growth. SP sessions afford a unique student perspective on the course, bringing to light those aspects of the course that advance students’ development as writers and to those aspects that flummox students. If tutors have no regular venue for articulating successful or problematic patterns they notice in the students’ composing processes, the professor misses an opportunity to see these otherwise invisible patterns. If the faculty participant has little opportunity to openly share concerns and observations, the tutors and students will develop an incomplete understanding of the professor’s expectations and of how the discipline may inform those expectations. SP experiences in which tutors and faculty function in two parallel but separate worlds may sidestep messiness and confrontation, but they also bypass the potential for mutual learning.

We have learned that intentionally making room for faculty-tutor conversations *during* the collaboration dramatically improves faculty-tutor integration. When we have trusted that the interaction will simply

materialize, we have been disappointed to watch tutors (including ourselves) and faculty persist in their familiar, static approaches. To foster frequent and meaningful faculty-tutor integration, we build opportunities for interaction into each SP: tutors connect with the professor after each session to summarize patterned observations, such as unfamiliar discipline-specific conventions that stymie students (and tutors) or new insights students have gained about their own composing processes. Ideally, this input from tutors prompts the professor to share insights, questions, and observations in response.

We acknowledge the long-recognized danger that faculty-tutor integration may tempt students to conflate the professor's authority with the role of the tutor (Kail and Trimbur 8). Tutors' insider knowledge of the professor's expectations is an inevitable byproduct of the collaboration. However, we try to harness this knowledge as fodder for our work helping faculty examine their own assignments and teaching strategies. When tutors and faculty demonstrate for students this atmosphere of mutual learning, students become more likely to read faculty-tutor interactions not as confidential conversations about the professor's mysterious expectations, but rather as open explorations of how students might best learn, how the professor might best facilitate this learning, and how tutors might best tutor.

#### *Student and Faculty Willingness to Consider and Respond to Feedback*

Student and faculty receptivity to feedback plays perhaps the most consequential role in SP collaborations. Stubborn resistance to new writing and teaching strategies short-circuits the potential for student and faculty learning. Unlike in a student-initiated writing center session, students are introduced to SP sessions as a course requirement, making tutor and peer feedback an external requirement rather than a self-identified need. Tutors report students raising the objections that a) tutors are not experts in the field, b) tutors are not ultimately grading their work, and c) their peers, who they may view as even less expert than the tutors, are not qualified to offer feedback. A history student reflected, "I wanted to hear more from the tutors and less from the peers," a preference occasionally echoed by other students. However, when students become open to peer feedback, they report valuing the opportunity to recognize their "own mistakes in the writing of others" and to "see how others dealt with similar issues." Openness to SP session feedback enables students to recognize writing as a series of choices writers make, a recognition an anatomy and physiology

student exhibited when she described her growing ability "to see different approaches to a writing assignment."

Students sometimes take their cues from a professor who conspicuously requests and considers tutor feedback on classroom activities and assignments. A requisite ingredient in SP success is the faculty participant's willingness to learn from the collaboration and to make public—especially to students—the import of these lessons. This faculty willingness is the ingredient upon which lasting SP success rests most heavily, but it also is the one over which we have the least control. As administrators, we initiate each SP collaboration with our own agenda in mind: influence students who may not otherwise visit the writing center, expose the instructor to our understanding of how students develop as writers, and learn about writing in a particular discipline. Some faculty have initially committed to SP with a vague notion that the collaboration will "fix" struggling student writers and will reinforce the professor's view of writing, however well- or misinformed that view may be. When responding to faculty who bring agendas that conflict with ours, we desperately want to reject those at-first-glance objectionable agendas rather than engage them as opportunities for learning. In the course of SP planning conversations, faculty have urged tutors to use tedious proofreading symbols to edit student work, to help students inexperienced in the discipline write twenty-page research papers grounded in primary research, and—literally—to independently provide all writing instruction in the course.

We subtly sidestep such entreaties, trusting that faculty-tutor interactions, rather than our vocal protests, will "open up healthy discussions about priorities for feedback" (Hall and Hughes 26) and inspire the professor to critically reconsider misguided or ineffectual teaching practices. Resisting the temptation to criticize the professor's view of writing, we make student writing behaviors the subject of each faculty-tutor conversation, posing the collaboration as a problem-solving inquiry rather than an evaluation of teaching strategies. We cannot manufacture faculty willingness to change. However, we can demonstrate our willingness to learn from the collaboration while offering the invitation to join tutors and students in an environment of mutual learning. When faculty accept the invitation to consider our feedback, SP collaborations result in potentially lasting changes in professors' approaches to teaching with writing across the disciplines. Changed faculty initiate new collaborations with the Writing Center and experiment with more purposeful ways to embed support for

student writers in future courses. For us, this counts as incremental, positive institutional change.

## Conclusion

Perhaps especially when we allow each new collaboration to fuel reflection, we find SP to be among our best writing center efforts. While the list of factors we mention here is neither exhaustive nor globally applicable, we hope our examination illustrates the value of recursive reflection about course-embedded tutoring. Course-embedded tutoring is uniquely complicated and uniquely powerful, and this reflective scrutiny is crucial if writing centers hope to realize its potential.

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# RE-ENVISIONING COURSE-EMBEDDED PROGRAMS AT THE GRADUATE LEVEL: A TUTOR'S EXPERIENCE IN A DOCTORAL, TRANSLINGUAL<sup>1</sup> MARKETING COURSE

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*"It's like you're literally guiding them through the maze, and dropping breadcrumbs along the way."*

– Carol, MARK 8397 Instructor

We were halfway through our Summer 2014, PhD-level, required University of Houston,<sup>2</sup> Bauer College of Business class, MARK 8397: Communicating Academic Research, when Carol,<sup>3</sup> a five-foot tall, thick-skinned, straight-shooting, endowed chair and Marketing professor explained my role in her course as “hand holding.” I raised my eyebrow and waited for her to continue. “You know, confidence building,” she continued. I felt slightly better. Then she said, “Academic writing is confusing for students because they don’t know which way to go. They might know when and why they need to make changes, but they don’t really know *how* to do it.” This was better. Carol’s idea of me as a guide for students through the “how” of academic writing was something I felt matched my own understanding of my role in the course.

My role in MARK 8397 was set up via an eight-year partnership between Bauer and the writing center (WC).<sup>4</sup> Since most of the WC administrators at my university were not familiar with business writing at the graduate level, I was expected to draw on my own knowledge of and experience with writing in the disciplines from my rhetoric and composition doctoral coursework and from previous discipline-specific WC partnerships in engineering and health sciences at a different institution. MARK 8397 was scheduled to meet seven weeks during the summer: Carol would lead Monday classes focused on academic communication, while I attended and participated; I would lead Wednesday workshop classes centered on peer-review without Carol present. Since MARK 8397 was the only “co-teaching” style partnership the WC had, there was not a specific protocol for me to follow; I wasn’t positioned as part of a larger Course-Embedded Program (CEP).

However, being familiar with WC scholarship, I immediately understood myself as a kind of “writing

fellow” (WF), as defined by Bradley Hughes and Emily B. Hall in their 2008 special issue of *Across the Disciplines*. In their “Guest Editors’ Introduction,” these authors argue that WFs play a valuable role within Writing Across the Disciplines programs because they “link students to specific writing-intensive courses; encourage partnerships between a Writing Fellow and a course professor, and promote collaboration between peers.” Additionally, I was positioned as a “classroom-based writing tutor,” as described by Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman in *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring*, because I would be providing “writing support...directly to students during class” (1).

Yet, after my first summer in MARK 8397, I began to see my role as different from both the “writing fellow” and the “classroom-based writing tutor.” Specifically, my experiences disrupted three key assumptions supported by research in the two collections cited above:

- 1) Tutors with disciplinary expertise are preferable to generalist tutors (Soliday 32; Severino and Traschel).
- 2) Tutors should act with directive, interventionist methods (Corbett 101).
- 3) Tutors must constantly navigate conflicts related to their own authority and their relationship to the course instructor (Martins and Wolf 159; Singer Breault, and Wing; Zawacki; Cairns and Anderson).

Thus, in Summer 2014, I began a pilot study to re-envision how a CEP at the graduate-level might operate using MARK 8397 as a model. After briefly describing the course’s context below, I present three primary observations that challenge the three assumptions above by drawing on my own experiences and reflections as a course-embedded tutor, conversations with the course instructor, and captured content from the Wednesday writing group meetings that I facilitated. My findings show the value

of having a rhetorically trained WC professional who sets and models explicit guidelines for peer response without being overly directive and establishes a professional “co-teaching” relationship with the instructor.

### A Description of MARK 8397

The Summer 2014 MARK 8397 course consisted of seven first and second year doctoral students: six female (all of whom spoke either Chinese or Korean as a first language) and one male (who spoke Telugu as a first language). They were all highly intelligent (many had multiple Masters degrees), had sub-disciplinary expertise in Supply-Chain Management, Marketing, Accounting, and Management, and were extremely dedicated to becoming better writers in English. However, pre-assessment survey data suggested to me that these students lacked confidence in their abilities to communicate in English.

The main objective of MARK 8397 spoke directly to this issue. As stated in the syllabus, the course was designed “to increase students’ skill and confidence in talking about research.” The course took place over the summer, with a gap between the first-week-in-June sessions and the remaining twelve July and early August sessions. During the first two meetings, students presented their research projects to the seminar-style class, and Carol shared both writing advice from a previous *Journal of Marketing* editor and a bad example of her own writing so that students could “get past the idea that everything that’s published is wonderful” (Carol). During the rest of June, students wrote, drafted, and revised an article-length proposal or study and submitted a full rough draft to Carol and me when class meetings started again in July. That rough draft became the basis for four peer review group sessions organized and facilitated by me, every Wednesday in July.

As I mentioned, I led class on Wednesdays without Carol. I broke the class into two groups, attempting to keep student specializations together (i.e. so that the two accounting students were in the same group, even if they were paired with a management student). This summer, each group attended class with me for 90 minutes, during which 15-30 minutes consisted of mini-lessons based on student need (audience awareness, paragraph organization, writing Abstracts, and organizing the Introduction, for example), and the remaining 60+ minutes were spent discussing student drafts.

In preparation for each discussion, I gave students specific guidelines for peer review and provided detailed comments and questions on each draft. We

worked through drafts section by section, using a modified IMRaD genre as a guide (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion—with an Abstract). During the first week, students submitted their Abstract/Introduction prior to our meeting; read, commented on, and returned the Abstract/Introduction of their peers; and came to class having read feedback from both their peers and myself. Then, we spent group time clarifying feedback, drawing similarities among responses from multiple readers, and working collaboratively to generate possible revisions. For the second week, students were expected to revise their Abstract/Introduction and also submit their Methods section for peer review. This pattern continued until we made it through the final Discussion section of each draft.

Meanwhile, Carol led class meetings on Mondays that focused on talking about academic research; students practiced “elevator pitches,” mock interviews, and teaching lessons from the course textbook (Williams and Colomb’s *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*). In addition, Bauer faculty members visited the class to discuss topics related to academic communication, including how to create effective graphs, figures, and tables; pick a dissertation topic; and give a strong oral presentation. During these classes, Carol developed the content and led class, while I asked questions, offered suggestions, and gave students written feedback on presentations. During the final week of class, students submitted a final version of their article/proposal to Carol and me for comments and delivered a 45-minute job-talk style presentation in front of the class.

During these Monday and Wednesday classes, my role was complicated as a course-embedded tutor because I acted as student, peer, and tutor. This was not an issue of authority, but rather I was trying to learn about research writing in business and help students develop both skills and confidence in English communication. On Mondays, I acted as a peer-student because I was trying to learn from Carol how successful business scholars like herself approach writing. I took careful notes so that I could get a sense of the broader disciplinary “keywords” and language for talking about research. On Wednesdays, I tried to bring this terminology into my instruction and our conversations. My role shifted to that of tutor-teacher, not only because I was leading class, but also because I was ultimately perceived as the “writing expert,” in that when conflicts arose, all looked to me for direction. Despite this, as time went on, I tried to position myself as a peer so that the students could begin taking ownership of both our conversations about writing and also the writing itself.

## Re-Envisioning Course-Embedded Tutoring at the Graduate Level

Drawing on my own observations, captured content from Wednesday meetings, and conversations with Carol, my experiences with MARK 8397 challenge the assumptions about CEPs mentioned at the beginning of this article. Thus, I would like to offer three key concepts that can inform WC practices as tutors and administrators begin to consider course-embedded tutoring at the graduate-level.

*Assumption 1: Tutors with disciplinary expertise are preferable to generalist tutors.*

*Challenge 1: Generalist tutors are practical, effective, and should work with students in small groups.*

When I asked Carol if it would be desirable to substitute a business graduate student for my role, she said that there was not a chance that would happen. In this program, the top business graduate students do not accept teaching assistantships because they earn more money working as consultants. Instead, international students without solid English communication skills usually hold assistantships. The latter would not be qualified to take on the role of course-embedded tutor because they lack the English writing and communication skills that were key to my participation in the course, according to Carol.

Beyond this point of practicality, Carol admitted that she viewed tutor disciplinary expertise as “marginal” in the context of MARK 8397. Since the students in the course come from a variety of sub-disciplines, they end up being the experts, and the practice of explaining their research to a more general academic audience is valuable for them. Part of the purpose of the course is to help students become effective communicators for a broader departmental audience: they need to be able to explain their research across a varied business faculty and deans, in addition to experts.

While the students themselves functioned as sub-disciplinary experts, their peers acted as general business experts. Thus, it became less necessary for me to have business-specific disciplinary knowledge, but equally necessary for us to discuss writing in small groups. When given clear guidelines for feedback, graduate students were capable of providing thoughtful, discipline-specific feedback to their peers. For example, a typical peer-to-peer comment would read like this:

In your “method” section, you use logistic regression model. I wonder if you could explain why you choose this model either from an

econometric point of view or from a theory point of view. For example, as a reader, I want to know whether the logistic model is the only/most appropriate model for estimation and/or whether some studies have used that model for similar estimation.

In this comment, the reviewer not only requests more explanation from the writer, but she also offers two different perspectives from which the writer could draw (econometric or theory). Then, the reviewer describes her question from the position of a reader who has other possible models for the study in mind. I found that methodology was one aspect in particular that students across the sub-disciplines of business seemed to understand and comment on regularly.

While I did not bring disciplinary expertise to the table, I tended to focus specifically on writing-based issues with which students felt less comfortable. Our small groups functioned well because the students initiated discipline-specific areas for conversation, I initiated writing-specific concerns, and then we were all able to weigh in based on our own readings of the draft. Thus, it became clear early in the course that the students expected me to provide them with feedback focused on clarity, organization, and style. For example, I often commented on paragraph length, topic sentences, unclear terminology, syntax, and section-specific organization, and then we were all able to discuss possible revisions together.

*Assumption 2: Tutors should act with directive, interventionist methods.*

*Challenge 2: Explicit instruction and non-directiveness teach students to navigate various perspectives.*

Since I provided feedback from a position of writing—not disciplinary—expert, I understood my role to be non-directive, in that I did not tell students specifically what changes to make. Instead, I provided explicit directions for peer review to stimulate strong, detailed feedback from multiple readers, and also offered detailed comments/questions on each student’s draft. These guidelines called for writers to identify areas of focus for their readers, and for reviewers to spend at least 45 minutes commenting (see Appendix 1). The purpose of working in writing groups then was to offer students a variety of perspectives on their drafts and to engage in conversation that made those perspectives clear to the individual writer. Then, students worked individually to navigate the feedback they received and make decisions about the changes they wanted to make. This process usefully mimics what students will eventually experience when they submit articles for publication and when they work with dissertation committees.

Overall, I found that when graduate students are taught how to provide specific feedback in writing groups, tutor directiveness is unnecessary because graduate writers are capable of self-directed revision; students revised holistically and did not need to work individually with me to figure out how to do it. Although I offered to work with students one-on-one, only one student requested a meeting one time over the course of the semester. Furthermore, since we continued to work with the same article and its revisions, students received comments from their peer groups and myself four times. Oftentimes, if a section of the draft was not revised thoroughly enough, we continued to bring our concerns to the writer during writing group time until our questions/concerns were resolved.

While I did not consider my role to be directive in terms of speaking over the group to tell students what to revise and how, I did explicitly describe academic writing conventions, as I understood them, especially because I was working with a group of translingual students for whom this American-style of research writing seemed new. For instance, one area that was unfamiliar to these students was the literature review section, where students needed to draw conclusions about multiple sources, point out gaps and limitations, and then position their own work in relation to previous research. In addition, these students were unfamiliar with the concept of “foreshadowing,” or stating early in the Introduction what was to come in the remainder of the article. Thus, we spent time early in the semester looking at sample articles together and writing out guidelines for how students could make similar moves in their own writing.

In addition to these organizational structures that seemed new to this group of translingual students, we also focused our discussion on academic style. As noted by Talinn Phillips in “Tutor Training and Services for Multilingual Graduate Writers: A Reconsideration” (2013), such a focus on what we would usually consider to be “lower order concerns” must be taken seriously when working with translingual writers. Not to be confused with grammar, these students turned specifically to me for advice about how to position themselves in their writing (to use “I,” or “we,” or neither), how to use sentence-level writing conventions (like “On the one hand...On the other hand...”), and how to write transitional topic sentences that start with the previous paragraph’s old information before introducing the new information. Our style discussions were framed around findings from our first Wednesday meeting when students were asked to investigate editorial guidelines for a journal in which they wished to eventually be published. One

student found a business journal that requested manuscripts to be written in “scientific English.” While we had a few laughs over not understanding what that meant, we also were forced to acknowledge that this journal (and perhaps others) wanted what we could only interpret as an American-style of writing. Thus, we took sentence structure, grammar, and style seriously in our group meetings, and I was explicit in explaining these conventions when they surfaced.

*Assumption 3: Tutors must constantly navigate conflicts related to their own authority and their relationship to the course instructor.*

*Challenge 3: Peer-to-peer authority can be established among all class members, including the tutor and instructor.*

Carol starts each semester by stating that we should all think of one another as peers with different kinds of sub-disciplinary expertise. For instance, in addition to calling everyone by their first names, Carol is quick to point out her own lack of expertise, especially when she responds to students who are not in Marketing. “Don’t let me put words in your mouth,” Carol said almost every time she repeated students’ projects back to them in her own words. Thus, Carol taught with an awareness of her authority as the course instructor, and constantly worked to encourage students to take ownership of their research and speak as experts of their own sub-disciplines.

Not only was authority shared across all students of the course, but Carol also trusted me with a third of our class periods to focus on writing in any way that I wanted. When I asked her about this, Carol explained that when working with people in academia at the graduate level, people tend to know what they are good at and they work best when they are given the freedom to work off of their own strengths. She also argued that in terms of writing, there are so many different things you can work on with a group of students, and that while she and I would probably spend time in writing classes differently, both approaches were equally valuable.

While I do not necessarily think this degree of trust and freedom is possible in an undergraduate classroom with a faculty member and an undergraduate course-embedded tutor, it works well at the graduate level because the students enter the classroom with more authority. My own experience as a graduate student and co-teacher in MARK 8397 suggests that instructors are more likely to trust the class of graduate students with carrying out their own education. Thus, we did not need Carol’s “supervision” to work seriously and effectively in writing groups because the students were invested in becoming better writers.

This suggests that, while not appropriate for all courses and students, there may indeed be instances where undergraduate tutors and students should be given more trust and independence, which in turn can help them gain more authority. In our Wednesday meetings for MARK 8397, students seemed to feel more comfortable admitting their questions and concerns about writing without Carol present. For instance, we spent some of our time trying to interpret things Carol explained in class (like when she told one student that she “couldn’t see the forest for the trees”) or comments she had made on someone’s draft. Had Carol been present during our Wednesday meetings, we might not have talked about our questions and confusions as openly.

