

## Connecting WID and the Writing Center: Tools for Collaboration

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WRITING CENTER ADMINISTRATORS and scholars have long struggled with the problem of providing useful writing support for students in disciplinary courses, when the tutors who staff writing centers are usually not experts in those disciplines. Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)/Writing in the Disciplines (WID) programs, for their part, have not always been focused on the specific design of student support, especially for upper-level courses in the disciplines. In this article, we discuss a new approach that we have developed on our campus for providing access to disciplinary knowledge for tutors and students that we call the Discipline- and Assignment-specific Tutoring Tools (DATT). This project has evolved out of collaborations between individuals in our college's Writing Across the Curriculum Program, writing center tutors and faculty members from across the campus, and is designed to help writing center tutors go beyond working on seemingly generic issues in their tutoring sessions to providing directed support for tutor-student collaborations on discipline-specific writing projects. The DATTs address a number of issues identified by tutors, students and instructors, such as the need for concrete models of writing and learning tasks that help students produce writing that conforms to the disciplinary requirements of the field, as well as the need for appropriate interpretation of the assignments and terminology of a discipline or course.

The history of the project we describe here is something like a *Bildungsroman*, in which we set out on a journey that takes both Writing Across the Curriculum and writing center practitioners out of their comfort zones, and hopefully leads us to learn something about the challenges and potential rewards involved. The initiative has been known by various names as it was re-conceived along the way, ranging from "Infosheets" to "Guided Paper Starters," but we have settled on the less-catchy but more descriptive "Discipline-and-Assignment-specific Tutoring Tools" (DATT).

In all of its iterations, the intended purpose was to help close the gap between WAC/WID pedagogy as it is practiced in actual classrooms on our campus, and writing center support services where tutors who were mostly undergraduate and recent graduate English majors were increasingly called upon to tutor outside their accustomed focus on composition and literature courses. The project is also notable for what it reveals about the differing frameworks that underlie WAC/WID and writing center practices.

### *WAC/WID and the Writing Center: Student Support and Divisions of Labor*

The relationship between WAC/WID and the writing center is one of the core topics of WAC scholarship. The current WAC bibliography on the subject lists 233 items ranging from the late 1970s right up to the present (Jory). Writing centers were there at the birth of WAC, and in many cases pre-dated it. Writing Across the Curriculum and writing centers share “intersecting histories” (Mullin), and so the roles of WAC/WID and of writing centers appear to be complementary, with WAC primarily focusing on faculty development, and writing centers on student support. In recent years, there have been calls for a greater integration of WAC/WID and the writing center, with some emerging from the writing center side (Waldo; Corbett and LaFrance) and some from the WAC/WID side (McLeod; Kuriloff). Michael Pemberton pointed out as early as 1995 that in many cases there is a fundamental disparity in theoretical orientation and basic practices between WAC and writing centers, to the extent that bringing the two together, as Pemberton argues, has resulted in an “arranged marriage” founded on “administrative expediency” rather than a core alignment of goals and conceptions.

Because many writing centers arose initially as support for first-year composition, and because most peer tutors have successfully completed that course and many writing center administrators teach it, the issue of course-and-assignment-specific support tends to get submerged in this familiarity. As writing center mandates have expanded to support writing courses beyond composition, issues of discipline have become increasingly important, and yet still tend to fall into the gap caused by the division of labor between WAC/WID and the writing center. The writing center has often operated with the unspoken assumption that student writing is student writing, and that therefore a tutor can approach any session in the same way: by asking the student to provide the context and conventions of the assignment. The tutor’s role has been limited to giving feedback as a general reader and as a writing process coach, but it is often precisely the context and conventions that are at the heart of a student’s difficulties, especially in highly technical subjects and those with particularly specific rhetorical conventions. The tutor’s expertise in supporting composition courses may be of little use here, and might even be counterproductive, if,

for example, they advise students to begin by stating a thesis if that is not the usual convention within a given field.