Furthermore, in both the small group Wednesday setting and during Monday classes, I noticed that I was treated as “the writing expert,” and in this particular context, I was comfortable owning up to that. For instance, on Mondays when we worked together on phrasing a research project in a sentence or two, Carol often turned to me for advice. Sometimes I offered a suggestion and other times I asked questions geared at helping the writer establish the task at hand in her own words. Thus, I did not face conflicts related to my own authority because my authority was recognized as different yet equally valuable compared with Carol’s and that of the other students in the class.

### A Call for Course-Embedded Programs at the Graduate Level

In this article, I have challenged key assumptions about CEPs at the undergraduate level. Specifically, I’ve argued that tutors with disciplinary expertise and directive approaches are not necessarily preferable at the graduate level, and that establishing authority can be less of a struggle. Instead, graduate-level CEPs can benefit from generalist, non-directive tutors who work with students in small groups and operate with a writerly authority that is recognized by both the instructor and the students.

In addition, I would like to argue that course-embedded tutoring at the graduate level begins to answer Steve Simpson’s call in “Building Sustainability: Dissertation Boot Camp as a Nexus of Graduate Writing Support” (2013) for WCs to create a more university-wide, outward focused kind of writing support for graduate students. In particular, MARK 8397 serves as a model for how a graduate class with a course-embedded tutor could function. Furthermore, the three observations from within MARK 8397 that I have presented provide future course-embedded tutors and administrators with a starting point from

which to develop further research about how to develop and train course-embedded tutors at the graduate level.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> I prefer the term translingual, as defined by Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur (2011) because it recognizes the potential for multiple languages to be key resources in producing meaning in writing and speaking. This term also recognizes that students work across languages, rather than solely within one language or another.

<sup>2</sup> Permission to include the course and college names was granted by the instructor.

<sup>3</sup> Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the instructor.

<sup>4</sup> Before I had the position, an assistant director turned graduate student in rhetoric and composition worked with MARK 8397.

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 Appendix: Guidelines for Peer Review

First, when you submit your writing each week to the Blackboard Group, please write some guidelines for your reader in the “Message” box. Consider answering any of the following questions: (1) What did you struggle with the most while writing this draft?; (2) What areas of the draft are you most concerned about? Why?; (3) Is there a place you want your reader to focus his/her attention? Are there any specific questions you have for your readers?

In terms of responding to your classmates, you’ll have two major options:

- (1) Track changes and comment bubbles in the word doc
- (2) An end note or letter like response

You should read your peers’ drafts carefully and respond thoughtfully. But also, as Carol might say, read your peers’ work as if you were a lawyer on the other side: challenge their models, hypotheses, methods and data.

Plan to spend approximately 45 minutes or so on each response (this will depend though, according to length and how fast you read). As you respond to your peers, be sure to include the following:

- (a) Address the writer’s questions and/or concerns
- (b) Give a general observation comment about what the main point of the section seems to be. Follow this template: “The most important idea/main point in this section seems to be...”
- (c) Give at least one praise comment (What does the writer do well? What section/part/sentence is the clearest?)
- (d) Consider section organization (Does the Abstract, Intro, Methods, Results, or Discussion section follow the guidelines from the Kohli PP? See guidelines below)
- (e) Consider clarity and style (Does the writer keep paragraphs to half a page or less? Are the sentences two lines or less? Mark places in the essay where the writer doesn’t follow these rules.) \*Also use the lessons from Style as we learn them to look for places that need to be revised
- (f) Consider grammar and/or sentence structure (Do you see any mistakes that are repeated 3 times or more? If so, note them.) But, don’t “fix” all the grammatical errors, please—it will consume you!

## Ajay Kohli Guidelines (a breakdown)

Advice About Clarity & Style (Always keep these in mind)

- Use short sentences (No longer than two lines!)
- Use short paragraphs (No longer than half a page!)
- State each paragraph’s point explicitly (Think of the first sentence of every paragraph as a mini-thesis statement or claim for the content in the paragraph. In Composition, we call these topic sentences.)
- Provide concrete examples (Don’t just use abstract terms but give real examples with real people in them)
- Check for consistency in definitions, arguments across sections, and terminology
- Delete words, sentences, and paragraphs that aren’t directly related to your key selling points and research

Organization of Major Sections (As you read each section, look for these things)

- (1) Title/Abstract:
  - (a) Use a crisp and inviting title that displays your key selling points
  - (b) Write an abstract that is an executive summary (i.e. briefly covers the entire article’s contents)
  - (c) Write an abstract focused on your key selling points (i.e. say what your research adds to the conversation!)
- (2) Introduction:
  - (a) State the problem/issue + who should care + why?
  - (b) State what the literature says about the issue (only use what’s relevant to your research)
  - (c) State how the literature is deficient
  - (d) Foreshadow the new insights you provide, AND who should do what differently based on them

(3) Theoretical framework/Hypotheses:

- (a) Only refer to theory/literature that relates directly to your research
- (b) Develop convincing arguments for hypotheses (argument narratives should include exact constructs stated in the hypotheses)—i.e. use the same language in the arguments that you do in the hypotheses themselves

(4) Methods:

- (a) State the purpose of each study clearly (for multi-study papers, use sub-headings and provide a purpose for each one)
- (b) Highlight things that show the care that went into the study
- (c) Be clear and specific about what you did
- (d) Explain why you did things certain ways and the specific benefits that were produced because you did things the way you did
- (e) Consider using sub-headings to break things down more clearly for your reader, especially in multi-study papers \*Added partially by me

(5) Results

- (a) Report results in tables to make text more readable
- (b) Be sure that the written text stands on its own, without the graphs/tables/charts \*Added partially by me
- (c) Be sure the graphs/tables/charts stand on their own, without needing the explanatory text \*Added partially by me

(6) Discussion:

- (a) This is where your voice and smartness should shine—now that you've provided the results (the same as everyone else could), what do they mean? How should they be interpreted? (It's your job as the writer to tell us) \*Added partially by me
- (b) Include a section called "Theoretical Contributions": how results extended prior research at a broad level, but don't repeat all findings) and note consistencies and inconsistencies with prior research
- (c) Include a section called "Actionable Implications": what should who do differently, based on the specific findings?
- (d) Include a section called "Limitations and Research Directions": where did your research fall short? How should people do it differently? What should come next?

## TRACTION AND TROUBLESOME LEARNING: A PRAXIS OF STUCK PLACES FOR COURSE-EMBEDDED TUTORING

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While many composition theorists have tackled the question of how to encourage transfer beyond their introductory writing classes (see Perkins and Saloman; Wardle; Beaufort; Fallon, Lahar, and Susman; Blaauw-Hara), we also need to consider how embedded peer tutors develop their practices as they enter into disciplinary tutoring and, over time, gain traction while tutoring in different disciplines. Whereas in a first-year writing course we might gear our pedagogy to students' development over a single semester but never fully know how they will transfer their learning into new disciplinary contexts, in an embedded tutoring program we mentor tutors who must transfer their learning and gain traction in new disciplines several different times during their semesters with us. Like Dara Rossman Regaignon, we define "traction" here as the process of engaging rigorously and in authentic ways, rather than passing smoothly over, the difficult analytic and rhetorical frameworks available in all disciplinary learning environments (121-22). We think that successful tutoring in an embedded tutoring program depends on such an engaged learning process. Not surprisingly, however, the experience of moving from class to class and gaining traction in the new one rarely happens smoothly for students *or* tutors. Instead, both frequently struggle as learning and practice become "troublesome," and they get "stuck." Building from the work of Jan H. F. Meyer and Ray Land on "troublesome knowledge" and Leslie Gourlay on "threshold practices," we investigate how tutor development and student learning in an embedded tutoring program can be understood and cultivated in relation to the idea of liminality that shapes their paradigm for learning. In this context, we offer a rationale for and an analysis of "a praxis of stuck places" for tutor development and student learning in an embedded tutoring program (Lather qtd. in Meyer and Land 379).

### **Metagenres, Ecocomposition, and Stuck Places: Introducing Tutors to the Challenges of Writing and Learning in Disciplines**

When we work in the practicum that new tutors take upon joining our program, we aim—among other things—to help tutors become conscious of two contradictory aspects of university writing at once: the overarching shared features of academic writing *and* the specific requirements of disciplinary writing. That is, in some important ways, our praxis with new tutors confirms Bonnie D. Devet's call to introduce writing center tutors to two theories—metagenres (Carter) and ecocomposition (Weisser and Dobrin)—that together enrich our understanding of university writing. Educating tutors about both metagenres and ecocomposition, Devet argues, can facilitate their movement across the disciplines and help tutors understand their own position as both rooted in particular fields and migrating between them. With metagenres, tutors learn to understand similarities between "ways of doing" in various disciplines. As Devet explains, "When directors use training [in metagenres] to point out overarching features inherent in writing for the academy, tutors and their . . . [students] both realize that disparate disciplines share ways of knowing; tutors can avoid panicking when students are writing a paper in a major that differs from their own field" (3).

By contrast, ecocomposition draws tutors' attention to how writing, as Sidney I. Dobrin puts it, "takes place" in specific environments (within a classroom, within a discipline, within a university) (11). In this paradigm, entering a discipline is conceived of as being akin to entering an ecosystem. A tutor, then, can help a "student [to] see that she is becoming an inhabitant of an ecosystem . . . ; she contributes to the system as the system molds her. When tutors give . . . [students] this important perspective, student writers feel less intimidated, more welcomed" (Devet 5). Both of these concepts can help writing center tutors eventually come to see themselves as intellectual "travelers," learning to navigate from discipline to discipline and working to immerse themselves deeply into a new discourse community as soon as they arrive in it (see Drew 60).

Devet's call for dual awareness may not seem as applicable for course-embedded tutoring programs

where immersion in the disciplinary ecology might seem sufficient. Whereas writing center tutors need to be prepared for any surprise that comes their way, course-embedded tutors immerse themselves in the ecology—the “textual forms,” “cultural norms,” “interpersonal interactions,” and “purposes” and “ideas” (Cooper 369-70)—of a particular class. However, most tutors are not placed in the same course from one semester to the next, and many do not even tutor in the same discipline each semester; indeed, though we might call them “embedded,” these tutors are uprooted at the end of most semesters and grafted into new environments. As a result, these tutors must often consider, just as their peer writers must, how to gain traction anew as they move to a new class.

In addition, while Devet wants to help tutors feel more at home when working in unfamiliar disciplines so they can help students feel “less intimidated” by the expectations of a course (5), we want to value more fully than she does the intellectual discomfort and upending experiences of liminality both tutors and students encounter in moving from one academic place to another. Meyer and Land characterize liminality as “the conceptual space entered and occupied by higher education students” who experience difficulty “during their programmes of learning” (375). In more colloquial terms, they discuss liminality in relation to the idea of being stuck. Students *and* tutors get stuck: we know this from years of teaching and mentoring them. When this happens, they undergo experiences of confusion, doubt, and struggle. Further, while they remain stuck, students and tutors often feel as if their status (or even being) is called into question. Drawing on Gourlay as well as Meyer and Land, we conceive of both disciplinary writing and embedded peer-tutoring as having necessarily fraught ontological dimensions. Both disciplinary writing and embedded peer-tutoring are thus “threshold practices” with tacit, troublesome dimensions to them (Gourlay 183). These troublesome dimensions, moreover, cannot be “overcome . . . [merely] by technicist redesign of curricula” (Meyer and Land 378). Instead, as Patti Lather suggests more generally, we argue that in the peer tutoring of disciplinary writers and the training of embedded peer tutors a “praxis of stuck places” must “tolerate [and grow from] discrepancies, repetitions, hesitations, and uncertainties” (Lather qtd. in Meyer and Land 379).

We cultivate a praxis of stuck places in our Writing Tutors Program largely through our unique mentoring system. In our program, which combines embedded tutoring with WID collaboration, groups of six to eight peer tutors work under the supervision of

a “mentor.” The mentor is a university faculty member appointed at the rank of Senior Lecturer who specializes in the teaching and tutoring of writing and writing in the disciplines. Together, the mentor and the tutors prepare for the discipline-specific requirements of their courses. While collaborating actively with disciplinary faculty on writing pedagogy, the mentor simultaneously helps tutors to hone their tutoring practices in light of the philosophy and writing conventions at work in the course and the difficulties the student writers and the tutors encounter. Over time, we have learned that when we mentor tutors to work with students in these courses, we need to search actively for the different stuck places in the learning and work of both tutor and student. Our aim is, then, to help our tutors work more effectively in and around these different stuck places.

### **Troublesome Learning in the Field: Tutors’ Reflections on the Stuck Places**

To help elucidate such a mentoring and tutoring praxis, we want to examine the work of one mentor, Tara Parmiter, and the end-of-semester reflections by two tutors, Paris and John, whom she mentored during the spring of 2014. In end-of-semester reflections, we find that our tutors almost always want to make sense of their fraught work at the intersections between their own learning and that of students. As we have suggested, Meyer and Land characterize this space where learning is troublesome as “liminal,” and in our experience, both tutors and students may feel extremely humbled by the confusion they experience in these liminal places where authentic tutoring and learning often occur (376). In their end-of-term reflections on their work, moreover, our tutors frequently describe how they struggle to help confused students gain traction and to gain traction themselves. We value these end-of-term reflections, whether they seem to suggest genuine threshold learning, appear to mimic such learning, or seem like honest reflections on the unproductive trouble tutors felt while being stuck. These reflections reorient and guide our own further work with tutors to cultivate a more effective mentoring praxis.

Prior to the spring of 2014, we almost always assigned mentors to one large or two smaller but related courses (for example, one humanities survey or two smaller biology labs) to make their development meetings with tutors more cohesively focused. In the spring of 2014, however, because of the needs of the department and the exigencies of the moment, we combined tutors from a biology lab course on

“Genetics and Genomics” and a twentieth- and twenty-first-century “African American Literature” course in one mentor group. To further complicate the dynamics, though all the tutors in this mentor group had several semesters of experience, two of the biology tutors were working for their first time in the sciences after tutoring primarily in humanities courses: one was an English and philosophy major who had most recently worked in a Shakespeare class, and one was a neuroscience major who would be splitting her time between “Genetics and Genomics” and “African American Literature.” At first, the pairing of biology and literature seemed like it would complicate the development meetings, requiring a shift in focus each week to whichever course needed the more practical attention at the moment. Instead, we kept finding metageneric overlaps between the courses, making the weekly meetings both grounded in the specifics of the disciplines and more expansive. Through working with two different ecologies of writing, the mentor group became a serendipitous meeting ground where we could draw insights from one course to another and gain traction in both in the process.

Almost immediately, we realized that though the assignments varied greatly in content, their similarities helped us prepare for both courses. In particular, each professor’s focus on crafting arguments, using researched sources, and paying attention to formal structures helped us find a shared focus for our meetings. These similarities were particularly noticeable to Paris, the tutor working in both classes, who found that “the ability to tell a good story was at the heart of both a successful biology lab report and an African American literature critique” (Paris). The language of “storytelling” came from the biology professor, not the literature professor, and it helped us see a key overlap in the class ecologies. Where students were getting stuck, however, differed from class to class. Paris noted that in her literature conferences the students were uncertain of their arguments, but were willing to join her in conversation and try to figure one out; they seemed to appreciate that “collaborative talk” (Harris 30) could lead them to insights and eventually an argument of their own, and they were open to exploring new notions in the liminal space of the conference. The biology students, however, appeared less willing to admit they were stuck. As Paris saw it, the biology students tended “to be more risk-averse, constantly searching for the right answer, not the answer that most accurately fits their story (their data, in this case)” (Paris). Rather than taking a risk to present what they actually found in their research, these students were reporting what they believed they *should have* found, convinced that such a

route would secure a better grade, even if what they reported was not what had happened in the lab. Paris made it her goal to confirm, adapt to, and care for her peer colleagues who were in the midst of troublesome learning, assuring them that they could get the “wrong” results in an experiment yet still write the “right” paper about those results, and helping them overcome their anxieties about “fitting in” so that they could reclaim their writing. She shifted the focus of her conferences, then, to “encourage science students to loosen the confines of their fear of failure [and] to open up the conversation for more truthful and telling writing” (Paris). It was the combined insight that came from working with the students in each class, however, that helped her make this leap.

In Meyer and Land’s terms, the problem these students experienced is a version of mimicry. Often when students encounter conceptual difficulty, they desire to “fake it” rather than grapple with not-knowing. In the example Meyer and Land cite from Glynis Cousin, students in cultural studies courses sometimes fake an understanding of otherness, especially male students, in order to “bypass an interrogation of their own masculinity,” and instead “churn out dutiful . . . assignments” that they hope will “attract good marks” (qtd. in Meyer and Land 383). In “Genetics and Genomics,” Paris noticed a different version of mimicry, as students tried to “fit in” to the experiment’s norms and thus attempted to elide having to grapple with their own results. The outcome was writing that mimicked established reasoning about established results and at the same time avoided actual reasoning about actual results.

When one attends to the metageneric “discourse similarities as well as differences” (Severino and Tracschel) between learning challenges in different writing ecologies, one begins to learn, as Paris’s reflection attests, to cultivate “a third ear that listens not for what a student knows (discrete packages of knowledge) but for the terms that shape a student’s knowledge, her not knowing, her forgetting, her circles of stuck places and resistances” (Ellsworth qtd. in Meyer and Land 378). Paris’s focus on these students’ resistances and the terms of their understanding and misunderstanding allowed her see how to help students begin to let go of their desire to have correct results. They would have to learn to let go of their drive to fit in if they were to learn how to reason more truthfully about the actual knowledge that their own experiments did and did not produce. Such work is perhaps best accomplished among collaborating peers, because it very much does have a troublesome ontological dimension for these budding scientists, if they are actually to come to understand in a

transformational way how a geneticist learns, knows, and does his or her work (Meyer and Land, Carter).

In a similar fashion, we find that embedded tutors themselves can also fall prey to mimicry, knowing what they are supposed to do but being blocked from actually doing it. While placing a tutor into a disciplinary course where the tutor has no content knowledge may put the tutor at a disadvantage at the beginning of his or her development, doing so later in a tutor's work can help the tutor to develop more dynamic understandings of his or her practice. Meyers and Land theorize the problem of naïve versions of threshold concepts that act as proxies for the real thing while discussing an economics course where the concept of "opportunity cost" was used to find "out whether students had an inclination to 'think like an economist'" (381). They reason that teachers should avoid introducing a naïve version of "a threshold concept (. . . a deliberately simplified and limited delineation)" to students, because the naïve version can "act to a certain extent as a proxy" (381). We find that an analogous process also happens among tutors, who, despite our careful work with them, sometimes initially learn to talk the talk (about active listening, working from the writer's point of interest, and working in relation to a learner's proximal zone of development) but may not be able to walk the walk in their actual practice.

A second tutor whose reflections suggested how he got unstuck, John, was an English and philosophy major who had worked primarily in humanities courses but had generously signed on to work in "Genetics and Genomics," one of the biology courses we regularly partner with that many tutors who major in the humanities try to avoid. John's generosity and willingness to take a risk paid off remarkably, as what he noticed most in reflecting on his experience was that the troublesome learning of this new environment liberated him from some habits he had formed while tutoring in his previous classes. In his reflections, John describes his transformed understanding of his practice; as he put it, the new ecosystem of the science classroom "forced me out of the comfortable idea space I had lingered in during my previous two semesters" (John). No longer able to lead a "comfortable" discussion of the tropes, themes, and ideas in Shakespeare's plays, John realized he had to listen more attentively to the students seated beside him in conference. "I found myself learning from the student, in a way I hadn't before," he reflected at the end of the semester. "Most of them had a more detailed knowledge of material I was completely unfamiliar with. Having them explain it—at times with impressive clarity—made me realize how engaging the

process can be, even when my knowledge of the course material was limited at best" (John). Whether he considered it as such at the time, in looking back John could see he had been stuck in the comfortable space of his own knowledge as a tutor in the Shakespeare class. Being placed in a completely new ecology of writing but approaching it with the experience of a former humanities tutor, John found that "not only can the learning process be discursive, but the fundamentals we learn are surprisingly versatile."

### Gaining Traction

By combining Devet's call to incorporate metagenres and ecomposition theories with Meyer and Land's emphasis on the value of troublesome knowledge, we can now look back and consider why this mentor group helped Paris and John reflect so valuably on their work as tutors and on the struggles that students faced in writing in their respective disciplines. Course-embedded tutors benefit from their embeddedness; unlike writing center tutors, they are a part of the writing community of the class, included in discussions of material and methods with professors, and privy to the larger expectations and goals of the particular class environments. But just as importantly, they bring with them insights from their previous (and, for Paris, her other) embedded courses and their own experience as students within particular majors. One thing revealed by troubling disciplinary ecologies via mixing them is tacit knowledge: fresh conversations can be had, fresh understandings can be generated, and new metagenres can be created from the hybridized discourse of such a mentor group. In ecological terms, we could call our spring 2014 mentor group an ecotone, a transitional zone where two ecological communities meet and mingle. The question now becomes how to create more of these fertile grounds where the mentor and tutors can search within and across disciplinary ecologies for the "stuck places," both in their own practice and in student learning, in order to engage more rigorously and caringly with one another.

In addition, Devet, Meyer and Land, and the spring 2014 experiences of this mentor group also help us see more clearly that any travel or transition from one stage of learning to the next ought to require some level of genuine intellectual discomfort. What we might have originally described as transfer, then, we now think of as transport and traction: the ability not simply to carry already-acquired information into a difficult, new environment but also to work through the liminal places in tutor and student learning and

help them gain, particularly where the footing is uneven and rough, the necessary traction to propel themselves forward. When tutors and students gain such traction, as Paris and John both did, they are able to “extend [and clarify] their use of language in relation to [new thresholds in the learning],” often leading to “a shift in the learner’s subjectivity” and “a repositioning of the self” (Meyer and Land 374). Yet such understandings usually emerge only after troublesome transitional periods where variations occur among learners, and learning itself is experienced as a challenge. Gaining traction involves passing through liminality: identifying, working through, and eventually moving beyond the stuck places—the discrepancies, uncertainties, resistances, and proxies—that are inevitable and also valuable for the learner. Further, as our recent experience suggests, embedded peer tutor programs should seek to variegate their pedagogical ecologies more often by intentionally mixing these “complex, socially-situated” disciplinary writing and tutoring environments (Gourlay 182). Thus, we advocate for more experimentation with cross-pollination and a clearer focus on stuck places as embedded peer tutoring programs engage tutors and students rigorously and caringly in the midst of troublesome learning.<sup>1</sup>

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> We wish to thank Paris and John for their thoughtful work and for giving us permission to cite from their end-of-semester reflections on their tutoring. We also wish to thank Benjamin Stewart, Director of Faculty Development in the Expository Writing Program at New York University, for helping us to home in on the idea of liminality that undergirds Meyer and Land’s theorization of threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge.

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# RE-ENVISIONING THE BROWN UNIVERSITY MODEL: EMBEDDING A DISCIPLINARY WRITING CONSULTANT IN AN INTRODUCTORY U.S. HISTORY COURSE

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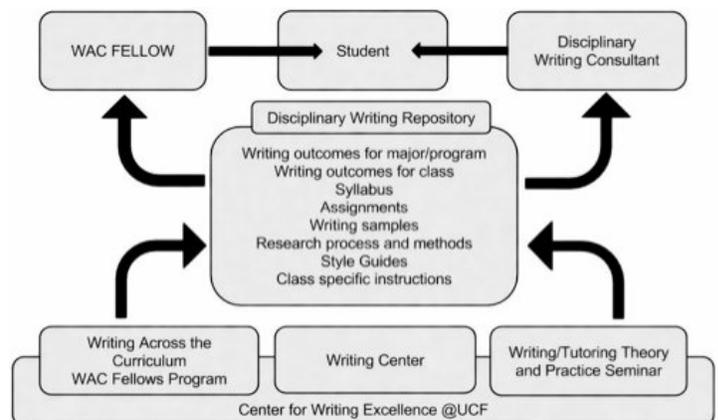
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College writers often wish for a sympathetic reader who can offer feedback on a draft or assist during the invention or revision process. Established in 1982, the Brown University's Writing Fellows Program was the first to formally pair small cohorts of students with a writing tutor to receive individual assistance for the duration of a course. According to the university website, today the Writing Fellows Program is a student-driven initiative in its 32nd year, in which students "work in a spirit of collegiality, helping to extend intellectual discourse beyond the classroom." Inspired by the success of Writing Fellows Programs that have emerged across the country, the Disciplinary Writing Consultant (DWC) Program at the University of Central Florida (UCF) was designed to offer individual support to student writers without mandating participation. Diverging from the Brown model, only one DWC was embedded in a course of approximately 50 students and offered *voluntary* writing assistance both in class and in writing center consultations. The goal was to bring the writing center into the classroom to encourage ongoing collaborations between students, instructor and the DWC. Building and maintaining such complex partnerships in higher education is a challenge. Condon and Rutz insist that "successful WAC requires a complex partnership among faculty, administrators, writing centers, [and] faculty development programs—an infrastructure that may well support general education or first year seminar goals" (359). This assertion outlines one of the driving questions at this major research university: How can a network of partnerships between faculty, administrators, and writing consultants benefit students and support their learning? Specifically, how can this work be done effectively at the second largest public university in the country?

In 2012, the newly formed Center for Writing Excellence became home to the existing University Writing Center (UWC) and the newly formed Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program. Both programs moved into a renovated space in a centrally-located academic building. At UCF, faculty members who complete semester-long WAC training in writing instruction, assessment, and assignment design successfully earn the designation of a WAC Fellow. Writing tutors who have completed a three credit-hour course in theory and practice in tutoring writing through the writing center and have tutored at the UWC for at least one semester can become DWCs.

Figure 1: To support student learning, faculty complete a one-semester WAC fellowship and writing tutors complete a three credit-hour course and internship in the writing center before becoming a Disciplinary Writing Consultant in the University Writing Center.



Both WAC Fellows and DWCs contribute materials, including writing outcomes, syllabi, assignments and sample texts for the major/program and writing

intensive course(s) to a web-based Disciplinary Writing Repository. Currently, these files are stored on the WAC and UWC websites, allowing faculty and students to access the repository at any time. Our overall mission is to support student learning while fostering a culture of open communication among faculty and writing consultants.

Once WAC Fellows have taught at least a semester using the updated assignments and assessment techniques, they can request a DWC. These writing consultants bring their training and experience as generalist tutors in the University Writing Center to their work with the DWC program. In spring 2014, our third semester of forging relationships across campus with Chemistry, Nursing, Political Science, and History, a DWC was embedded in an introductory U.S. history course (AMH 1010). In this article, we will focus solely on the “history course model.” Drawing on results from surveys, the authors will describe, analyze, and evaluate the program’s design, implementation, and effectiveness.

### **The History Course Model**

From studying WAC programs and writing center histories, we know that one size does not fit all. Considering our local context, the WAC program developed an approach to training three to five member faculty cohorts from the same department willing to learn about writing pedagogy. The program is limited to three to four cohorts per semester. Among the first to sign up was Dr. Murphree, who continues to participate in ongoing research efforts into teaching and learning in order to offer his students the most effective experience of learning “how to write as a historian” in his classes. In “Writing wasn’t really stressed, accurate historical analysis was stressed: Student Perceptions of In-Class Writing in the Inverted, General Education, University Survey Course,” Murphree describes how the focus on writing in a General Education Program (GEP)<sup>1</sup> lecture class has challenged and changed student perceptions of writing.

Embedding a writing consultant in a history course was a new experience for all. Dr. Murphree decided to be cautious in how he integrated the DWC into the course design and daily class activities. Consequently, he changed very little in terms of format or assignments from his previous flipped courses. The 49 students would study assigned readings and be prepared to discuss historical events, issues, or problems in class on Monday and Wednesday. Fridays were reserved for students to learn to write “as historians.” The DWC was

accessible to students in three ways: she attended the course each Friday so that students could ask questions as they worked on their in-class writing assignments; she monitored a “discussion board” on the course web platform daily, inviting students to post questions about writing for the class; and she was available to consult with students at a drop-in office hour each week on Wednesdays after class, which allowed students to revise the previous week’s essay based on instructor feedback and/or to plan the essay for the following Friday. Furthermore, students had the opportunity to make an appointment with the DWC in the writing center during her regular hours. With eight hours per week on the schedule, availability before, during, and after class, and a dedicated office hour, the expectation was that the number of self-selected students who sought the DWC’s assistance would not surpass her availability. We planned for flexible meeting times, including shorter consultations, and small group meetings. In the event that not all appointment slots were filled with history writers, the DWC was available for drop-in writers in the UWC. The history instructor envisioned the DWC as a supplement to student learning in the course; the DWC would duplicate his in-class efforts to assist students in their writing while being available outside of class to help students better understand their writing problems and improve their efforts.

### **Student Buy-In**

Achieving student buy-in proved more difficult than we anticipated. Despite continued reminders about the role of the DWC in the course, only two students scheduled a consultation before midterms. One student came in for a hurried appointment the day that the first out-of-class writing assignment was due, and the other wanted to review a graded in-class essay. No student dropped by during office hours. Other avenues for connecting with students proved no more fruitful. The first in-class writing assignment yielded several questions about citations and thesis statements, and students approached both Dr. Murphree and the DWC during the class session. Later, however, the number of student questions decreased significantly, and when a student did have a question, they would ask the course instructor directly. In addition to her continued presence in the classroom, the DWC also attempted to assist students by posting inside a secure class management system (CMS) site in a discussion board section titled “Questions for the Embedded Disciplinary Writing Consultant.” This site was widely utilized by the class for other course activities. Despite encouragement,

students did not ask questions. To engage students, the DWC posted entries on common writing issues identified in student essays. By the second month of the semester, the DWC was frustrated. Her first year of graduate school was her fifth working in writing centers (in varying capacities at much smaller schools), and she had never experienced so little student engagement. As a generalist tutor at UCF and elsewhere, she typically encountered the opposite problem: walk-in writers were asked to return at a later hour because the tutoring schedule was so full.

### Changing Directions

During the midterm assessment, the low utilization of the DWC prompted the coordinator, instructor, and the DWC to create incentives for learning that would focus on revision. Extra credit would be offered for students who chose to revise graded in-class writing assignments and resubmit the essay with a rationale for revision attached. After spring break, the DWC announced in a new post to the discussion board that revising a graded essay would not only help students to continue working with past concepts, it would also “give [students] strategies to employ as [they] write future in-class essays for AMH 2010.” As a bonus, students were allowed to revise past essays for extra credit (up to 10 points, equaling a letter grade). The revision policy increased traffic during the DWC’s office hours as well as scheduled appointment hours. Several students repeatedly came to revise their work. Overall, within five weeks the DWC had fifteen appointments with nine different students. They were mostly struggling with the idea of evidence-based writing or with formulating a thesis aligned with the history content of the week.

The extra credit incentive seemed to be the deciding factor for the students who responded to the revision challenge. For the most part, they were motivated, not struggling writers. Most had received Bs or high Cs on the original drafts of their essays. Several students disclosed to the DWC that they were committed to getting the full value of extra points available for their revision because they wanted to earn an A in the class. As some students came in several times during the second half of the semester, the DWC saw improvements in their writing and argumentation. Specifically, she saw underclassmen utilize the mini-lessons they had gone over in her consultations, watching as they filled out inverted pyramids to structure background-rich introductions; began to see how topic sentences form the backbone of an organized essay; and realized that they were, in

fact, able to engage with their professor’s assessment of a historical period.

### Methodology

At the end of the spring 2014 semester we gauged student perceptions of writing assignments and course content through an IRB-approved survey. This survey added nine questions specifically focused on the role of the DWC in the course to 32 existing questions (six of which required a written answer; the remainder consisted of multiple-choice responses) from previous semesters (2013) in which Dr. Murphree researched student perceptions about instructional techniques, required assignments, and student engagement. Specific questions addressed the effectiveness of the course in terms of student learning of history content and student improvement in writing (informal and formal). All students had the option of completing the survey for extra credit points, and the survey was administered by a colleague with no direct connection to the courses taught.

Figure 2: The three courses and number of survey respondents.

2 sections of flipped mode without embedded DWC (2013) AMH 2020	n=85
1 section of flipped mode with embedded DWC (2014) AMH 2010	n=42

Not all students responded to every answer (for unknown reasons), making the number of question responses inconsistent.

### Writing Assignments and Student Perceptions

In terms of final student grades, few differences are evident between the Flipped, GEP courses taught with a DWC and without one.

Figure 3: Average overall grade for number of enrolled students.

	AMH 2020 without DWC (AMH 2020)	AMH 2010 with DWC (AMH 2010)
Enrolled students	n=107	n=49
AVG student score	79.7	81.1

Since the numerical difference between scores for the two groups was only 1.4 points, the grades themselves reflect little difference in student performance. Moreover, according to the GPA guidelines established for these courses, the 2013 and 2014 course averages both equated to a grade of “B.” In

sum, the various differences in both groups render these numbers useful primarily in an anecdotal sense, without sufficiently demonstrating that an embedded DWC caused a student grade increase. Results from pre- and post-tests administered in all courses confirm this conclusion.

Comparing student responses to certain questions administered in 2013-2014 surveys provides information not only on teaching strategies across semesters and courses but also on how students view the role of writing. Several questions pertained specifically to student perceptions of assigned writing in the course.

Figure 4: Student perceptions of assigned writing.

	AMH 2020 without DWC 2013	AMH 2010 with DWC Spring 2014
"Do you feel that the in class essay assignments improved your <u>understanding of course content</u> ?"	81 (96.4%) Yes 3 (3.6%) No	40 (95%) Yes 2 (5%) No
"Do you feel that the out of class essay assignments improved your <u>writing skills</u> ?"	74 (88.1%) Yes 10 (11.9%) No	31 (74%) Yes 11 (26%) No

These responses indicate that students in all sections believed that in class and out of class writing assignments improved both understanding of course content and student writing skills, though more students in the 2013 courses did so than in the 2014 course.

Surveys for both years also included questions that allowed students to respond in their own words about the value of the writing done in the course.<sup>2</sup> In response to the question "Do you believe the writing exercises you completed in this course will benefit you in other UCF courses? Why or why not?" one student from a 2013 section (no DWC) enthusiastically wrote: "Absolutely! I have written so much now that I feel like I will be able to structure essays for other classes better and write efficiently and effectively." Another from the same group stated "Yes," reasoning, "While not all classes require a brief overview of content like history does, some forms of writing such as summaries & analysis papers have overlapping qualities w/ history-based writing." Similarly, one student taking the same course opined, "Yes because the in class essays were timed so it required you to be organized before you start writing." Students in the 2014 section (with DWC), expressed comparable opinions, at times with matching enthusiasm. "Yes it pushed me to read and study more so it sticks in my mind," wrote one student. Another noted "yes, the course helped me become a better writer and would be useful in other classes." However, some students had mixed views on their writing experiences. One student in a 2013

section (no DWC) wrote: "The in-class essays were difficult for me to finish but ultimately increased my skills as a writer." A student in the 2014 section (with a DWC) seems to agree that the course structure was "Very effective, writing improved due to the amount of essays." Another student taking the 2013 course remarked: "Although tedious, it challenged me as a writer and encouraged me to use the UWC [University Writing Center]." Similarly, a student in the 2014 course offered, "Although writing was extensive, it definitely helped in improving my writing skills ...." Students generally placed great value on the writing assignments in the course.

A complex, rhetorically framed writing assignment challenged students and engaged them, but only when they recognized the value of the assignment beyond the classroom. One student in a 2013 section (no DWC) simply wrote "I don't feel like my writing has improved." Another from this cohort responded, "No, I am not a history major." A third 2013 student offered, "Maybe. I'm a business major, so writing in this format or this content isn't particularly relevant in my opinion." Some students from the 2014 cohort (with embedded DWC) echoed these sentiments. In response to the same question, one stated, "No, Because not much of my major is writing based." Another offered, "No because writing about history cannot be applied to my other courses." A respondent from a 2013 section commented, "Although my writing has improved it was never a strong point of mine. Being an engineering major my future at UCF is one filled with math and physics not history and writing (unless of course it's a lab report)." Based on these comments, one's chosen major seems to have an impact on perceptions of writing exercises' utility and student engagement in this history course. These responses also have implications on how instructors and DWC should talk about the value of writing transfer with their students, in order to ensure that they can apply writing strategies learned in one educational context to other disciplines and professional contexts.

Nine questions in the survey administered to students in the 2014 course specifically addressed the DWC, five of which were multiple-choice questions:

Figure 5: Student perceptions of the DWC.

Survey Questions	Yes	No
"Do you feel the Embedded Writing tutor improved your writing skills?"	19 (45%)	23 (55%)
"Do you feel that the Embedded Writing tutor improved your performance on in class essay assignments?"	19 (45%)	22 (54%)
"Do you feel that the Embedded Writing tutor improved your understanding of course content?"	13 (31%)	29 (69%)
"Do you feel that the Embedded Writing tutor improved your performance on out of class Discussion postings?"	13 (31%)	29 (69%)
"Do you feel that the Embedded Writing tutor improved your performance on out of class essay assignments?"	14 (46%)	27 (66%)

Based on these numbers, about 2/3 of students did not regard the DWC as beneficial to their writing skills. Moreover, most students contended that the DWC did not advance their learning in the course in other areas as well. However, the DWC did benefit more than 1/3 of students in improving their writing or learning historical content. Considering that the incentive was not implemented until after the midterm, the numbers appear encouraging.

Other aspects of the survey responses indicate that student viewpoints of the DWC are a bit more complicated. Four students used the margins of the survey paper itself to comment that they had never used the DWC. Other student comments on the survey seemed to indicate that regardless of their opinions on the DWC's role in the course, many students never approached the DWC for assistance. In response to the question "Specifically, how did the Embedded Writing tutor assist you in this course?" sixteen of the forty-two respondents admitted to never meeting or asking the DWC for help. Among the responses in this regard are, "I did not at any point speak or communicate with the Embedded Writing Tutor"; "I did not seek assistance, but we did receive a handout with writing tips for the future"; "not at all, never asked for help"; and "I never asked for help & therefore never received it." Two of the multiple-choice survey question responses reflect the lack of student engagement with the DWC.

The following numbers suggest that either students did visit the writing center but did not seek out the embedded writing tutor or their perceptions are exaggerated. When asked, "How many times did you consult the Embedded Writing tutor during in-class writing sessions?" 1 (2%) responded "More than 5 times," 6 (14%) responded "2-5 times," 8 (19%) responded "1 time," and 27 (64%) responded "0 times." Self-reported student use of the DWC outside of class reflects comparable numbers/percentages. In response to the question "How many times did you

make/keep an appointment with the Embedded Writing tutor outside of class?" 2 (5%) answered "More than 5 times," 5 (12%) answered "2-5 times," 11 (26%) answered "1 time," and 24 (57%) answered "0 times." These data do not match records in TutorTrac,<sup>3</sup> where our logs show that actual numbers are lower.