The question of how writing centers should offer tutoring services not only to students enrolled in composition courses but also to those in courses across the disciplines has been a focus of writing center literature for some time. Several scholars (e.g., Hubbuch) have argued that a tutor's lack of knowledge about the content of a specific discipline is both beneficial and appropriate in a tutoring session, whereas others take a more equivocal stance suggesting that some expertise on the part of the tutor is useful in that it leads tutors to direct their sessions towards more higher-order concerns (Kiedaisch and Dinitz). Other scholars argue that disciplinary expertise is necessary for tutoring to have real, long-term value for a client, especially because only an expert can introduce a client to knowledge in the discipline—be it to do with content or discourse conventions—that the client does not and perhaps cannot yet know (Shamoon and Burns; Clark). The consensus seems to be that some disciplinary knowledge is useful in a writing center context, but only when it does not lead to a tutor's appropriation of a client's work. However, the availability of such knowledge in a writing center very much depends on the expertise of individual tutors, often leading to a situation where those who prove to be the best available tutors do not have the disciplinary expertise that would match the needs of students coming to the writing center.

Further, whereas writing centers have often prioritized providing student support over providing specialized preparation for support staff, WAC/WID has not always seen support for students as an integral part of its mission partially because in many cases the writing center was already there when WAC programs got their start and many institutions simply expanded the Writing Center mission to include supporting WAC/WID courses. Overtaxed WAC administrators find themselves with more than enough to do in focusing on their pedagogical training for faculty in WAC pedagogy, and in gradually developing a curriculum that includes writing at every level and in every department. In order to bridge the gap between writing center and WAC foci, we need to find some administrative avenue for addressing the dilemma of a student's experience of college writing. As students move on to more advanced courses, they are expected more and more to mimic and then to internalize and finally to master the genres and registers and conventions of their discipline. They are expected to become members of that disciplinary discourse community, and to learn how to participate in its practices, think according to its epistemological assumptions, and finally write like an insider. If they are having difficulty doing so—and who wouldn't, with so complex a task?—they may seek out support in the writing center.

## *WAC/WID, Writing Fellows, and the Roots of DATT at York College*

York College is a four-year college within a large urban university system, the City University of New York. Our campus is known for its professional programs, ranging from social work to physician's assistant to nursing to medical technology to occupational therapy. As students move from lower-level to upper-level courses, and from WAC to WID, the differing theoretical frameworks of WID and the writing center become more evident. Many of our majors in our "pre-professional" programs must complete writing assignments that focus on highly technical genres that often have strict requirements for producing documents. These genres do not allow for a lot of variation in terms of structure or register, and therefore tutors who have only training in rhetoric or experience in humanities courses will be able to offer only limited advice, if they are to rely only on their own resources.

Our WAC program at York College is a writing intensive (WI) model that is a hybrid of a WAC and a WID orientation. We require two lower-level WI courses, often completed in general education or elective courses, and one upper-level WI within the major. We also required (until Fall 2013), as a prerequisite to all upper-level WIs, a junior-level research writing course that is generally taught by instructors with a rhetoric and composition or English literature background, in which students write a research paper that addresses issues in their field but is framed for a more general audience. One of the signature features of the university-wide WAC program is a major resource: six "CUNY writing fellows"—advanced graduate students who are given WAC training and work fifteen hours per week—are assigned to support the program on each campus. Not to be confused with undergraduate "writing fellows" who tutor at other institutions, our graduate writing fellows usually have significant teaching experience, and can interact with our faculty on a near-collegial level. Their ambiguous positioning within the interstices of the institution—not instructors, not teaching assistants, not tutors, not administrators, yet with elements of each—allows them to serve as intermediaries between all these groups, and this flexibility of role was crucial in both the conception and the development of the DATT initiative.

The courses that we chose for the DATT project were all upper-level courses intended for juniors and seniors, and in one case, graduate students. Within those courses, the DATT project focused on assignments that instructors collaborating with writing fellows had identified as particularly problematic for students. From a WAC perspective, the first question to ask about such assignments is if the assignments are really that difficult or if they are not clearly structured or explained to students. The WAC instinct is to ask faculty to re-think their approach to assignment design and classroom management of assignments. In this case, however, the courses in nursing, occupational therapy, social work, and health education were

also courses in which Writing Fellows had been working with the faculty to develop and to implement WID pedagogy by scaffolding longer assignments, using low-stakes and middle-stakes writing and developing assessment tools that include writing goals as well as content goals. These were courses where a lot of effort had already been expended on WID pedagogical design; the DATTs were a natural extension of the work that had already been done.

### *Designing the DATTs*

The DATTs were designed with the following principles in mind, described by the writing fellow who designed the original “Infosheets” template:

What if we had a kiosk in the Writing Center that stocked an array of one-page handouts with big print and lots of white space, each of which addressed a single very specific writing-related skill? The one-page, big print and white space requirements were important to the concept: if the information could not fit on one side of an 8 ½ by 11 sheet of paper in 14-point type, then it was too much information. Students wouldn’t use it, and if they tried to use it, it would be just as likely to confuse them as to help them solve their problem. (Broder 2)

As we started to look at the Infosheets as a resource for the writing center, other benefits became apparent. The format was flexible and open-ended enough so that as long as a writing fellow and a faculty member were interested, there was no limit to the issues that they could try to represent on the Infosheets. Tutors could also participate in the production of these materials by examining them and helping the writing fellows adapt them for the writing center context to help focus the resources on their students’ problem areas in a particular assignment or course. The resources could also potentially capture the often-ephemeral workshop material with which tutors are trained, and whose transmission to students was unevenly implemented.

The DATT project arose from the assumption that not all knowledge exists within the student, and that setting up the tutor as an expert sometimes creates false expectations of the tutor’s ability to help students with their disciplinary and research assignments. In developing the DATT, we felt that building in structures for collaboration was vital, but as we came to see, each adaptation of the DATT framework raised different issues about the ways in which we ask our students to understand our assignments, and how the writing center staff must be creative in helping the student respond to the assignment in the course of a tutoring session.

The set of DATTs that was designed surrounding the literature review section of the occupational therapy (OT) program’s graduate thesis provides a useful illustration of the process surrounding the development of these resources. The writing

center's administrative staff had already tried to provide specialized training for tutors to help them negotiate the specialized writing conventions of the literature review. Faculty in the occupational therapy (OT) department had identified this part of the thesis as one that the students struggled with, so the writing center director and a writing fellow met extensively with the OT faculty to develop a workshop to train tutors to understand the conventions of this review so that they could support OT students as they came to the writing center for help. The workshop itself was not particularly effective, however; the writing fellow conducting it had created a lecture rather than a truly interactive experience that would get the tutors thinking about what to do in a tutoring session. The DATT provided an opportunity to revisit the topic with the OT faculty and develop resources with which both the tutors and students could interact. The DATTs stood in for both writing fellow and faculty in explaining how the assignment should be executed. We include the first of the series of DATT for this course here (Figure 1); others can be found at <http://www.york.cuny.edu/wac/for-students/discipline-specific-infosheets> along with the other DATT resources). This DATT, while more generic than others seen in Figures 2, 3 and 4, shows the basic format of the resources.

The DATTs for this assignment are typical. They begin with a description of the assignment and a description of the conventions that are part of the assumptions of the assignment, such as APA style citations. The DATTs then focus on specific strategies that students might use to successfully negotiate the process of writing the literature review, such as how to read relevant articles effectively, and how to summarize the information that they find in those articles in a way that will make a contribution to the overall focus of their thesis. The DATTs provide a breakdown of the task and the strategies used to negotiate the actual writing of the assignment.

### *The DATT Development Process: Case Studies*

To further illustrate the process of developing the DATT, we turn to the first set that we developed. The starting point for the development of these DATTs was an assessment rubric for the final paper in the upper-division writing-intensive health education course, *Program Planning*. This *Program Planning* assignment was notorious in the writing center. Students would come needing help with their writing, and both tutors and students would flounder to understand expectations for the assignment, and to implement the detailed rubric that the course instructors had developed over the years. When a writing fellow started working with the course instructor one semester on supporting the writing pedagogy surrounding this assignment, the DATTs existed only as a set of generic tools developed to help students with elements of paper writing such as developing a thesis, writing an introduction, and

using evidence to support claims. Using the DATT concept, the fellow assigned to the *Program Planning* class developed a set of DATTs to break down the rubric so

Writing a Literature Review DATT #1

**Writing a Literature Review: Overview**

A **Literature Review** represents an in-depth written survey of scholarly articles, books, and other sources in a problem area you choose to research. Your purpose is to substantiate the state of the field: provide an overview of significant literature in your field.

**A literature review:**

- begins with the formulation of a problem or question that you wish to investigate or a hypothesis (an educated guess, hunch, or speculation proposed as a possible solution to a problem that is based on observation and can be supported or refuted through further observation or experimentation).