Students' final comments reflected the seemingly contradictory responses in the survey assessing the DWC's benefit to students. While many students did not utilize the DWC for writing assistance, some valued the presence and skills of the DWC in the course, at least according to their written responses. One student reported that the DWC "helped me improve my introduction paragraphs for in-class essay revisions." Another appreciated the DWC for "Helping me revise my essays mainly with the organization aspect of them, and overall helping me become a better writer." Those students who did approach the DWC for help seemed to have improved their writing in multiple ways. "The tutor helped me develop a thesis for history papers and to build a stronger argument," one student explained, adding: "Also, she helped me with appropriate citations." Speaking for the class as a whole, one student claimed, "She helped guide students in the right direction. When it came to in class writings she helped identify the structure of how the paper should be as well as helped the student how to get more out of the reading to help the in class essay." Another student expressed their appreciation for the assistance obtained from the DWC, concluding, "The writing tutor helped me so much in revising my in class essays. She showed me how to structure my introductions, topic sentences and information, and I ultimately became a better writer."

Further evidence that the DWC conformed to student expectations of assistance came in the form of responses to the question "What could the Embedded Writing tutor do differently in this course to improve your writing skills?" Of the 42 student respondents, only 19 provided a response other than "nothing" (the majority of this group left no response at all). Three others responded "I don't know, I found her very helpful," "She did a lot already," and "She was great. No complaints." Some students did offer suggestions, however. Seven students responded in a variety of ways that they wanted the DWC to devote more time to students in the course: "The embedded writing tutor could be more accessible [sic]." Expanding on this theme, seven other students wanted the DWC to have a greater role in the course as a whole ("Be more involved with the actual content"), provide more teaching materials and classroom presentations and

“Directly grade/comment on written essays.” Two other students made more specific comments along these lines. One suggested making it “mandatory to see” the DWC. Another agreed, advocating making it “required to see her for at least one essay. I’m sure it is extremely helpful.” So despite the general lack of student engagement with the DWC, some students requested a heightened role for the position in the course in the future. Although the program was intentionally constructed without requiring visits from all students, these responses indicate that for some students, making consultations mandatory constitutes the necessary motivation for using the services of the DWC.

### Moving Forward

Undergraduates in all sections indicated support of the flipped structure and related assignments, and in general preferred this technique to the lecture/exam model traditionally used in GEP History courses in U.S. institutions of higher education. Student grades in the courses indicate that their favorable perceptions are matched by increased knowledge of content as well. Use of the DWC in the 2014 course, on the other hand, prompted divergent student perceptions. Survey responses indicate that even students who did not use the DWC valued the assistance, or potential assistance. One student claimed that they did not seek help from the DWC but admitted that “I could have approached her and made appointments to critique my writing.” Another student remarked, “I never used it but it was nice reassurance if I ever needed the help.” A third student offered, “If I would have looked for the help it would have helped me better organize my paper but I didn’t really meet much with her.” A fourth student seemed to regret not seeking assistance from the DWC, writing “I didn’t ask help from the tutor, but I would have liked to.” Another student contended that she/he did not work with the DWC due to time constraints: “I loved how she was there to help and there should be someone available everytime. However, I did not use her to my advantage because I have a busy schedule, but I know I should have!” At least one other student acknowledged that the DWC may have helped improve her/his writing skills, noting “I didn’t seek out her help this semester but it seems that everyone who did improved in their work!” While not all students utilized the DWC, those who did seemed to have benefitted from the experience. A few lamented not using the expertise of the DWC, and some believed the DWC should have a greater role in course instruction and assessment. Overall, it appears that students appreciated the potential advantages of

having a DWC in the course but rarely took advantage of the resource.

In terms of embedding a disciplinary writing consultant in a GEP class, requiring every student to meet with a writing tutor for a prescribed number of consultations is unfeasible, given the consultant-student ratio of about 1:50. However, more research is needed regarding how best to engage students throughout the semester. Some students also suggested embedding a writing consultant only in upper division classes. Nevertheless, the student perceptions included above illustrate that while they value the expertise and assistance a DWC can provide, they do not appear to be sufficiently motivated to use this resource on a voluntary basis. Motivation can be encouraged by:

- course design that stresses revision and reflection
- instructor feedback that includes a specific referral in final comment on writing
- extra credit incentives that reward students for reflective revision (e.g. letter to instructor about revision plans or revision log attached to revised draft in collaboration with writing tutor)

In short, the DWC offers options for improving student course performance, but the tools’ effectiveness depends on close collaboration and student motivation. The issue of student engagement is one that none of the authors could solve alone. Our limited success emerged from being able to assess the needs of this particular class of students once the semester was already underway, and to adapt the program to meet those needs.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Students at many American universities and colleges have to complete a required set of coursework during their first two years of college, which is referred to as the specific university or state’s General Education Program (GEP).

<sup>2</sup> Student-written responses from the survey have not been edited, so as to preserve the original style and voice of the authors.

<sup>3</sup> TutorTrac is the online management software platform this writing center uses for making appointments, logging students tutoring services, and communicating with tutees by sending reminders, summary session notes of consultations, and information about additional resources useful for revision plans developed during the consultation.

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## DISRUPTING AUTHORITY: WRITING MENTORS AND CODE-MESHING PEDAGOGY

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At our small, private, historically black university (HBCU) in Raleigh, North Carolina, we were adding a few new touches to the Writing Center in preparation for the semester—cleaning some hard-to-reach places, updating computers, and posting new signs on the walls. After hanging one sign in particular, we paused and took a few steps back, arms crossed, heads tilted—considering. Above the shelves containing our handouts on common grammatical errors, words in black letters now read: *Most Common Errors in "Standard English."*

Believe it or not, we had been talking over those quotation marks for several hours; we considered variations: *standardized Englishes* ("But will that just confuse students?"), *edited American English* ("How many of our faculty even know this term?"), or whether we should use the words "grammar" or "dialect." Eventually, we decided quotation marks would work. On one hand, they expressed our agreement with Laura Greenfield in *Writing Centers and the New Racism* that Standard English does not truly exist, that "Standard English' is a qualifier ascribed to many ways of speaking (and by extension, though differently, writing) by privileged white people or, perhaps more accurately, any variety of English that has not been associated historically with resistance by communities of color" (43, emphasis in original). On the other hand, students would still be able to understand the sign well enough to locate the handouts.

The problem may seem small, but it's not. The solution may seem laughable, and in some ways, it is; that's why we're writing this article. As we stood back from that sign, we looked at one another with the frustrated, self-critical expressions we've worn with some frequency in the past year—grappling with the (il)logics of racism, with varieties of English in the classroom, and what writing centers can offer students of color in higher education.

It was obvious in that moment: that sign, and the point we were so carefully making with it, was clear and meaningful to no one but us. What it *said* was obscure, what it *did*—what it actually offered students navigating the university system that Grimm writes

"was not designed for them" (104)—was negligible, too small even to be counted.

We could do better.

As sites of both scholarship and practice, writing centers are well-positioned to identify problems and to propose (and then enact and experiment with) solutions. The push and pull of this problem-solution dynamic frames our work and provides context for moments of frustration and insight like the one described above.

The "better" that we "could do," the solution that this article proposes (which we'll get to, and which we believe is considerably better than a pair of quotation marks on a sign), is a course-embedded writing mentors program that responds to the particular manifestations of language discrimination at a small, private HBCU. For those instructors who choose to participate in it, the program is intended to facilitate an instructor's implementation of code-meshing pedagogy. But first, the problem.

### Problem

In 2005, Victor Villanueva challenged the Writing Center community to confront the "new racism"—that is, the "racism without racists" (Bonilla-Silva 4), which "embeds racism within a set of other categories—language, religion, culture, civilizations pluralized and writ large" (Villanueva 16). In the intervening years, many scholars have taken up Villanueva's call and discussions of race in the writing center and the writing classroom have necessarily focused on the role that language plays in the new racism, the way that language is racialized. For, as Villanueva put it, "behind [the language] there is a material reality—the reality of racism, still present, and not all that new after all" (19).

In *The Everyday Writing Center*, Geller, Eodice, Condon, Carroll and Boquet argued that writing centers cannot, because of their positioning within institutions and broader systems of power, "completely escape resembling and reproducing much of what students of color experience outside [writing center] spaces" (92). After all, writing centers situate

themselves as authorities on good writing, and within the academy, good writing is almost always Standard English writing, and Standard English is almost always perceived as white. And as Greenfield writes, “any practices that advocate the teaching of any privileged language will be—by definition—contributing to a system of inequity” (58).

How, then, do writing centers “escape”—even if imperfectly or incompletely—from cooperation in racially-biased academic practice on an institutional level? Naming the problem is not enough. And while current scholarship has admittedly named the problem well, the scholarship has thus far neglected to offer writing centers many practical, meaningful steps to go about challenging the larger community of academic practices that automatically (and often unwittingly) reinforce systems of racial privilege.

In a conversation with widespread implications for students of color, the voices of writing centers at HBCUs have been largely absent, at least in scholarly publication. The need for new pedagogy and practice at these institutions is pressing; traditional Standard English hegemony cannot end soon enough for those students for whom a single lecture in the vein of “all language varieties are equal”—however bolstering, however interesting—offers no new and useful ways to navigate the writing world. But how do we marry the practices of the writing center to the work of anti-racism without so upsetting the expectations of stakeholders (who have their own, often deeply entrenched ideas about language) that we jeopardize the funding of our space, its reputation or scope, or our job safety?

When it comes to resisting the predominance of “Standard English” in the academy, that old cliché bears heavy truth: *easier said than done*. Yet at some point our attention must turn from the ideological realm of *convincing* toward the messy, everyday realities of *accomplishing*.

We are, after all, a community of *praxis*, of embodied theories and realized ideas.

## Solution

Code-meshing is a pedagogical approach that treats the blending of Standard and undervalued Englishes as a single integrated language system. Code-meshing has been theorized by Vershawn Ashanti Young “(1) as a framework for thinking about the relationship between African American literacy and Standard English, and (2) as an approach to teaching writing to African American students” (*Other People's English* 1).

As a method, code-meshing gives writing instructors a more meaningful way to resist reproducing oppression via language in the classroom than a few quotation marks on a sign. However, between affirming code-meshing on an ideological level and implementing it on a practical one—in a writing course for first- and second-year students, not specifically themed to address language diversity—there lies a significant gap.<sup>1</sup>

It is over this which we are attempting to build a bridge in the form of course-embedded writing mentors, marrying the ideological with the practical to facilitate code-meshing pedagogy, and fusing the writing center’s anti-racism efforts with classes outside its walls to challenge language discrimination on a more institutional level.

As pedagogy, code-meshing is relatively new, relatively unknown, rhetorically complex, threatening to the status quo, and something else besides: disruptive of the traditional authority paradigm of a classroom.<sup>2</sup> In a traditional paradigm, an instructor-student binary, the instructor and the student have relatively distinct assigned roles; the instructor is the language expert and the student is the language novice. In a code-meshing classroom, however, instructors are no longer necessarily the language experts—or at the very least, they are no longer the only ones in the room with language expertise. Students may bring to their writing undervalued Englishes in which they are quite fluent (possibly even expert) and of which the instructor may or may not be an expert (or even competent) user and/or reader.

This disruption of authority—in concert with the other unique elements of code-meshing pedagogy—opens a space for alternative paradigms to enter. Jim Henry and Holly H. Bruland have described the ways in which mentors in the composition classroom re-order the traditional classroom binary, substituting a new instructor-mentor-student “trinary” (309); in “Reconstructing Authority: Negotiating Power in Democratic Learning Sites,” Candace Spigelman reflected on the ways in which classroom-based writing tutors serve to reconstruct authority in the classroom (185). Our writing mentor program has emerged in dialogue with both of these concepts.

Between instructors’ position as writing evaluators and students’ position as writing evaluated is the liminal space which mentors occupy. That liminal position in the classroom allows mentors to build trust with students in a way that instructors, because of their inescapable roles as evaluators, cannot. “Because,” as Kim Brian Lovejoy writes, “code-meshing is a practice that students have not been

encouraged to attempt, teachers need to create an environment that will invite students to trust their language” (145). It is our belief that the addition of course-embedded mentors to the writing classroom will help create the environment of trust—and in particular, trust in students’ languages—which is necessary to code-meshing.

For a number of reasons, instructors alone may struggle to create such an environment. First, because (as has been mentioned) instructors are positioned inescapably as gatekeepers. Even if an instructor applies an intentional strategy for honoring language variation—modifying rubrics, adding disclaimers to syllabi, giving affirming lectures—she is always swimming within the current of student expectation. Instructors contend not only with students’ lived relationship with their languages, but with all the years students spend inhabiting their roles as students.

That students have absorbed a certain set of narratives regarding academic writing is, we think, fairly indisputable. In “Code-meshing meets teaching the conflicts,” Gerald Graff observes that “it seems clear that much of the bad writing we receive from students stems from the mistaken picture of ‘proper,’ academically correct, writing that students form out of their experience of schooling” (15). But students’ expectations in a classroom encompass not just their ideas about student writing, but also those about instructors’ roles. Introducing a new and typically unheard-of approach like code-meshing can raise suspicions about motives, leading to questions like those Lovejoy encountered: “Is he settling for mediocrity and dumbing-down education?; ‘Is he forsaking responsibility to prepare students for the world of work?’ or worse, ‘Is the White guy engaging in a conspiracy to keep minorities in the underclass?’” (128).

And so code-meshing pedagogy asks far more of its students than the act of meshing (though that’s complex enough). Indeed, “Teachers who adopt code-meshing as pedagogy,” writes Lovejoy, “are ... asking students to negotiate the writing classroom” (146). Even apart from the social, political, and economic pressures that add complexity to any issue involving racism, any pedagogy which asks to students to be critical of the classroom itself can be tricky, and destabilizing.

It is into this difficult-to-enact negotiation of the writing classroom that we believe peer mentors can step and provide an invaluable service. They provide *an* authority (for they do have some, unavoidably; see *On Location* for a thorough treatment) that is not also *the* authority. As a result, they can model for students the critical negotiation code-meshing demands in a

way that instructors cannot. Even when instructors give students’ permission and encouragement to code-mesh, even if instructors themselves possess a language background similar to that of the students (and this cannot be assumed), they are less effective models for the simple but unavoidable fact that they have achieved professional success and security in a way that students have not. When we gave one first-year writing class copies of Young’s code-meshed article, “Should Writers Use They Own English,” many of the students put forward a common complaint along the lines of *This is all very interesting, but I could never pull it off*. “Easy for this guy,” said one student. “He’s a doctor!”

Like instructors, mentors are examples of successful and confident language users, but unlike instructors, they are close enough in age and standing to be relatable, and meshing holds similar risks for them as it does for students. But more importantly—for we do not envision that mentors must be proficient at meshing in order to be proficient mentors—mentors are uniquely positioned to empower students to be critical of language ideology in the writing classroom. While instructors can invite students to be critical of the classroom, they are always, at the end of the day a) directing and representing that same classroom, and b) sabotaging, to an extent, their own trustworthiness (via their evaluative role). By contrast, mentors can actually *be* critical and build trust through their non-evaluative (or at least, less evaluative) peer relationship.

In some ways, then, mentors can occupy positions of classroom authority that reflect the liminal, contradictory positions of any opposing oppression—participating, even as they are resisting; resisting, even as they are participating. As a result, course-embedded mentors are well-situated to help instructors generate conditions more effective for supporting students as they make informed, critical choices about language than those instructors might be able to manage on their own in a traditional binary.<sup>3</sup>

So far, we’ve talked about our *proposed* idea and what it is we *believe* and *will do*—which begins to sound remarkably hypocritical, considering the stress we placed on the need for action, practice, solutions, and accomplishing. We would like to explain now what it is that we *have done*—the “pre-pilot” we experimented with this past spring—and how it informs what we plan for the current academic year. To borrow from business terminology, the pre-pilot is our “proof of concept,” the evidence that establishes an idea, process, or model as feasible.

In the spring of 2014, one of our Writing Center's peer readers was able to enter a writing classroom and fill the role that we've described. It was early in the semester and Cecilia was trying to implement code-meshing pedagogy, inviting her students (most of them first-years) to make rhetorical choices that would blend their devalued Englishes with the Standard English.

One assignment asked them to consider music lyrics as a reflection of (the myth of) the American Dream, with questions such as: "Who has access to the American Dream?"; "Who or what creates it?"; and "How does it look differently for different people?" Ultimately, students would compose and then critique their own "Soundtrack of the American Dream"—a playlist of songs that represented the American Dream to each of them.

Unfortunately, the conversation was going awry.

The students were espousing sanitized, commercial opinions, seeming eager to offer the "correct" answers. No one was complicating the generic ideals discussed, and Cecilia was determined not to tell them what to think. So she invited one of our peer readers, Dominique, to join the class and the discussion. When students began again with comments like, "Everybody can succeed if they work hard!", he was able to read the room and understand where the breakdown was occurring. He posed a question: "Yeah, but can they? What about people who been to prison?" There was a brief pause. "Or what about people who *been* working hard...at McDonald's?"

To be clear, Cecilia had already asked very similar questions, but they had been met with relative silence and consternation, with students reluctant to answer because they didn't know what the "right" answer was—the "for school" answer. Dominique was better able to challenge that type of student performance, to model critical thinking in a way that invited students to do the same. And he was able to do it in the language of his peers.

One student answered Dominique: "I got a uncle who came out of jail and was tryin' to do the right thing, but just couldn't get a shot." A few other students nodded in agreement. A conversation ensued that was more critical of the mainstream notion of the American Dream. The students, watching Dominique, began to include alternative American narratives—ones that were marginalized and controversial—and to debate the validity of different ways of aspiring to the American Dream. Some students validated the new lines of reasoning; others rejected them. What was important: they were far more interested in what their

classmates thought than in what they thought Cecilia the Instructor "expected" them to say.

After a far more engaged and fruitful conversation, the class transitioned to an activity designed to help the students practice the kind of analysis that their "Soundtrack" assignment would require. They compared two music videos, Miley Cyrus's "Party in the USA" and Lil Wayne's "God Bless Amerika," and considered how the overall messages about the artists' experiences of America were reflected in images and lyrics.<sup>4</sup>

The conversation that Dominique had just led primed students to examine the music with a critical eye. Students were asked to think about the role that language was playing in each song. Dominique continued to attend, helping the students make comparisons, speaking in a meshed blend of Standard and African-American English. He was able to reconstruct the parameters of classroom discussion in a way that did more than give students permission to think critically and use all the language varieties available to them; his modeling supported code-meshing pedagogy in a way that Cecilia simply hadn't been able to manage on her own.

His success in that class helped us to conceptualize the shape and scope of the writing mentors program—the training that we plan for the fall, and the official pilot we plan for the spring.

### Writing Mentors Training – Fall 2014

The specificity and complexity of the goals of our writing mentors program requires a semester's worth of preparation for prospective writing mentors. Because mentors will be selected from among the Writing Center's peer readers, the training for the program builds on our existing training practicum, which is completed concurrently with a peer reader's first semester of work in the Writing Center and focuses on writing center theory, pedagogy, and practice. The writing mentors training program will work off this foundation to focus on preparing mentors to facilitate code-meshing pedagogy in the classroom.

We have set three goals for this training. Writing mentors will:

- Reflect on the development of their confidence as writers and evaluate their own success and proficiency with language;
- Develop a critical awareness of the social, political, economic and educational issues that impact language usage and instruction; and,

- Expand and complicate their awareness of and response to the classroom as a rhetorical situation, taking their new roles as mentors into account.<sup>5</sup>

From among our staff of peer readers, we will recruit prospective writing mentors who demonstrate particular interest in or aptitude for responding to language variation in writing. The recruitment process will culminate in a written application that discusses the applicant's language attitudes and begins the process of reflection. We anticipate a very small group of writing mentor trainees—between two and three per training cycle. (Our staff of peer readers numbers only ten.)