Example: Chocolate may cause pimples

- addresses why it is important.
- discusses *concepts* and **data**, not “papers”, “articles”, or authors.
- is *not* a list describing or summarizing one piece of literature after another.
- includes a *critical analysis* of the relationship among different works.
- organizes the significant literature into sections that present themes or identify trends that are related to your research problem.
- does not list all the material published, but *synthesizes and evaluates* according to the guiding concept of your problem or question (your review makes something new out of parts and elements of related articles that you judge as important to your problem or question).
- may be written as a stand-alone paper or to provide a *theoretical framework* and **rationale** for a research study (such as a thesis or dissertation).

York College WAC and Writing Center

Figure 1. Writing a Literature Review DATT #1

students and tutors could interpret it; she worked extensively with a tutor in the writing center to understand the needs and the perspective of the writing center staff, as well as running workshops in the *Program Planning* course with the tutor to help students understand how these resources could help them. Figures 2 and 3 show the first two sheets in the DAT'T set that supports writing the final assignment in this course.

Program Planning Infosheet #1

**Writing a Problem Description**

In your grant proposal, you will need to explain to your reader what health problem you are addressing as well as the priority population most impacted by this problem. Your health problem description should:

- Identify and describe the health problem.
- Include relevant international, national, state, and local statistics and data (see DAT'T #19-20). This research will provide evidence as to the prevalence of your problem and its impact on certain populations. This research will also connect to the next part of the task: your description of the priority population.

Your priority population should:

- Be defined by community. Who does this health problem most effect? Is this group defined by: Age? Race? Behavioral risk factors? Socioeconomic class? Region? Are there any other defining characteristics of this group?
- Be identified by your health problem statistics. Do these statistics support that this group is acutely impacted by your health problem?

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Figure 2. Writing A Problem Description (Program Planning DAT'T #1)



Program Planning DAT T #2

## Writing a Needs Assessment Plan

### Methods and Measures

You have identified your **health problem** and your **priority population**, and you have provided your reader with evidence regarding the impact of your health problem at the international, national, state, and local levels, particularly as this problem affects a priority population (see *DAT T #1*). A **needs assessment plan** will now identify exactly what you need to know about this priority population to address this health problem as well as explaining how you will find this information out.

A **needs assessment plan** begins by describing:

- The **priority population** and evidence that this population is impacted by the **health problem**.
- The **measures** through which you will gain information from this population. For example, will you use focus group questions? Surveys? What other forms might you use to assess this population? You will also need to explain why these **measures** are appropriate for this population.
- The **methods** through which these **measures** will reach your population. How will you select the focus group, for example? How will you distribute the surveys?

See *DAT T #3* for the next part of the **needs assessment plan**.

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Figure 3. Writing A Needs Assessment DAT T (Program Planning #2)

The *Program Planning* case showed how the DAT T concept might adapt to disciplinary WI courses. Beginning with instructor documents and input, the writing fellows would break down the process surrounding the writing of a particular assignment in an upper-division course. Having drafted a critical mass of DAT Ts, the writing fellow would consult with a writing center tutor and revise the DAT Ts, often breaking the task down further, and creating more of the tutoring tools. Subsequent semesters could see further refinement, but at any stage the DAT Ts would provide

more support for tutors than had been possible in the past. The growth of the DATT project was a real step forward at a college where course instructors were sending students to the writing center, and leaving it to students and tutors to interpret and implement the assignment directions.

The psychosocial assessment assignment from the upper division writing-intensive social work course at York College also shows the utility of the DATT project with respect to supporting WID in the writing center. Of all the assignments in the DATT project, the psychosocial assessment, which is part of an upper-division social work course, is the one that is the least traditional academic assignment. Rather, it is a key piece of writing that many social workers, in a wide variety of settings, use every day in the field. It has in some ways a very rigid structure, yet paradoxically it is adaptable to very different populations and situations. The first of the DATTs for this course is shown in Figure 4.

In the social work case, the DATT project had a lot to work with. The instructor, a former writing fellow, had worked for two years with another writing fellow to develop an elaborate rubric and a workshop for teaching the psychosocial assessment (Oglensky). For DATT, we worked to adapt this rubric, and the materials developed in the professor's *Writing in the Field* workshop series. The DATT documents provided not only a resource for use in the writing center, but also an institutional memory of the WID work involved in implementing the apparatus surrounding the professor's approach to preparing social work students to write the psychosocial assessment. The DATT also allowed us to work against the inherently transient nature of the writing fellows' role at York College, and at CUNY—each fellow is limited to a one-year appointment. The DATTs give us a way to orient new writing fellows to the work that has been happening in faculty collaborations, as well as removing the necessity to reinscribe the pedagogical apparatus every year. The extension into the writing center of this project was, in some ways, an added bonus, allowing upper-division social work students to get support beyond the instructor and the writing fellow assigned to the project as they worked on the assignment. The disciplinary knowledge that the DATT resources encoded would give tutors a leg-up if a social work student arrived in the writing center seeking help.

### *DATT in the Center: Tutor Roles, Collaborative Training and Realigning Stakeholders*

As we have discussed above, at York College there was a real necessity to connect tutors with disciplinary knowledge, and in particular the genres of writing associated with the professional programs in which many of our students major. The DATT resources could help tutors and clients work together, not expecting either of them to be disciplinary experts, but expecting them to be able to make the necessary

connections if we provided the scaffolding to do so. The development of the materials has the advantage of being an easily replicable process: the basic format is easily adapted to different assignments and assessment tools, and ongoing collaboration with faculty ensures that the DATT captures both content and pedagogy. The biggest challenge thus becomes making the DATT an integral part of the practice of tutors in the writing center.

Writing a Psychosocial Assessment DATT #1

**What is a Psychosocial Assessment?**

As a social worker, one of the most important genres of writing you will use in order to convey information about a particular client will be the psychosocial assessment. A **psychosocial assessment** is the social worker's summary as to the problems to be solved. The social worker considers a variety of factors, which may include the physical/psychiatric illness and its impact, results derived from psychological tests, legal status, descriptions of the problem(s), existing assets and resources, the prognosis or prediction of outcome, and the plan designed to resolve the problem(s).

Your **psychosocial assessment** should:

- Communicate pertinent information about a client to colleagues for case planning and referral purposes.
- Establish in writing an account of “**where the client is at**” at a particular moment in time during service provision; the psychosocial assessment account offers baseline information about the client when he or she enters an agency for service.
- Offer the social worker an opportunity to reflect on, refine thinking, and raise questions about the client and his or her situation – to digest information about and impressions about the client through the process of **writing about it**.

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Figure 4. DATT #1 for Psychosocial Assessment

From a writing center perspective, perhaps the most disconcerting aspect of the DATT project is that it requires the tutor to take a much more active role in setting the agenda for the session than is customary in many writing centers, including

ours. Probably the deepest taboo of the writing center concerns the fear of becoming overly directive. Kenneth Bruffee's classic essay on peer tutoring suggested that too much training could be detrimental. The worst thing for a tutor's self-conception, according to Bruffee, was to be called a "little teacher." Bruffee's idealization of the peer tutor relationship—as two students collaborating on a particular assignment—has been highly influential in writing center theory and practice. Yet in the situations that we are addressing, where the student is enrolled in an upper-level course which assumes a lot of prior disciplinary knowledge, the tutor is not going to be able to collaborate on anything like an equal basis without help. By reaching for the binder that contains the DATT materials, the tutor is making a gesture that suggests the necessity of the instructor's virtual presence in the room that is represented by the materials developed in collaboration between the instructor and the writing fellow. The tutor at this point becomes essentially a part of the instructional team and joins that hierarchy. In writing center parlance, it becomes a *directive* tutoring session—or at least a semi-directive one—where the tutor, assuming the mantle of a surrogate of the instructor, essentially takes control of the session's structure. This was a step that many of our tutors did not feel comfortable making. Therefore it is probably the most important topic to be addressed in the tutor training: how can the tutor introduce the use of DATT—definitely an act of authority to some degree—without leading the student to feel a loss of control during the session?