Training will employ a number of methods of instruction: small seminar-style discussion, independent reading/writing assignments, and guided classroom observations. A series of writing tasks will serve as our primary method of assessing growth and change in mentors over the course of the training program and their first semester of mentorship. The written application will serve as the benchmark for each mentor's initial attitudes and observations regarding language, mentorship, racism, and the writing classroom. Two additional writing assignments will document the development of their critical language consciousness and increased rhetorical awareness: 1) a discussion of their expectations for their mentoring experience at the end of the training semester, and 2) a more comprehensive reflection on their experiences at the end of the first semester of work as a writing mentor.

### Writing Mentors Pilot – Spring 2015

The Spring 2015 semester will serve as the official pilot for the writing mentors program. One writing mentor will be assigned to each of the writing center administrators and her respective section of the Critical Writing Seminar course. Writing mentorship will take place both inside and outside the writing classroom. Mentors will be required to attend class with the students they mentor for at least half of the contact hours each week. Their contributions to class activities and discussions will be determined in consultation with the course instructor. In addition, mentors will offer reserved consultation hours in the writing center for the students they mentor. While these consultations will not differ from typical Writing Center consultations, mentors will be asked to complete additional documentation of their work with mentees through consultation logs.

Both mentors and instructors will document their experiences through audio recorded reflections after each class meeting. Additional assessments of the writing mentors program will include surveys and focus groups for students and selected case studies of code meshing in student writing.

As we poured over the plans and timelines that were giving shape to this idea, adjusting readings lists, assignments, and course schedules to accommodate the presence of a mentor and the heightened attention to code-meshing, we felt a familiar trepidation creeping up. For just a moment, we were gripped by the same frustrated and self-critical feelings first caused by those quotation marks on that grammar handout sign. *What are we doing?* (We don't know!) *Who have we told?* (Almost no one). The unflattering and honest truth is that we are not broadcasting our writing mentors program very loudly these days. The “feelers” we've put out among colleagues and administrators about code-meshing pedagogy have let us to believe that, given the complex language ideologies at an HBCU, building consensus around this program will be a difficult process. In fact, our ability to conduct this experiment in course-embedded mentoring owes little to colleague “buy-in”; it is possible only through the lucky intersection of two realities: 1) that as Writing Center administrators we have the independence to expand the responsibilities and tasks of some of our peer readers to include participation in the writing mentors program, and 2) that we serve as both coordinators and instructors of a required writing course, a position which gives us the authority to shape that course to fit the writing mentors program in ways both broad (course-wise) and specific (section-wise).

In the interest of full confession: before we summon up the courage to challenge language ideology on a broader scale at our institution, we are hoping to gather substantial evidence to back our claims with this first year of trial and error. We admit that perhaps this isn't the road-most-taken, strategy-wise. Sometimes, we feel as if we are standing at the edge of a deep pool, and where other scholars have waded in, careful to make space for their presence and to keep from disrupting other swimmers, we've just gone ahead, cannonballed in, and begun doggie paddling in an energetic, but naïve fashion—splashing wildly.

We know that our plans are not going to change the white-preferential academy overnight, nor beliefs within our own institutional community. But, as Canagarajah writes, “The classroom is a powerful site of policy negotiation. The pedagogies practiced and

texts produced in the classroom can reconstruct policies from the ground up. In fact, the classroom is already a policy site; every time teachers insist on a uniform variety of language or discourse, we are helping reproduce monolingual ideologies and linguistic hierarchies” (“Pluralization Continued” 587).

We are trying to utilize the power of the classroom. We are trying. We do fear that by asking that the burden of that attempt fall heavily on students—to take language risks in service of this ideology and to take them alone—might be acknowledging the right problem, but coming up with the wrong solution. Ultimately, we do intend to use the results of our course-embedded writing mentors program, and hopefully its successes, to extend our antiracist practices beyond the writing center, beyond classes taught solely by its administrators, and out to others; our ultimate goal is nothing less than overhaul of the institution's language ideology. But first, we need to practice.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The pedagogical examples provided by Young, Lovejoy, and Canagarajah, while useful, are not very generalizable; they occurred within courses designed for upper-level undergraduate or graduate students, or within courses for which language variety or undervalued Englishes comprised the main thrust, theme, or topic.

<sup>2</sup> Suresh Canagarajah writes that “code meshing is a complex discursive act for our students” (602). Not only does it ask students to manage fairly sophisticated rhetorical and writing tasks when choosing *how* to mesh the language varieties available to them to best effect, but it presumes all the while that they clearly distinguish between/among those varieties, and possess both the control and the rhetorical awareness to determine *where* and *when* to mesh most effectively.

<sup>3</sup> We do not mean to suggest that students who choose *not* to code-mesh will be making less of an informed, critical decision about their language use. We are in agreement with Lovejoy: “A teacher and classroom that privilege code-meshing are not prejudiced against the narrower Standard English or those who idealize it. They simply provide the opportunity for others to be heard as well” (128-129).

<sup>4</sup> Full credit for this assignment goes to Christopher Massenburg of the Saint Augustine's University English Department. He also deserves credit as a co-creator of the critical writing course that allowed for the assignment's creation and implementation.

<sup>5</sup> Our training program relies on the existing peer reader practicum to establish the “generalist literacy

training” that Mary Soliday argues in *On Location*, “can successfully bridge specialized writing situations (15). It then focuses on preparing our writing mentors, who will be “present at the rhetorical scene” (56), to “be aware of the rhetorical complexity—both interpersonal and intertextual—that any given tutorial can entail” (Corbett, par. 5).

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## FROM SILOS TO SYNERGIES: INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS FOR WRITING FELLOWS

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Spigelman and Grobman describe the Writing Center (WC) as an “obvious parent” of classroom-based writing tutoring, with WAC as the implied other parent (5). Such a lineage produces writing fellows (WFs) able to work with their peers “on location,” to borrow Spigelman and Grobman’s title. This elegant family tree assumes—and requires—shared parenting beyond the birth of the WF program, but unfortunately, even at small colleges the parents too frequently live apart, occupying different spaces with little interaction and sometimes a little territoriality. WFs raised in isolation by one or the other develop in very different ways. WC tutor training doesn’t necessarily prepare students for the group work of embedded tutoring (Nicolas), WAC training may be too genre-focused (Russell and Yañez; Gladstein) and, like SI, is more concerned with content than with writing (Hafer). But a more significant difference is in the relationship of WFs to faculty, which reflects the divergent ideologies of WAC and WCs. In the WC student-centered model, the WF works primarily with students and their writing, supporting the faculty member and occasionally attending class; in the WAC writing-centered model, WFs work with students on their writing, but also with faculty as they develop those writing assignments, playing an essential role in student and faculty development. Such differences may place WFs trained in WAC theory and those with WC training “at odds” with each other (Martins and Wolf).

Some newer WF programs have adopted one WF model without realizing that there are other, possibly more appropriate, options—a situation revealed in several sessions at the 2014 IWAC conference. In other cases, WAC and WCs occupy separate locations where they have developed parallel WF programs with little or no connection, sometimes unaware that similar work is being done elsewhere on campus. This situation developed at our small liberal arts college

because of a staffing reshuffle, causing confusion, competition for scarce resources, and duplication of labor. Our realization of how counter-productive our silos had become formed the impetus for this article. Little happens in isolation at small schools, and the experience and intermingling of WAC and WC fellows helped us fully realize the limits of single parenthood and the potential benefits—indeed, necessity—of cross-training. We hope our interwoven narratives will provide a cautionary tale *and* a model for how to collaboratively incorporate WFs into a vertical writing curriculum.

### Context

Drew University, located 25 miles west of New York City in New Jersey, includes a liberal arts college enrolling 1,600 undergraduates with an average SAT-verbal score of 550, a Methodist Theological Seminary, and the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies. When the College revised its General Education program in 2008, almost unanimous support was given to a vertical writing curriculum featuring traditional first-year writing (FYW) taught by writing faculty, at least two elective WAC courses, and a required writing in the major course or sequence. First-year students also take an open topics College Seminar taught by faculty from across the curriculum, all of whom are assigned a peer mentor trained to facilitate students’ transition to college, but explicitly not to work on writing. The hiring of a WAC Director and the various WF programs she initiated supported this new curriculum.

In 2012, the WAC Director, who had also become the director of the University WC, was promoted to Associate Dean. First-year services, including FYW, were consolidated under her. The previous Director of Composition, Sandra Jamieson, became Director of WAC, and two Postdoctoral Fellows, one of them Jennifer Holly-Wells, became coordinators of FYW. The Assistant Director of the WC, Maya Sanyal, took

over administration of the Center and training of tutors. Additionally, the WC space also became home to peer-based subject tutoring, with the two ultimately moving into an Academic Commons in Fall 2014.

Such reorganizations are not uncommon at small colleges (see Gladstein and Regainon) and generally lead to new partnerships and possibilities, but not always without casualties. In our case, what was lost in the splitting of WAC from the WC was the unified WFs program imagined by the previous director, Melissa Nicolas, who had also acquired two grants to fund it. A grant from Verizon supported WFs for FYW courses for transfer and IESL students, and a grant from the Edward W. and Stella C. Van Houten Memorial Fund supported a WAC WFs program. The WC continued to administer the former, which was already in place, and the WAC Director took over the latter, developing it from a funded proposal to an established program. Each of those two WF programs evolved with their new directors, but each also reached the limit of what it could be in isolation. The three separate threads of our narratives trace this evolution, and then intersect to become a story of new collaborations and ultimately of communal parenting.

### **The Role of the Writing Center: Maya Sanyal**

I became the Assistant Director of the Drew WC in 2010, and was responsible for center management—hiring and payroll, scheduling, marketing, and supervision of tutors. I am a long-time adjunct instructor at Drew, teaching both FYW and graduate level IESL Theological students. In my new role, I developed and began teaching a FYW course for college-level IESL students. Then, the Director became Associate Dean, and I found myself also responsible for the WC budget and payroll management and supervisor to the Verizon-funded WFs placed in IESL and Transfer Seminar courses.

Structurally, the FYW-WFs provided opportunities for the students in the class to benefit from their peers' knowledge and student success practices in the context of college-level academic writing and critical thinking, without being bound by a disciplinary context. FYW-WFs attended and participated in classes weekly, were assigned to small groups of students (3-4) with whom they engaged in regular meetings, and were initially paid through the Verizon grant for class, small-group time, and training sessions. In their work both in class and in small groups, FYW-WFs drew from WC theory and practice: listening; helping student writers learn to think about higher-order issues of structure and

organization before grammar & mechanics; discussing what the students' writing and reading processes were; encouraging students to become aware of, and articulate, what they already knew (particularly important in the IESL world of non-English language facility being seen as a deficit); and, in keeping with Steven North's classic dictum, helping students become better writers, rather than focusing on better writing ("The Idea of a Writing Center" 441).

I developed training sessions for the FYW-WFs based on the philosophy that WC tutors and WC-trained WFs are located in the empowering (albeit challenging) place of effectively developing what Meg Woolbright (drawing on Nancy Schniedewind's work) has argued to be significant for feminist modes of learning: "an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and community; shared leadership; a cooperative structure; the integration of cognitive and affective learning; and action" ("The Politics of Tutoring" 17-18). In managing the FYW-WF program in general, and the WFs in my IESL courses, I operated on the principle that the triadic structure of learner-mentor-instructor (students, WFs, and myself) would present an excellent learning opportunity for everyone in the classroom. My teaching and training modules draw on the philosophy that in the relationships of trust, collaboration, and intercultural growth that almost necessarily happen in (well-run) small groups of Writing students and WFs, all students involved—international and domestic—find opportunities to become educators for each other. This approach stems from my strong belief in the feminist approach of building non-hierarchical models of learning and challenging the 'teacher'-as-omniscient belief often prevalent in non-U.S. educational systems.

As it turned out, this collaborative, non-hierarchical model of shared learning/shared responsibility worked well in my classes and in the WC; however, when Jennifer and Sandra approached me I realized, as they will explain below, that it did not transfer easily to other contexts or relationships and did not provide the tools necessary for WF work across contexts. I collaborated with Jennifer to articulate our vision of the role WFs would play in her FY IESL and Transfer Seminar classes and to develop materials for weekly training sessions. I also co-taught the WC tutor-training course with Sandra, revising it into a combined WC tutor/WFs course and, in the process, creating a shared pool of tutors/Fellows/resources and a collaborative model of Writing support that would spread across the entire Writing program.

## First-Year Writing Fellows: Jennifer Holly-Wells

In my position as Co-Director of FYW at Drew, I worked with WFs in several different kinds of FYW and WAC courses. My background is also in WC work, and I believe that WFs represent a commitment to the development of leadership in the university. Students in classes with WFs are presented with strong academic role models who work with everyone in the class, not just the “weaker” writers, helping students realize that we all benefit from feedback on writing. I am convinced that the experience of being a WF is also transformational for Fellows. As a result of their work, WFs start growing into leaders who have more confidence in their own abilities to communicate both in speaking and in writing. Jim Ottery, Jean Petrolle, Derek John Boczkowski, and Steve Mogge note that WFs also have the opportunity to “affect procedure and pedagogy” through the feedback they provide to instructors (63), and Fellows with whom I worked were always honest about the writing process and the responses of the students in my classes, informing me when they were doing well or when they were overwhelmed. In my third semester working with WC-trained WFs, they also inadvertently helped me to understand the difficult terrain WFs occupy: several faculty reported to me that one of the WFs working with my living-learning community FYW course was misinforming students of program-wide requirements. I realized that this could have been avoided if I had approached my role in the faculty-WF relationship more as a participant than as a dispatcher, and I began exploring how we might train embedded WFs to work differently, balancing the knowledge they bring to the course with the expectations of faculty.

Recognizing the limits of my solo approach, I asked Maya to partner with me to do additional training for the three WFs assigned to my next class, a writing-emphasis College Seminar for spring semester transfer students. Nicolas calls for “tutor trainers . . . to define and explain the roles we ask our students to play and . . . to create training scenarios that more closely align what we ask students to do both theoretically and practically” (114), advice we took to heart. Maya and I ran mock group sessions, led discussions about professional expectations and behaviors, and provided space for Fellows to give each other advice about handling the workload. This helped us frame their relationship with the students, who at small schools are likely to also be friends, suitemates, teammates, classmates, lab partners, or at least acquaintances of the WFs.

This training worked well for the WFs in both my transfer course and my IESL course the following year. Students in my courses with WFs were more comfortable at Drew in comparison to those in Seminars I had previously taught; like those studied by Ottery et al., these Fellows “play[ed] a crucial social role . . . giving the students a social foothold in a bewildering mass of new information and personalities that comprise their first-year experience” (65). College can be particularly confusing for transfer and international students, who often report feeling “behind” the students they perceive as “normal,” and the WFs became a lifeline for these students, offering them assistance with their writing and with managing their lives as college students. Because the transfer seminar was a topics-based WI course, I gave the WFs leeway to work with content as well as writing, trying to find what Gladstein refers to as the “gray spaces” that would permit them to “use their knowledge of both the content and writing pedagogy to help empower [the] students” (6). I emphasized that WFs were specialists who assisted students both inside and outside the classroom in small groups, and that weekly attendance was mandatory. Students in these courses simply accepted that other students were in charge of a part of their learning.

WFs in WAC and FYW contexts will differ in their relationship to the course. I realized that FYW-WFs need to understand which concepts and skills I value as the professor, so I devoted training sessions to helping them understand my grading rubric and we debated, for example, the characteristics of an adequate thesis versus those of a good thesis. While WFs should be able to discuss content with students in FYW, their primary concern should be the writing. Since FYW students feel at ease asking questions of and learning from the experience of their FYW-WF, articulating the centrality of the writing focus ensures that students and FYW-WF do not get distracted by other concerns. Using the rubric reinforced those priorities.

## WAC Writing Fellows: Sandra Jamieson

As new WAC Director returning from a year-long sabbatical, I became responsible for developing and implementing the new WAC Fellows program, and adopted a structure that in most ways mirrors the one Melissa and Maya developed for FYW-IESL. WAC-WFs are embedded in sophomore/junior-level Writing Intensive and Writing in the Majors courses and attend class once a week, facilitating peer response workshops and writing groups in and out of class, and also working with some students individually. The

grant pays for six hours a week (which includes time in and outside the classroom, and regular meetings with faculty and with me). But the WAC model also differs in one very significant way: the WFs meet with faculty as they plan their classes and writing assignments and provide suggestions and feedback based on their knowledge of WAC theory and practice. In many ways, this relationship is the most important facet of the program.

Faculty from across the curriculum are often committed to incorporating writing instruction into their classes, but are unsure of their ability to do so. Having trained WFs attending class and working with their assignments can alleviate faculty members' concerns; after experiencing the class from the student perspective, WAC-WFs can offer feedback and suggestions grounded in writing theory and practice. By sharing program philosophy, they also help to create a more coherent writing culture campus wide. If participating faculty ask Fellows to focus mostly on grammar, mechanics, and editing, they do so; however, they also raise possibilities for alternative writing pedagogy, and emphasize the value of prewriting and drafting. And they can help faculty develop ways to respond to student writing that facilitate meaningful revision. It is here, as Jennifer has described, that WAC Fellows differ from WC tutors and WC-trained FYW Fellows.

Although I initially imagined WFs receiving traditional WC training, several of my colleagues requested to work with strong writers who had taken the course in question, so in the pilot program about half of the WFs were not trained WC tutors. I held weekly meetings focusing on specific skills necessary for embedded tutoring, including facilitating small groups, balancing content knowledge and writing skills, working with faculty, and general professionalism. We also reviewed genre theory, discussed the significance of disciplinary differences and conventions, worked on the concept of learning as a conversation, and talked about information literacy and citation practices. Participating faculty liked this model, so I continued it when I rolled out the full program. WFs have developed short “self-help” videos on aspects of writing identified as important by the faculty they work with—a more hierarchical model than in WC tutoring, yet one that meets the needs of faculty and students. They also maintain a “Best Practices for WAC Faculty” guide, giving credit to faculty whose practices they find particularly effective and providing a base for discussion when they work with faculty and in WAC faculty development workshops.

Yet some of the WFs trained as WC tutors felt uncomfortable sharing their expertise with faculty, while those not trained as tutors said students were reluctant to meet them in the Writing Center. When pressed, the WAC fellows reported that they didn't work with WC tutors or with each other on their own papers, and WC tutors in classes with WAC-WFs did not ask for their help, even when they were struggling to enter a new discourse community. We had failed to create the kind of community among the fellows that would lead them to value each other's and their own authority and expertise. Somehow, the close relationship between WC tutors and WFs assigned to FYW on the one hand and my focus on WAC training and faculty development on the other had allowed the essential “everyone is a learner” philosophy Maya describes to fall by the wayside. And this may have been the biggest casualty of the divided programs. As we planned the course we co-taught, Maya and I worked to restore this sense of community and the balance between focusing on the student as writer and on specific pieces of writing, work that we realize will need to be ongoing.

### **From Silos to Synergies**

We had all in different ways recognized the importance of cross-training. Maya and Jennifer were already co-training the WFs assigned to FYW, so it made sense for Maya and Sandra to co-teach the “Theory and Practice of Writing Center Tutoring” course and reshape it for both WC tutors and WFs. Each of us proposed items for the reading list, and as that list grew we realized we were combining what could be two courses. We trimmed as much as we could, and the students valiantly read, discussed, wrote about, and made sense of it all, admitting that there was too much reading but unable to identify what to cut. We were impressed by the insights our students brought to the readings as they considered the various contexts within which writers, tutors, and WFs work. We also learned from each other as we read the materials each had provided from her own part of the field. Our understanding of the similarities and differences of our two programs sharpened when we found ourselves noting during class discussion that specific responses would be appropriate in an embedded class, but not in the Writing Center, or vice versa. What seemed as if it should be two courses because, as Jennifer discovered, different contexts require different kinds of WFs, ended up much more beneficial as one, and we hope that co-training will create a stronger sense of community and help-seeking among the tutors and fellows. Sandra is requiring that

WAC-Fellows register for a one-credit independent study the semester after the course, and Maya will continue to work with the IESL instructors to cross-train WFs for FYW. We have returned, enthusiastically, to the co-parenting model.

### A Synergistic Writing Curriculum

Following assessment of our GenEd program, we are exploring a new model of FYW common at other SLACS: interdisciplinary writing seminars (Gladstein and Ragainon). Drew faculty initially selected the FYW model to ensure students gained a firm grounding in general academic writing skills in their first year as a foundation for discipline-based writing in later years. With FYW taught by writing specialists, the topics-based write-to-learn seminars to which they were linked could focus on critical and creative thinking and academic advising. Arguments supporting disciplinary status for Writing Studies seem to support such a split based on separate expertise, and often complicate WAC conversations. However, a vertical WAC curriculum guided by a liberal arts philosophy argues for combining writing-to-learn and learning-to-write in topics-based introductory seminars taught by experienced and appropriately trained faculty from across the curriculum. And, as our writing-intensive courses show, faculty members in those courses will be more successful with the support of WFs, so the new Writing Seminars will each be assigned a WC-trained WF along with a peer mentor. Co-trained WAC-WFs will continue to work with WAC courses, building on a strong emphasis on writing and writing support established in the first year and helping to infuse writing throughout the curriculum. Faculty development around the new seminar will also facilitate increased WAC faculty development.

Cross training of WFs to work with first-year writers and WAC faculty will provide them with the flexibility they need to participate in a vertical program. And if we plan vertically and scaffold learning, our co-parented WFs will ensure transfer of knowledge by repeating key terms, strategies, and beliefs across courses and contexts. In other words, our WFs will become true ambassadors for the values and pedagogies of our writing program. The initial fracturing of the WF program allowed us to realize the different roles WFs can play, and the new co-parenting is producing WFs with the flexibility to work in FYW, IESL, and WAC courses. As we contemplate our new curriculum, we believe it is the presence of WFs that will make it work.

The model of shared parenting implied by Spigelman and Grobman ultimately reduces conflict

between programs and confusion about the role and limits of WFs. It also increases the WF's flexibility and ability to think critically between approaches and traditions, making possible the kind of vertical curriculum we instituted and now hope to perfect. Not incidentally, it also reduces administrative workload, strengthens program coherency, increases faculty support for the program, and facilitates skills transfer. Of course we expect to encounter some challenges as we move forward, but our experience tells us that working together will be the most productive way to accomplish our program learning goals and to model the collaborative skills we try to instill in our students. Collaboration is not easy, and working alone can seem—and be—more efficient and more desirable in many ways, but we need to demonstrate the cross-contextual work we demand of our WFs, and that includes creative problem-solving across programs. We firmly believe that in order to be effective educators and role models to students who are or will be members of an international, multicultural, global citizenry, we must move beyond a world of territory and silos and inhabit, very intentionally, a spirit of collaboration and synergy at all levels of our work.

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# CURRICULAR COLLABORATION, PROGRAMMATIC COLLISION: CHALLENGES TO INTEGRATING TUTOR TRAINING FOR WRITING CENTERS AND WRITING FELLOWS PROGRAMS

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## Introduction

For years our Writing Center and our Writing Fellows program, a curricular-based, undergraduate peer tutoring program, had operated autonomously to the point of cordial estrangement. Then a series of widespread changes in leadership and institutional structure prompted us to ask, “How can we bring these programs closer together?” Training became the focal point of our discussions. At the time, tutors were trained through a credit-bearing internship; fellows were trained through a credit-bearing course. Notable overlap in peer tutoring theories and methods prompted the question, “What if we integrated training for tutors and fellows?” We sensed the complexity of the task but were eager to experiment. We believed that collaborating would produce an innovative curriculum that would improve the quality of tutoring and strengthen connections between programs. After all, we presumed, wouldn’t only good things come from collaborating?

In this article, I describe and reflect on the development and demise of our effort to create an integrated training course for tutors and fellows to illustrate the complexities of administrative collaboration. While several factors constrained the success of our integrated course, I argue that the underlying problem was an inadequate conception of administrative collaboration, one that overlooked the integral relationship between programmatic structure and curricular practices and the corresponding need to coordinate curricular and administrative revision. I first situate the development of our integrated course within existing literature on writing centers and institutional relationships to demonstrate a lack of current models for guiding administrative collaboration, especially between similar but separate writing tutoring programs. I then describe the conditions contributing to the course’s proposal and development and highlight complications that emerged early in its implementation to demonstrate the impact of programmatic pressures on curricular structure. I conclude by briefly outlining a modified version of the course that attempts to better balance

curricular revision with programmatic needs. This account underscores the complexities of administrative collaboration between similar but separate writing tutoring programs, and it encourages professionals in writing centers and related fields to approach curricular collaborations with writing support programs critically and carefully.

Arguably *the* foundational concept in writing center work, collaboration is variously cast as a theory, a method, a goal, and an outcome; consequently, it is frequently considered a presumed good, a taken-for-granted assumption in writing center scholarship. In their assessment of classroom-based writing tutoring, Spigelman and Grobman invoke collaboration when describing the benefits of this instructional approach: students benefit from “collaborative models” of teaching and learning and from experiencing writing as a collaborative and social act; teachers benefit from classroom-based collaborations with tutors through increased familiarity with theories and practices that support effective writing instruction; tutors benefit from the professionalizing experiences of collaborating with teachers and assuming expanded roles in classrooms; and writing centers benefit from conversations and partnerships prompted by collaborating with “institutional structures and programs” (6-10). But, as Muriel Harris reminds us, the ubiquity of collaboration can lead to indiscriminate use of the term that “blur[s] useful distinctions” among programs or activities with similar approaches and methods but with different “underlying perspectives, assumptions, and goals” (369). Harris’s observation applies to professionals seeking to engage in collaboration across tutoring programs, especially those with similarities in methods *and* goals. Melissa Nicolas experienced this while administering a Peer Writing Consultant Program, which used consultants-in-training to facilitate peer response groups in basic writing courses. Initially supportive, Nicolas became concerned about the program’s effectiveness after identifying two problems: first, the program’s “conflation of two related collaborative learning models: peer response and tutoring”; and second, its

“uncritical collapsing of the boundaries between curriculum-based tutoring and writing center tutoring” (113). After reviewing some unintended consequences of the program, Nicolas argues that administrators seeking to “create new models of collaboration” must train students explicitly to recognize “how different models of collaboration can and should work” (121).

I would modify and extend Nicolas’s invitation by saying that program directors and professionals seeking to increase collaboration between writing support programs must imagine new models of administrative collaboration and recognize how collaborations that focus on teaching or training create corresponding needs for programmatic revision and administrative adaptation. Because administrative collaborations rival curricular collaborations in their complexity, administrators need to develop clear, perhaps even discrete, models to inform their work in both areas. As a novice writing center director, I presumed that a collaborative approach would be as essential to my administrative work as it had been to my tutoring practice. This is why I readily embraced the opportunity to pursue a curricular collaboration with our Writing Fellows program. But I overlooked, first, how administrative contexts require different conceptions of and approaches to collaboration and, second, the complexities of developing a collaborative partnership between tutoring programs with similarities in goals, methods, theories and practices.

The integral relationship between a tutoring program and its curriculum is particularly evident when collaborative curricular innovations are not accompanied by programmatic changes that will sustain those innovations. This may sound obvious, but I believe my colleagues and I failed to appreciate this relationship in our effort to develop a single training course for separate writing tutoring programs. Unfortunately, our engagement in curricular collaboration underestimated how the separate needs of both programs would create competing constraints for tutor training that inhibited substantial and sustainable curricular revision. Consequently, the site which we anticipated would initiate programmatic collaboration—the integrated training course—actually instigated programmatic collision, leading us to discontinue the integrated course and revert to our previous, separate training models.

Admittedly, several factors contributed to the demise of our curricular experiment, including my lack of administrative experience and limited awareness of the complexities of administrative collaboration. But an equally significant factor was the tendency of existing scholarship to reinforce collaboration as a presumed good in writing center administration.

## Limitations of Existing Scholarship

Recent scholarship on writing centers and institutional relationships signals a clear invitation to pursue engagement, collaborations, and partnerships with programs and people across and even beyond one’s institution (Mauriello, Macauley, Jr., and Koch, Jr. 3). The few essays in collections such as *Before and After the Tutorial: Writing Centers and Institutional Relationships* and *Marginal Words, Marginal Work? Tutoring the Academy in the Work of Writing Centers* that address the challenges and risks of collaboration reinforce its value; none call into question or advocate avoiding the practice. Thus, program directors who consult such literature may gloss over the full implications of the complexities of writing-center based administrative collaborations, assuming that a collaborative approach will ultimately result in beneficial outcomes.

A more specific limitation of much of this scholarship is its emphasis on collaborations with programs or people largely unfamiliar with writing centers, which diminishes its relevance for those seeking to develop collaborative relationships among similar tutoring programs. Even Linda Bergmann and Tammy Conard-Salvo’s application of collaborative learning principles to inform administrative efforts in pursuing stronger relationships between programs that support writing, which they demonstrate through their effort to bring administrators of the writing center and first-year composition and their programs into closer contact, illustrates this tendency to discuss collaborations between writing centers and other programs with clearly different identities, roles, and expertise. In such partnerships, the writing center is granted or tasked with legitimizing its authority on knowledge and practices of writing, peer tutoring, and—especially—collaboration. But these distinctions are blurred when writing centers pursue collaborations with similar tutoring programs that have equal claim to such knowledge and practices. As Nicolas argues, such blurring can produce innovative curricular collaborations that excite administrators but confuse tutors and students and diminish the effectiveness of the innovation. Having access to scholarship that documents the complexities of writing-center based administrative collaboration could help writing center professionals avoid or address such problems.

A related limitation in existing scholarship is the tendency to concentrate on the instructional dimensions or implications of collaboration, often at the expense of larger programmatic and administrative dimensions. Although Maggie Herb and Virginia

Perdue note the absence of scholarship on writing center outreach to non-academic areas, in addressing this gap the authors focus on how collaborating with their campus's counseling center improved tutor training. This example illustrates how tutor training as a collaborative teaching and learning activity tends to be closely associated, if not conflated, with the practice of pursuing collaborative partnerships, creating the perception that the latter primarily serves the former. Such conflation can inadvertently perpetuate the assumption, reflected in our effort to integrate training for tutors and fellows, that collaborating on curricular development is a natural and appropriate location to initiate programmatic collaboration. But our experience suggests that this is not necessarily the case.

A final limitation of current scholarship is a lack of models to guide collaborations between writing centers and writing fellows in ways that respect the autonomy of both programs. Carol Severino and Megan Knight characterize the University of Iowa (IU) Writing Fellows program as serving an “ambassadorial function” for the campus's Writing Center (21). At IU, the two programs operate harmoniously because of a precedent of partnerships between the Writing Center and the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program; but at our institution, where the Writing Center, the Writing Fellows program, and Writing Across the Curriculum emerged at different times under different administrators and have operated in relative autonomy, if not isolation, the ambassador analogy would be misconstrued as an attempt to subordinate the Fellows program to the Writing Center. Even when the Writing Center and Writing Fellows program “are branches of the same agency, run by the same people,” the administrative complexities of such an arrangement have prompted some to acknowledge the virtues of having both programs operate independently (Leahy 71).

Although we found limited guidance in the scholarship, we forged ahead to develop an integrated tutor training course, exercising faith in the promise of collaboration and our collective wisdom and experience to design an innovative training course.

### **Institutional Context and Conditions for Change**

Some institutional context helps explain the circumstances prompting our curricular collaboration. The BYU Writing Center, a university-wide generalist tutoring service created in the 1970s, employs approximately thirty undergraduate tutors per semester, with reduced staff during summer months. The BYU Writing Fellows, a curricular-based peer

tutoring program created in the early 1990s, employs approximately sixty undergraduate fellows per semester who work with undergraduate students in specific courses in the disciplines. In past decades, program administrators would occasionally collaborate to host a local peer tutoring conference, and an occasional writing tutor would also work as a writing fellow or vice versa. But, in general, both programs operated largely in isolation.

Recent institutional changes brought the Writing Fellows program, previously housed in the General Education/Honors department, under the administration of University Writing (formerly English Composition) which, housed in the English department, is responsible for first-year and advanced writing, Writing Across the Curriculum, and the Writing Center. More recently, during the 2012-2013 academic year, a series of widespread leadership and administrative changes in University Writing and the English department prompted talk of increasing collaboration between the Writing Center and Writing Fellows programs: the conversion of the Writing Center coordinator position from a professional to a professorial track; the creation of a Writing Center assistant coordinator position; the hiring of a new Writing Center coordinator, Writing Center assistant coordinator, Writing Fellows coordinator, and WAC coordinator. In addition, the University Writing coordinator and the English department chair, who oversees University Writing, began their terms in their respective positions. A kairotic sense of energy accompanied such widespread leadership change, motivating several individuals to begin discussing ways to pursue programmatic improvements and collaborations.

In early 2013, the outgoing WAC coordinator, incoming WAC coordinator, who was the outgoing Writing Fellows coordinator, and incoming Writing Center coordinator (me) began meeting to discuss ways to strengthen connections between the Writing Center and Writing Fellows programs. The outgoing WAC coordinator, who had also previously served as Writing Fellows coordinator, suggested that cross-training tutors and fellows might be a sensible first step. At the time, initial training for tutors and fellows occurred separately. The Writing Center used an academic internship model: prospective tutors were interviewed, and successful applicants were invited to enroll in a credit-bearing internship on peer tutoring. Interns would be assigned shifts in the Writing Center and observe, team-tutor, and meet with the program coordinator and other interns to discuss readings, observations, and writing assignments. Successful interns were usually hired as paid tutors the following

semester. Writing Fellows used a course-based model: prospective fellows were interviewed, and successful applicants were hired as fellows and required to register for a credit-bearing course in peer tutoring that also satisfied the university's general education advanced writing requirement. The course introduced students to peer tutoring theory and methods and required writing and research assignments related to writing or tutoring writing. After approximately four weeks in the course, students would begin fellowing.

### **Proposed Curricular Change: A General Peer Writing Tutor Training Course**

The clear overlap in peer tutoring theories and practices covered by both training models suggested that training would be a natural site of collaboration. Hence, our discussions about collaborating soon focused on imagining a general writing tutor training course that would prepare any student to work in either program, or both. Soon, a proposal was submitted to the department chair to dissolve the Writing Center internship and redesign the existing Writing Fellows course as a general peer writing tutor training course. The course would retain its emphasis on peer tutoring, but course content and assignments would be modified to accommodate the training needs of fellows and tutors. The writing instruction would be reframed as an introduction to writing studies, encouraging students to situate their writing, research, and tutoring in this broader discipline. The outgoing Writing Fellows coordinator and incoming Writing Center director (me) would share responsibility for redesigning and co-teaching the course during the 2013-2014 academic year, after which the incoming Writing Fellows director and I would alternate semesters as course instructors. In highlighting intended outcomes of the course, the proposal reflected our faith in the benefits of this collaboration: it would create synergy between the two programs; produce a more robust and consistent training experience; provide a more fluid and versatile staff able and motivated to move between programs; create a precedent for pursuing additional collaborations between the programs.

Following the proposal's approval, the outgoing Writing Fellows coordinator and I began meeting regularly to design this integrated tutor training course. We made substantial revisions to course scope and content: expanded and clarified learning outcomes, increased the reading assignments on peer tutoring, revised and resituated the research-based writing assignments within a writing studies framework, modified existing and added new writing assignments,

and increased the number of observations students conducted in the Writing Center. These content revisions broadened the emphasis of the course, but they were not accompanied by changes to the course's original structure. In fact, the course could not accommodate substantial structural revision because its structure was integral to the maintenance of the program it was originally created to support: Writing Fellows. Our failure to recognize the integral relationship between a program and its curriculum, and specifically how programmatic needs shape both the content and the structure of a curriculum, reflects the tendency in current scholarship, noted earlier, to conceptualize programmatic collaboration primarily in terms of curriculum or instruction while neglecting the programmatic and administrative dimensions and implications of such collaborations.

Because we became aware of this programmatic constraint on curricular revision after our proposal had been approved, we were obligated to proceed with implementing the integrated training course, despite our emerging reservations. Programmatic collision ensued. This was especially apparent in two instances: determining staffing needs and implementing a recruiting plan for both programs.

### **Programmatic Constraints on Curricular Structure: Staffing and Recruiting**

Discrepancies in staffing needs for both programs was the most visible programmatic pressure that prevented substantial restructuring of the course. Typically, each semester the Writing Center trains between four and eight interns, while the Writing Fellows program trains between 20-25. The discrepancy, coupled with a diminished Writing Fellows staff and low enrollment in the training course for the Fall 2013 semester, suggested that staffing needs were more immediate for the Writing Fellows program than for the Writing Center. Consequently, while all students who enrolled in the course would be trained to work in both programs, they would be required to work concurrently as fellows; in short, they would fellow first and tutor second. To compensate for this imbalance, the full staff of the Writing Fellows—the 40-50 experienced fellows in addition to those in the course—would be included in the applicant pool for Writing Center employment. Further, it was proposed that a handful of students in the training course could be groomed for employment in the Writing Center, although they would not be able to work until the following semester. But both program coordinators were concerned about problematic constraints on hiring and staffing likely to

emerge from this approach to joint-training and joint-staffing.

Programmatic needs also affected recruiting students to become tutors or fellows. Given our preoccupation with revising course content, we did not develop a joint-recruitment plan until after the Writing Fellows advertising and recruiting campaign had been launched by the new program coordinator, who was aware of but not involved in the curricular changes. Previously, writing fellows staff would conduct an intensive two-week recruiting campaign across campus at mid-semester, then interview and hire selected applicants who would enroll in the next semester's Writing Fellows training course. In contrast, the Writing Center coordinator would contact instructors from English and writing-intensive courses toward the end of the semester, invite them to encourage strong writers to apply for the Writing Center internship, and then interview and invite selected applicants to enroll in the next semester's internship. To integrate recruiting efforts, we imagined that tutors and fellows would work together to invite students to work as peer tutors in either program.

However, programmatic needs again trumped our effort at collaboration: we were unable to create a viable marketing campaign to recruit students to enroll in a general writing tutor training course because the ultimate goal of recruiting was to invite students to work in a specific program, not to take a course or to become a general writing tutor. And course structure further constrained employment choices for students interested in the Writing Center by requiring them to first work in the Writing Fellows program. In its modified form, then, joint-recruiting involved mostly writing fellows and some writing tutors recruiting students to become writing fellows with the possibility of being considered for employment in the Writing Center. To offset this imbalance, it was assumed that, given the stability of writing center work as a part-time job in contrast to the seasonal work of the writing fellows, a substantial number of writing fellows would regularly be interested in pursuing Writing Center employment.

### Considering Alternatives

This brief description of our year-long experiment to design an integrated training course for writing fellows and writing center tutors does not adequately represent the complexities of the collaboration, the commitment and earnest effort all participants brought to the effort, or the benefits that continue to emerge from it, including increased communication between the current program coordinators and

aspirations of pursuing future collaborations. What I hope to have illustrated is the complexities involved in collaborations between similar but separate peer tutoring programs, which stem from the intricate and often overlooked relationship between a program's administrative needs and the content and structure of its curriculum. And while this may be an obvious realization, I suggest that it is obscured by the dominant perception of the inherent goodness of collaboration in writing center scholarship. I also hope that this account will promote a more deliberative approach to collaboration for writing center professionals seeking to develop partnerships with course-embedded writing support programs, one that echoes Nicolas's caution against "uncritically collapsing the boundaries" between tutoring programs and their accompanying administrative structures.