In theory, given the difference in preparation between tutor and student, the introduction of the DATT should actually help to even things up. The DATT would help maintain "a balance of power," as Pemberton describes it (124), where student and tutor could draw on their strengths with respect to working on a particular assignment, and truly collaborate to produce the type of work that the instructor had explained in making the DATT collection for their particular course. From a writing center/WAC administrator's perspective, the DATT offer benefits beyond providing materials for students to use with their tutors. They provide an opportunity to bridge the perennial gap between instructor and tutor (Carino Floyd, and Lightle; Healy). We take as an ideal Shmoon and Burns's claim for directive tutoring, and adapt it for document-led collaboration. "It allows both student *and* tutor to be the subjects of the tutoring session (while nondirective tutoring allows only the student's work to be the center of the tutoring session)" (145).

The importance of the DATT project from our perspective, however, goes beyond developing a set of useful materials that fill a gap in the resources available for tutors and students in the writing center. The DATT project also illustrates how the relationships between stakeholders in the process of writing disciplinary assignments and the pedagogy surrounding those assignments, were re-conceived in the process of developing these materials, as seen in Figure 5.

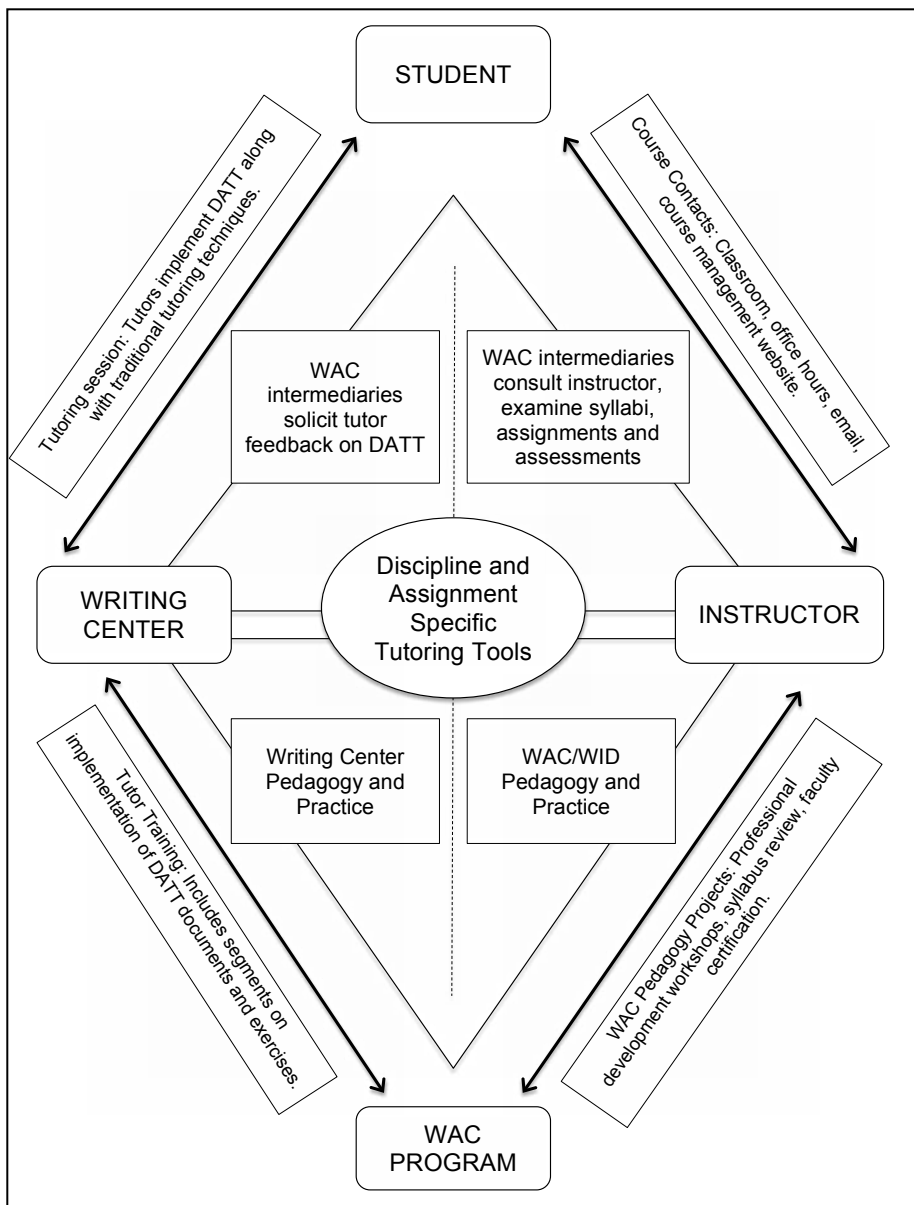


Figure 5. Realigning stakeholders

WAC/WID and the writing center always have a complicated history of interaction; the relationships between tutors, students, and instructors all too often form two lines which meet at only one point. The student and the instructor see each other