Reflecting on possible alternatives to the integrated tutor training course described above, I imagine a fully restructured course, a genuine hybrid of the Writing Center internship and the Writing Fellows course that draws on the strengths of the curricular revisions in our integrated course. Such a course could consist of three parts: a) an introduction to collaborative learning theory, the field of writing studies, and peer tutoring strategies; b) an internship-like experience, where students work for a substantial portion of the course as writing fellows or writing center interns and are given ample opportunities to apply, reflect on, write about, assess, and even conduct research on the foundational theories and practices they've been learning and using; and c) a concluding portion that brings students together to share and compare their respective tutoring and fellowing experiences. Perhaps the culminating assignment could be a collaborative portfolio, produced by pairs of students who reflect on and incorporate their separate tutoring and fellowing experiences to showcase similarities and differences of both practices and the accompanying similarities and differences of the programs that support those practices. But while such a restructured course is likely to provide an integrated training experience for students, its creation must be accompanied by an administrative structure that would balance the needs of participating programs.

To minimize programmatic collision when engaging in curricular collaboration, administrators ought to consider such questions as,

- What does successful administrative collaboration look like among similar but separate tutoring programs?

- Can an integrated training course meet the needs of tutoring programs with separate administrative structures?
- What models of administrative collaboration can mitigate programmatic constraints on innovative curricular collaborations?

As professionals from writing centers, curriculum-based peer tutoring programs, and related programs address these questions and forge partnerships in a spirit of deliberate collaboration, I'm optimistic that we can find promising answers and models for curricular revisions and programmatic collaborations that build on rather than blur boundaries that are worth preserving.

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## SHIFTING THE CENTER: PILOTING EMBEDDED TUTORING MODELS TO SUPPORT MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES

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Beginning in its third year, the Georgia Tech Communication Center began investigating embedded tutoring as part of the overall slate of tutoring services already in practice. Because our center remains in a nascent period of identity, we continue to enjoy an unusual amount of flexibility in how we are exploring new ways to work within the tutoring milieu—that is, we have not had time to become complacent in providing services in particular ways. Additionally, because we are somewhat unusual given our professional staff of postdoctoral fellows, we have a broader ability to work across disciplines with instructors who are more willing to work with postdocs than with undergraduate peer tutors. Our aim is to build embedded tutoring programs with our postdocs, gain the confidence of faculty members across campus, and, eventually, begin embedding peer-tutors in classes.

Our programmatic aims are fivefold:

- 1) To better understand the pedagogical goals of course instructors in order to best address the needs of students (both those in embedded courses as well as those in similar courses without embedded tutors) who seek our tutoring services.
- 2) To involve instructors (or program leaders) in our work so that they might better understand our mission and the goals of a multimodal writing curriculum.
- 3) To more diversely employ the pedagogical experience our postdoctoral professional tutors possess.
- 4) To provide our professional tutors with additional professional development opportunities that could help them better understand the work of colleagues in other disciplines.
- 5) To make our work more visible across disciplines, units, and programs because our center is new to campus.

While many of our programmatic aims are targeting a more integrated position for the center within the larger community of the Institute, the overarching theme of our embedded tutoring pilots has been to leverage the skills of our unique population of postdoctoral fellows who serve as professional tutors in the center. Each of these fellows also teaches in our multimodal writing and communication program, which provides the instruction for first-year writing and some technical writing courses at the Institute.

In this article we explain how we have begun to move toward our programmatic aims through our first two embedded tutoring pilots, and we showcase the work we have done with the further aim of sharing our pilots as potential models for other writing centers. The case studies we present detail the planning, implementation, and results of our two pilot programs.

### Theoretical Grounding

Embedded tutoring at Georgia Tech responds to the presence of what Terry Meyers Zawacki calls “institutional realities” (n. pag.). Zawacki oversees George Mason University’s Writing Fellows program and finds that, because of the number of embedded tutors and fellowed classes she oversees, she often faces resistance from faculty who are uncertain about the tutors’ roles or their own responsibilities. As Zawacki argues, this resistance can create friction that can hinder student learning. Because our postdoctoral fellows are autonomous instructors, they have a stronger sense of what instructors in other disciplines might find challenging, even daunting, when including writing and communication projects in their courses. We hypothesized that the “common ground” created by embedded tutoring could lead to additional and more successful collaborations with faculty, which would, ultimately, help us better serve our students. However, we also recognized the need to guard

against any perceptions of differing pedagogical strategies that might lead to conflicts about assessing writing on the part of tutors and professors. Joyce Kinkead, et al., echo these concerns as a common problem tutors (embedded or not) face when working with poorly designed or poorly articulated assignments (1-5). This tension is something to keep in mind in our program where the embedded tutor is not an undergraduate, but a Ph.D. with years of teaching experience and pedagogical training—training that can be helpful but can also complicate the tutor’s relationship with the classroom instructor.

Having professional rather than peer tutors embedded in disciplinary writing classes can also have certain benefits over, or at least sidestep certain problems with, some writing fellows programs. For instance, Emily Hall and Bradley Hughes focus on the challenges associated with developing professional relationships between fellows and professors, explaining that “within the Writing Fellows literature...there’s a gap between the impressive potential that Fellows have to be agents of change in WAC and the cautionary tales from the complex realities of Fellows actually working with faculty and student-writers” (22). They attribute these challenges to the complexity of writing fellows’ jobs, and argue that the resulting gap necessitates not just extensive collaboration with instructors on course goals and design but also training in writing theory for fellows. Given the extensive pedagogical training and experience our professional tutors already possess, some of this process can be bypassed—or at least streamlined—to allow for a less demanding collaboration on the part of instructors. Once we gain instructors’ trust, we will move to include peer tutors in our embedded programs. Beginning our pilots with the professional tutors, we believe, will help instructors more readily accept the inclusion of peer tutors in future courses.

On the other side of the collaboration, the instructors for the courses in which we embed professional tutors can learn more about the difficult process of teaching writing and communication. Irene Clark credits working in writing centers as one important way for instructors to better understand the many complexities involved in teaching writing: “In the Writing Center, teachers who may never have reflected on their own composing processes and who have had little formal composition training get to observe real student writers in action and to gain insight into how writing actually occurs” (347). Essentially we aim to bring this experience from the center to the instructors in their own classrooms—creating situations where we help them become better

teachers and communicators while also helping their students. By extension, we hope that our collaborations will help them understand and support our work more fully in the future, which would represent a significant institutional change at Georgia Tech. As Jennifer Corroy notes at the end of her evaluation of the Writing Fellows Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, institutional change can be a reasonable expectation of embedded tutoring programs: “Change most frequently occurs at the lowest level, that of individual reflections and interactions. If widespread lower-level change happens, the institution will change in an increasingly conspicuous manner” (43). Corroy argues that institutional change is never merely the result of a desire for change, rather it must reflect “a realistic determination of goals,” and that “only by identifying those desires and goals can Writing Fellows become true agents, rather than unknowing participants, of institutional change” (43). As we move forward with additional pilots, we will incorporate more clearly-defined desires and goals agreed upon by all collaborators.

This year we launched two pilot programs: the first was in a traditional 16-week undergraduate course, and the second was in a 5-week summer preparatory bridge program for underachieving minority students. Both programs were chosen because the instructor (or program director) approached us to ask for help with the writing and communication projects in her course/program. As part of our center planning, we had already been discussing embedded tutoring, but had not yet found willing collaborators. In both cases, our offer to pilot embedded tutoring was met with enthusiasm. Because neither instructor had considered embedded tutoring as an option (in one case, she had never heard of such a thing), we had the luxury of complete flexibility in designing and implementing our pilots. The only drawback was that in each case we had very little planning time before the course/program launched.

### **Georgia Tech Embedded Tutoring Pilot Project: Undergraduate Philosophy Course**

In fall 2013, we conducted a pilot project with an upper-level philosophy class taught by a Public Policy professor. The class required students to work in small “teams” of 6-8 led by graduate students who acted as team facilitators to create research-based arguments responding to fractious problems in biotechnological research and applications. Students’ responses to these problems came in two parts: in the form of research

presentations and white papers recommending particular courses of action. The course featured facilitators who worked with the individual groups to provide guidance and feedback on their projects. These facilitators included librarians, Georgia Tech graduate students, and Georgia State University law students. All of the facilitators attended a seminar and met once a week throughout the semester that focused in part on coordinating their efforts for facilitating each groups' work.

The professor contacted the Communication Center's director to request an intervention tailored to the specific communication needs of the students. Seeing this as an opportunity to "export Writing Center philosophy and practice" to other parts of Georgia Tech's campus (Severino and Knight 216), and to both assist the professor and further our programmatic goal of involving instructors in our work to help them better understand our mission and the goals of a multimodal writing curriculum, the director assigned a professional tutor to first attend the graduate seminar to learn about the professor's goals and expectations for the assignment and to find out about the students' progress from the facilitators. This meeting helped the tutor determine how to best assist the students in meeting the communication goals of the projects. Based on both the meetings and the tutor's experience in leading oral communication workshops, the tutor created a workshop on effective coordination of visual and oral components of slide presentations. He then visited the class, delivered the workshop, and addressed questions from the whole class before visiting with the groups individually to address their concerns regarding their presentations and to encourage the groups to visit the Communication Center for further assistance. These individual meetings proved to be an invaluable part of the intervention, as they not only gave the tutor a chance to meet each group and provide feedback on their particular projects, but also gave the groups the opportunity to get a glimpse of the way that group-tutoring sessions are conducted in the center. In this way, the tutor was able to act as what Severino and Knight call an "ambassador" for the Communication Center, making connections with students and raising awareness of the Communication Center's mission and services (223).

The workshop facilitated this heightened awareness while also allowing the tutor to represent the aims of a multimodal writing curriculum in an environment outside that of the traditional communication classroom. The professor and her facilitators indicated that the limited intervention was useful for the students in preparing their final

presentations, but ultimately both they and the Communication Center staff felt that the class presented an opportunity for a more extensive and productive collaboration. Conversations with the professor produced a couple of possibilities for semester-long forms of embedded collaboration. One possibility that arose in these conversations is for a professional tutor to act as one of the class facilitators for one of the groups. However, understanding that such an arrangement would limit the tutor's ability to assist the entire class, we proposed another possible form of extended intervention, in which a tutor would act as an embedded representative throughout the semester. As stated at the outset, one of our main programmatic aims for this project is to facilitate a better understanding of the pedagogical goals of course instructors to best address the needs of students. An extended embedded experience of this kind would facilitate this goal by allowing the tutor to create presentations and workshops that would address the needs of the students in the class, as well as meet individually with groups throughout the semester. Because this is a problem-based class requiring students to make arguments regarding "fractious problems" in the field of biotechnology, prolonged involvement in the class would aid the tutor in becoming more familiar with the actual content that the students are researching and discussing. In addition, the professional tutors' high proficiency in "the general academic skills of open-minded inquiry, critical analysis, and use of sources to support an argument," identified by Severino and Trachsel as major assets of embedded tutors, would make them an excellent fit to assist the students in meeting the professor's educational goals for the class.

### **Georgia Tech Embedded Tutoring Pilot Project: OMED Challenge Seminar**

In summer 2014, we conducted a second pilot, serving as a counterpoint to the Public Policy pilot project. Focusing on interpersonal development and communication for STEM majors, the five-week seminar course in which the embedded tutor was placed is part of an intensive preparatory bridge program for underachieving minority students who will attend Georgia Tech in the fall. Established in 1979, the Office of Minority Education's Challenge Program is a comprehensive program within which the seminar forms the centerpiece for writing and communication within the spate of STEM-related summer start-up courses that students take as non-credit hours during the program. Because the program is an intensive student-centered experience, the

seminar emphasizes roles for students that are also key to good tutoring: participant, reviewer, and creator. The “challenge” for this embedded tutoring partnership was to create relationships and methods by which the students would learn to reflect on their communication processes, learn best practices for peer reviewing and group work, and understand how to use the Communication Center as a crucial support service for multimodal communication as they go forward in their academic lives.

The program instructor, a doctoral student completing her degree in History, Technology, and Society, constructed the seminar as a hybrid between interactive lecture and group-work sessions. Her focus on a multimodal, process-oriented approach to the seminar aligned with one of the goals of the center to work with instructors to implement best practices. The Director of the Writing and Communication Program, a reference librarian, members of Communication Center, and representatives from a community-campus partnership gave presentations on various topics, including tips for academic success, for employing effective communication in multiple modes, and for using campus resources. Additionally, within the context of outward-facing communication strategies, students were considering the complexities of the relationship between Georgia Tech and the nearby Westside Community, traditionally an area with a high poverty and crime rate. Strongly sponsored by Dean Jacqueline Royster, the Westside Communities Alliance (WCA) mission and initiatives provided problem-solving opportunities that fundamentally aligned with the STEM focus of the bridge program. The role of the embedded tutor was part of a network intersecting other student support services and programs within the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts, yet she worked within her own “native” role as a tutor in the Communication Center and as an instructor in our multimodal Writing and Communication Program.

The Challenge seminar instructor assigned high- and low-stakes writing and multimodal projects, culminating in a group presentation evaluated by a panel of three rotating judges. The final project included the professional and outreach documents that the students had produced on a website that served as a central digital hub for all of these materials, thereby incorporating the concepts emphasized during the interactive lectures. This structure shifted the course towards the pedagogical practices and goals of our Writing and Communication Program, raising the visibility of our work while also allowing for the further professional development of this embedded tutor as she interacted with these units and more

fundamentally internalized the disciplinary approaches of other programs across campus. Additionally, the seminar content and organization allowed the tutor to draw on her prior interests in areas of identity and social justice, connecting them to her pedagogical experience in facilitating discussion in small groups and in scaffolding assignments.

The work of the embedded tutor within the classroom was a fluid extension of the aims of the course through all modes of communication, occurring largely within the time and space of seminar sessions in which the students broke into teams for group-work. During those times, she circulated around, asking very general questions. Almost always, these inquiries gave the students an opportunity to come together as a group. Although the class was conducted in a large lecture hall with fixed tables and seats, the Director of the Writing and Communication program had emphasized the context of the space and the kinds of interactions it promoted during her interactive lecture, raising students' awareness of their physical surroundings and the potential disjunctions between their classroom environment and the kind of learning in which they were engaging. The embedded tutor saw her role as providing extra support so that students were able to receive face-to-face feedback on their projects, thereby reducing the impact of the fixed classroom arrangement. These interactions allowed her to provide students with a forum to rearticulate their understanding of each assignment, pose questions about potential counterarguments or options that they might not have considered, ask them about future preparations, and encourage them to continue good work.

Since the aims of this pilot project included promoting the use of the Communication Center to students and facilitating understanding of shared goals between the Center and Office of Minority Education, this partnership was both local and programmatic. These dual circumstances presented difficulties and opportunities, mostly because of the small amount of planning time before the pilot began. Although the students in the course were matriculating at Georgia Tech in the fall, they were not yet students and could not, therefore, use our online appointment system; they instead had to make appointments via e-mail for tutoring outside the classroom hour. Their tight schedules made this situation less than ideal; however, in addition to offering tutoring, the embedded tutor was able to devote time and energy to introducing the center and its services in a tailored fashion for the students who did come for tutoring.

This introduction was reinforced in the course when the embedded tutor presented on the resources

beyond the classroom available to students on campus. She asked the students to treat approaching one of these services as a rhetorical situation, identifying for themselves what sort of help they were seeking, what the service specifically offered, and what needed to be communicated within that negotiation between they required and what could be provided. To further illuminate such a negotiation, the Associate Director of the Communication Center and the embedded tutor role-played an unproductive tutoring session, and then a volunteer from the class role-played a productive session, using the information and tips that had evolved from student input.

The success of this embedded tutoring partnership will be long-term. In the pilot program, students benefited nominally from the extra support of the tutor and were continually exposed to the resources available to them at the center. The wrap-up meeting between the Communication Center team, featuring the Associate Director of the Center and embedded tutor, and the organizational leaders of the bridge program, including Directors of the Office of Minority Education, provided a fruitful exchange of ideas to move the partnership forward through means of intentional logistical and theoretical collaborations. Additionally, this discussion underscored the need for continuing the embedded tutoring model in that the pedagogical outcomes of the course, the program, and the center were very openly connected in exciting ways.

The recommendations of the group included creating a peer tutor role to work alongside the professional embedded tutor, thereby moving the partnership towards the programmatic goal of the Communication Center to eventually embed undergraduate tutors. The seminar instructor shared feedback from students' evaluations indicating that the goals of the course need to be more explicitly articulated and summarized throughout the program. Various strategies for these closer alignments were discussed among participants, all of which helped to more sharply define the interactions and general goals between the instructor and embedded tutor. The instructor also expressed her interest in placing more emphasis on student writing, since she noted a disconnection between the students' evaluations of the seminar and their ability to reflect and understand their own writing processes and progress. As this collaboration moves forward, in order for the Communication Center to best serve the students in the bridge program each summer and after its conclusion when they matriculate as students at Georgia Tech, discussions with these administrative partners will need to be situated within an ongoing

framework of exchange that continues throughout the academic year. Furthermore, more detailed research in the form of surveys and follow-up interviews with students should be conducted.

Since this pilot directly addressed the interpersonal and academic skills that students would need to succeed in their multimodal first-year composition courses, but did not focus on individual student writing, as the partnership continues, new strategies for reaching students to help them improve their writing are needed. In their essay "Getting the Writing Center into FYC Classrooms," Dvorak, Bruce, and Lutkewitte point out that research has shown that in-classroom tutoring and out-of-class mentoring have helped to facilitate students' development as "successful college students," but that no conclusions from this body of work can be drawn about the impact on students' writing skills (3). The anecdotal findings of this pilot course support this model of combining tutoring and mentoring for this bridge seminar course and also demonstrate the importance of the assessment that more research is needed to understand how such work can improve students' writing skills.

### Future Implications

The most important anecdotal finding from our two pilot studies was that there are instructors at Georgia Tech who are eager to collaborate and have embedded tutors in their courses and programs. We also achieved our goal of learning more about the expectations of instructors and transmitting that important information to all the tutors in our center to better help students in the course as well as students in other courses doing similar disciplinary work. The professional tutors who were embedded gained additional contexts both for tutoring and for their own teaching, especially for multimodal first-year writing composition courses targeting STEM majors. The professional tutors also benefited from networking and exposure to pedagogical and administrative structures outside of their home unit—an important professional development opportunity that will likely serve them when they move into permanent positions at other universities after completing their postdoctoral fellowships. We also succeeded in creating a better understanding of the work we do with instructors outside of our discipline. This is particularly important because a Public Policy professor has been named the new director of our Honors Program, and has already expressed a strong interest in future collaborations. Likewise, the OMED Challenge Program Directors are eager to collaborate

on future projects. Overall, we are committed to the creation of what Severino and Knight call a “ripple effect” of awareness emerging from a “center philosophy and practice, that moves us toward “the perfect outcome”: “a university that *is* a Writing Center” (223-5, emphasis added). Already we have gained important foundational knowledge for designing and redesigning embedded tutoring collaborations that will become a cornerstone of the services we offer and will more firmly integrate our work into the larger institutional community.

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## (RE)SHAPING A CURRICULUM-BASED TUTOR PREPARATION SEMINAR: A COURSE DESIGN PROPOSAL

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In Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman's collection *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring* (2005), the phrase "on location" is borrowed from film production and is aptly applied to writing tutors working within classrooms. As Spigelman and Grobman point out, the metaphor parallels "shooting on location" with the dynamic nature of classroom-based writing tutoring. Students, tutors, and faculty members create a different collaborative ethos than those formed in writing centers, and these differences between the philosophy of the writing center and the site of the classroom should necessarily be reflected in the training of course-embedded tutors.

With these shifts in location, purpose, and the stakeholders for tutoring, peer tutor training through preparation courses requires different approaches to preparing students for their roles. The role of tutors has been characterized by numerous scholars in the field of composition and rhetoric studies, and student "emissaries," "ambassadors," and "agents of change" are becoming more entrenched in classroom contexts,<sup>1</sup> oftentimes fulfilling roles in multiple contexts, including the writing center, non-writing classes, and first-year seminars. The adoption of writing fellows, associates, or colleagues in different curricular contexts means that preparation courses must account for the ways that tutors will collaborate with peers, faculty, administrators, and each other. This essay provides a course design outline for those who are charged with preparing tutors to work with peers and faculty outside of the writing center. It also provides a framework for understanding an institutional context and follows with rationale for establishing or modifying a tutor preparation course to meet the needs of tutors working with faculty and peers in a course. Finally, the essay focuses on the ways that the authors have administered the Writing Colleagues Program (WCP) at Hobart and William Smith Colleges; as directors, we have tried to remain open to the ways that non-writing faculty and students provide important insights and perspectives on tutor training and classroom preparation.

### **Analyzing the Institutional Context and Mission of Curriculum-Based Peer Tutors**

Any department, program, or writing center that is charged with beginning a curriculum-based peer-tutoring program must be keenly aware of its institutional context and the overall mission in creating such a program. At larger institutions, such as Brown University and University of Wisconsin, Writing Fellows programs have flourished with a different scale and mission than those at smaller liberal arts institutions such as Swarthmore and Oberlin Colleges.

At HWS, there are two distinct, but related, sites in which peer support for writing occurs. The WCP is housed in the Program of Writing and Rhetoric. The WCP is directed (on a volunteer basis) by full-time Writing and Rhetoric faculty and supported by a full-time coordinator, who is an HWS and WCP alumnus. The WCP is responsible for recruiting, training, placing, and supporting all first-time writing tutors on campus. We place Writing Colleagues (WCs) in approximately fifty percent of the Colleges' required first-year seminars as well as introductory courses. Once WCs have completed at least two course placements, they are eligible to apply to work as tutors in the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The CTL is an independent center on campus responsible for faculty development, disability services, and academic student support services. The former WCs who are employed by the CTL are supported by a CTL staff member and work one-on-one with students in a capacity that resembles traditional writing center work.

In this way, our curriculum-based peer-tutoring program serves the larger institution primarily by providing well-trained, embedded tutors in courses across the disciplines and secondarily by providing the CTL with carefully selected and experienced peer tutors. We recognize the advantage of having an independent Writing and Rhetoric Program that utilizes faculty expertise to train writing tutors for future work in classrooms, and in some cases, the CTL. Our unique context means that WCs are primarily selected based on their perceived ability to complete the rigorous work of the preparation course,

their potential to work with peers on essay assignments, their collaborative ethos as it relates to faculty interaction, and their conviction and willingness to improve and grow as writers.

As new directors, the WCP has been a fortunate inheritance from the founding director, Cheryl Forbes. This inheritance has meant that the application process, preparation course, and classroom placement process have entered a second phase in which we are tasked with bringing new vision and insights to the program. Each semester, undergraduates who are nominated by their professors or WCs apply to the WCP. Applicants are required to submit an application letter, a transcript, references, and writing samples and participate in an interactive interview (where applicants act in the capacity of WCs and the Directors play their peers). Accepted students enroll in the Writing Colleagues Seminar, which is offered each semester, and students receive course credit for participating in the seminar. Last semester (Spring 2014), the directors co-taught the course with 13 students and the Writing Colleagues Coordinator (Alex Janney) acted as the model WC for the course. WCs are embedded in a course only after the successful completion of the preparatory seminar.

Faculty from across the Colleges elect to embed WCs in their courses; historically, faculty members were selected to work with the WCP on a first-come, first-serve basis. However, we discovered a few flaws with this approach. First, not all faculty members are well-prepared to work with WCPs, so we designed an online questionnaire for faculty requesting to work with a WC. This questionnaire helps us to determine the challenges and strengths a given faculty member might bring to working with an embedded tutor and helps us match the faculty member with an appropriate WC.

We also decided that we would prioritize courses that enrolled a high number of first-year students, particularly the first-year seminar. First-year seminars are taught by full-time faculty from across the disciplines; the theme of each seminar is different, but all seminars must be writing instructive. We chose to focus our efforts on the first-year seminar and other first year courses for several reasons. First, the first-year seminar is the only course required of all HWS students and it is the only institutionalized place in which WAC occurs. Faculty members who teach the first-year seminar are generally committed to incorporating WAC best practices into their classes, which means the WC generally has an active, vital, and integrative role in the course. Another advantage of focusing our efforts on the first-year seminar is that we dramatically increase the number of HWS students

who experience the benefits of peer-to-peer writing support. At this point, we can be confident that half of all HWS first-years met with another student at least six times over the course of a semester to discuss their writing; we hope this contributes to a culture of collaboration and revision among first-year students, while making it more likely that they will choose to work with a WC or CTL tutor in the future.

A third advantage of focusing our work on first-year students is that it simplifies the training of our first-time WCs. As the program grows, we hope to introduce more opportunities for WCs to work in upper-level courses in the disciplines, but currently most of our WCs work primarily with first-year students. This means that WCs are working with faculty from across the disciplines, in courses that tend to emphasize generalist approaches to writing, and with students who have limited experience with college writing in any discipline. This also means that neither generalist nor specialist approaches to tutor training are strictly applicable. The courses in which the WCs are generally placed do not require the students enrolled in the course to have any specialized disciplinary knowledge; indeed, first-year seminars and introductory level courses *presume* that students have no disciplinary knowledge. The WCs at HWS must be able to decode faculty expectations and assignments that are sometimes informed by unacknowledged disciplinary assumptions; at the same time, they are often participating in courses that purport to introduce students to general writing, reading, and thinking skills. Thus, the course aims to introduce future WCs to a number of peer-tutoring approaches, most of which tend to align with approaches characterized as generalist, such as an emphasis on writers retaining control over their own writing, writing process, and facilitative questions, while at the same time providing WCs with significant exposure to WAC/WID theories that might help them decode and make explicit faculty members' disciplinary experiences with and assumptions about writing.

### **Theoretical Rationale: An Overview of Course Readings and Essay Assignments<sup>2</sup>**

The preparatory seminar for WCs has six course objectives:

- To encourage writerly growth through challenging, imaginative reading and writing assignments.
- To invite students to analyze their own identities and authority as WCs.

- To challenge students to rethink how the education process operates, through course readings that focus on issues of race, gender, class, language, and culture.
- To provide practical experience working with peers in a one-on-one context, including in the preparation course with the coordinator, peers, and a first-year writing student.
- To give students experience analyzing essay assignments and other writing genres.
- To build a collaborative ethos among peers, WCs, and faculty members.

Below, we outline how each specific objective is met, though these objectives are met in overlapping and complementary ways throughout the course.

*Encouraging writerly growth through challenging, imaginative reading and writing assignments.*

While students accepted into the WCP are already strong readers and writers, one of our primary goals is to further strengthen WCs' skills. This is perhaps one of the most significant differences between the training of embedded course tutors and traditional writing center tutors. We have found that embedded tutors' reading, writing, and thinking skills come under special scrutiny in the course of their work; faculty members and students have significant exposure to WCs' writing skills throughout the course of the semester through regular conversations about writing pedagogy, the use of WCs' own writing as models for students, and frequent email correspondence. Thus, strong writing skills are an important component in enhancing the ethos of both the WCs and the WCP.

In addition to building on WCs' already strong writing and reading skills, challenging assignments are also designed to force future WCs to meaningfully engage with the writing process. Many of the WCs enrolled in the seminar have never struggled with writing and have, therefore, not needed to prewrite, revise, or engage with critique to a significant degree. In order for WCs to understand the benefits of these writing practices—so they might pass them along to faculty and students—they have to experience their benefits for themselves. Thus, the course has been designed to truly challenge WCs as readers, writers, and thinkers.

Three major writing assignments anchor the course: a theoretically informed personal essay, a close reading essay, and a genre and discourse analysis. These assignments expose students to three distinct writing genres and therefore often require students to think and write in ways that they have not before. For example, the first essay assignment asks students to

explore an aspect of their own educational experience to extend or complicate a Freirian concept, while also using Freire to articulate aspects of their own experiences that were previously invisible or uninterrogated. Students are given very little direction about how to organize, incorporate evidence, or stylistically approach this essay; instead, they are required to make writing choices that best support the argument of their essay. This freedom is discomfiting to students, but it forces them to experiment with form through the processes of revision, workshop, Writing Colleagues sessions, and engaging with instructor feedback. That the essay is simultaneously theoretical, analytical, and experiential also presents each student with unique challenges: some students are comfortable with description, while others are more comfortable with theory, and still others with analysis. This means that students can build from their own comfort zone, but must also engage with approaches to writing with which they feel less comfortable.

*Inviting students to analyze their own identity and authority as Writing Colleagues.*

The starting point for the course is critical reading and critical pedagogy. Students begin by reading Bartholomae and Petrosky's introduction to *Ways of Reading*. The conversation on reading frames the larger goal of engaging students in complex and challenging texts that seek to destabilize their notions about the educational process and their identities as tutors. Students have worked in various capacities as tutors and editors in high school and they have often become comfortable with identities that fix them as authorities over other students' writing. Our initial efforts in the course focus on destabilizing their identities as directive tutors who are called to a "fix-it" model of student support. We focus on essays by Muriel Harris, Lad Tobin, and Donald Murray, as well as Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in order to encourage WCs to interrogate their assumptions about both faculty and tutor authority. In the course of their placements, WCs have to navigate a shifting terrain in which they are at once students, intermediaries, and colleagues to faculty members. Thus WCs benefit from discussion of the personas and places that peer tutors may find themselves in, in meetings with faculty, one-on-one sessions with fellow students, and in the classroom.

*Challenging students to rethink how the education process operates through course readings that focus on issues of race, gender, class, language, and culture.*

In the second unit of the course, students investigate the ways that language emerges through

(and because of) cultural and systemic forces. Students are exposed to scholars such as Lisa Delpit, Vershawn Ashanti Young, Paul Matsuda, and Michelle Cox. The class conversation about these texts brings students to an awareness of the ways that language privilege often goes unseen in education and writing instruction. Readings in this unit help students to challenge their own thinking about how Standard English operates to exclude or marginalize some in higher education. By engaging in a critical discussion of language and culture, students are forced to investigate and question their own language ideologies. The writing assignment for this unit asks students to conduct a close analysis of passage from Gloria Anzaldúa's, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." This assignment requires students to consider the relationship between Anzaldúa's use of language and her arguments *about* language. Over the course of writing this essay, even the staunchest defenders of Standard English come to recognize the prevalence and power of language variation.

We find that the WCs benefit from a sustained exploration of language ideologies. It is important that WCs are able to work effectively with students who speak and write in a variety of Englishes and that they actively resist the reproduction of linguistic assumptions and prejudices. It is also important that WCs are able to have difficult conversations with faculty members about their language ideologies. Well-meaning first-year seminar professors often have outmoded ways of thinking about language, grammar, and style. Some take off points for every usage error, others are unsure of how to support ELLS, while others employ ineffective and alienating methods for addressing sentence-level concerns. The preparatory seminar provides WCs with the theoretical tools to consider the implications of these pedagogical practices and the practical experience to talk about them. Because of conversations with their WCs, many faculty members who work closely with first year students have changed pedagogies and policies that reinforce linguistic hierarchies.

*Providing practical experience working with peers in a one-on-one context, including in the preparation course with the coordinator, peers, and a first-year writing student.*

Students in the course have the chance to work with our professional WC Coordinator who acts as a Writing Colleague for the preparation course. The coordinator meets with each student at least twice for each paper. Students benefit from their meetings with the coordinator because they help to improve their writing and expose them to the benefits of the WCP. The coordinator also models tutoring practices that include facilitative questions, multiple approaches to

providing feedback, and the use of graphic organizers. The nature of their work with the coordinator ideally assists students in cultivating a persona as a facilitator and collaborator with their peers. In-class activities often ask students to reflect on their own experiences working with the coordinator in order to help them make connections between readings about tutoring practices and the experience of working with a WC.

The prospective WCs are also given opportunities to act as WCs themselves. They begin this work by acting as WCs for one another; four weeks into the semester each WC is paired with a student from an introductory writing course. This practicum experience serves to initiate tutor training outside of the preparation course and their work with the coordinator. Because the WCs are paired with students from the directors' own courses, we are able to carefully select and monitor the pairings as they progress through the rest of the semester.

*Giving students experience analyzing essay assignments and other writing genres.*

Our approach to genre follows Spigelman and Grobman's analysis of Charles Bazerman's definition of genre as a matter of environment and location. In our third unit, we use Elizabeth Wardle and Amy Devitt's scholarship to expand students' definitions of genre and to examine how disciplines and individual professors may define genre in course placements. In this unit, students complete a third essay that functions as a hybrid discourse and genre analysis. As part of the essay assignment, students contact a current WC and the faculty member with whom that WC is working. Our students ask the professor for a writing assignment and three sample student essays. From their analysis of the selected essay assignment, students construct questions to ask the faculty member and WC in one-on-one interviews. These interviews allow students to investigate the ways that faculty and WCs understand and articulate the goals of the essay assignment, providing important context for their analysis of student essays. As students work to make sense of the data they collected, they must consider how the assignment, faculty and WC interaction, and the student writing itself work to promote particular ideologies about writing, genre, and collaboration.

This project gives students experience working with faculty, a key component of the WC experience. It also gives them theoretical frameworks and practical experience that they can bring to their placements in order to identify and make more explicit the variety of assumptions that faculty might bring to writing assignments, instruction, and feedback.

*Building a collaborative ethos among peers, Writing Colleagues, and faculty members.*

While students are working on their third essay assignment and discussing their practicum experience, they read emerging scholarship on curriculum-based peer tutors, as well as WAC/WID scholarship and genre theory. The readings include work by Susan McLeod, Margot Soven, Jill Gladstein, Michael Pemberton, Elizabeth Wardle, and Amy Devitt. The combination of readings provides a way to return to the critical lens that begins the course, this time with an explicit focus on the advantages and challenges of acting as embedded tutors in courses taught by faculty with a variety of disciplinary backgrounds.

The course culminates with a final portfolio where students include their three major essays and a synthesis essay. Along with assessing these pieces for the portfolio, we try to create opportunities for students, in the spring semester especially, to meet with the faculty member they will be working with in the first-year seminar in the fall. The Dean and Assistant Director organize a First-Year Seminar Workshop Day in which the directors provide the faculty with resources and guidelines for collaborating with WCs. In addition, the first-year seminar faculty member and their WC have the chance to meet and begin a discussion about the course content and writing assignments. On the First-Year Seminar Workshop Day, we are able to achieve a central objective of the tutor preparation course: to get WCs and faculty members to begin communicating and collaborating. For those students who are doing placements, this experience in talking with their faculty has been vital. The list of objectives above is certainly not exhaustive and it is ever changing in response to institutional and departmental need.

### **Critical Reflection on the Writing Colleagues Seminar**

The strengths and drawbacks of the course design outlined above are closely related to the WCPs current emphasis on supporting first-year writers. Because all WCs spend their first placement working with first-year writers in general education courses, the preparation seminar takes on a specificity that helps WCs to feel especially well-prepared for a very particular kind of tutoring experience. The renewed emphasis we are placing on faculty interaction within the preparation seminar—in the form of the discourse and genre analysis essay and interviews with WCs and faculty—has served to bridge the preparation course with the course placements. The course's emphasis on writerly growth and collaboration is especially well-

suited for beginning WCs who are generally in their sophomore year; these students have had limited exposure to the writing process or disciplinary writing practices and are generally open to, and in need of, significant attention to their own writing. Furthermore issues of authority, power, and positioning are essential considerations given that the WCs are so close in age to the students with whom they will work. Community and collaboration is easy to foster among students in the seminar because they are all preparing to do very similar kinds of work, and despite their different disciplinary interests, most WCs are still enrolled primarily in general education courses at the time of the seminar.

While the course draws its success partly from the specific focus on supporting first-year writers, it is perhaps less successful at preparing WCs for tutoring experiences beyond their first placement. An increasing number of faculty members have requested WCs for upper-division courses, and we have also received inquiries about utilizing WCs in community-based literacy projects, in courses taught at a nearby correctional facility, and for targeted student populations like ELL students, student-athletes, and developmental writers. We would very much like to provide WCs with an opportunity to grow beyond their placements in lower-division courses but acknowledge that the seminar may not prepare students as effectively to work in these diverse contexts.

We have also found that students in the seminar are noticeably less engaged with the readings and discussions that make up the third unit of the course, which focuses on genre theory and WAC/WID. We suspect that this is a result of the students' inexperience with disciplinary writing practices and their own experiences in first-year seminars that tend to emphasize more generalist approaches to writing instruction. It is likely that if the WC seminar enrolled students who were further along in their college careers or if WCs anticipated placements in upper-division courses, discussions of genre, WAC, and WID would seem more accessible and relevant to our students.

Given these challenges, we plan to introduce a second, upper-division course that complements the work of the current WCs Seminar. In this second course, our students could develop a focus on disciplinary knowledge. This specialist training would provide the classroom setting for WCs to apply the disciplinary knowledge that they develop in their majors to their placements. Furthermore, an upper-division course may provide a more appropriate context for engaging with scholarly conversations in

composition and help students to develop their writing skills as they move into graduate school or careers.

## Conclusion: Future Perspectives on the Programmatic Mission

As a tutor preparation course, the WCs Seminar has sought to prepare students through critical awareness, practical tutoring experience, and new writerly challenges. Our programmatic focus on the institutional context means we have the ability to lead WAC initiatives and adapt to future curricular changes. The unique position of our WCP means that tutors are prepared differently for their writing center work, and they gain experience working with faculty and students before they support their peers in the writing center. In the preparation seminar, we hope that our course objectives balance practical training with a critical examination of how becoming a WC positions students between their peers and their faculty collaborator. The adaptability of our program, we believe, should be paralleled by the WCs who work in spaces that require them to adapt and draw on their training in a variety of ways.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See *Rewriting Across the Disciplines: Writing Fellows as Agents of Change in WAC*. Spec. issue of *Across the Disciplines* 5 (28 Mar. 2008).

<sup>2</sup> A complete list of course readings is provided on the Works Cited page. The preparation course syllabus (WRRH 305: Writing Colleagues Seminar), essay assignments, and supporting materials available upon request via email.

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## CALL FOR PAPERS: WRITING AND DIS/ABILITY

For its Fall 2015 issue, *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* welcomes submissions on a wide range of topics related to writing center administration, practice, and theory. We also encourage submissions relating to the issue's theme on "Writing and Ability." Debility and capacity are experienced broadly, according to Robert McRuer, who points out that "all people" will experience disability eventually "if they live long enough." Disability shapes the way we communicate with others and impacts our identities as writers, rhetors, and intellectuals.

To that end, the editors of *Praxis* seek submissions that reflect on the way that issues of dis/ability, both invisible and visible, embodied and mental, shape writing center work. Considerations of dis/ability could even encompass contemporary academic notions of what it means to be a "capable" writer.

Submissions might explore, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- How do extant writing center practices serve or hinder students with intellectual, physical, or psychiatric disabilities or impairments?
- What practices help consultants with disabilities or impairments navigate writing center contexts?
- What does it mean to be a "capable" writer? How do writing centers contribute to empowering capable writers?
- How do we expect non-native speakers of English to be capable of succeeding in the writing center?
- How do digital or multi-model writing practices enrich our understanding of disability?
- How do we write when we are ill or impaired?

Recommended article length is 3000 to 4000 words.

Articles should conform to MLA style. Please submit articles to [praxisuwc@gmail.com](mailto:praxisuwc@gmail.com). For further information about submitting an article, the journal's blind peer-review process, or to contact the managing editors, please direct emails to the same address.

The deadline for fall issue consideration is January 15, 2014.