in class or during office hours, and the student and the tutor meet for their session in the writing center twice a week at most. However, the tutor and the instructor usually do not interact at all. The tutor may help the student to interpret the instructor's intentions based on a written assignment, or the instructor may refer students to the writing center, and may receive a general notification that the student has worked with a tutor after the fact. These methods do not afford an opportunity to fully communicate the genre requirements and specific conventions that instructors are looking for in student writing or in the many possible ways to negotiate content in an academic discipline.

Additionally, Figure 5 illustrates how these relationships were re-conceived in the course of the DAT T project. The DAT T materials themselves, though very useful as part of a tutoring session, are perhaps even more important as a symbol—and a facilitating condition—of this realignment of shareholders in the academic writing process. They serve as a magnet for activity that helps to close the loop and facilitate communication and collaboration—whether direct or indirect between the constituencies that have often operated independently: a) instructors and tutors, and b) the WAC program and the writing center.

The process of working with the WAC intermediaries compels the instructor to re-conceive the audience for class materials, to repurpose classroom materials for the new context of a writing center session, and to think consciously about designing support for a course—as opposed to just “sending” students to the writing center. In this new conception, there is no more just “sending” a student with writing problems somewhere else; rather, the instructor, through DAT T, becomes a participant in what happens when the student arrives and sits down with the tutor.

The WAC Program also becomes indirectly part of that session, not only through the agency of the WAC intermediaries in the process of DAT T development, but also through active participation in the process of tutor training. The writing center still conducts its usual training by focusing on the writing process, basic writing pedagogy and the ethics and procedures of general tutoring, but the WAC Program also contributes to this curriculum by incorporating a discussion of basic WAC/WID principles: writing to learn, disciplinary communities, and scaffolding assignments to facilitate learning, in addition to specific training in how to use particular DAT T materials created to support specific assignments and courses. These sessions may be run by the WAC intermediaries (such as our writing fellows), by the WAC administrator, by the writing center director, or even by the faculty from DAT T-targeted courses themselves, depending in all cases on time and availability. The DAT Ts make possible support of multiple disciplinary genres, but WID-based tutor training should go beyond the particular models to familiarize tutors with some basics of the disciplinary cultures that produced them (Walker 37). How do practitioners in

a particular discipline think? How do their discourse conventions reflect epistemological assumptions about what counts as evidence?

### *Some Final Thoughts*

We see a great deal of potential in the DATT model as a frame for faculty-fellow, fellow-tutor, and tutor-student collaboration, offering students consciously designed support in their WID courses. By bringing the WAC Program into the writing center in a collaborative manner, we work to overcome the traditional division of labor between faculty development and student support. For instructors, the potential use of DATTs in the writing center serves as a useful prompt, a tool for imagining audience and purpose as faculty and writing fellows collaborate on developing materials for supporting specific courses and assignments. Some instructors have begun to make use of the DATTs in the classroom by taking the original resources developed with the writing center in mind, and adapting them for the classroom context. One instructor, using York College's upper-division writing and research course as a laboratory for the use of the DATT, worked with a writing fellow to incorporate exercises into each sheet. The absence of the tutor meant that the DATTs themselves needed to be more directive. We provide two examples showing these exercises in the Appendix. Once again, the input of individual faculty members in the process of customizing the DATTs for individual classrooms is essential. Leaving the development of exercises solely to the writing fellow, as this instructor quickly discovered, led to overly general exercises that relied on texts from outside the course. Since this writing course is already reading-intensive, adding more reading that was outside the specific focus of the course would have quickly built resistance from the students.

As we continue to link WID and the writing center, we will assign a writing fellow to the writing center for several hours a week to provide support and do ongoing assessment of how the DATTs are used, and what resources need to accompany them so that they can work better. We will track how many students from targeted classes attend the writing center, and how frequently the DATTs are used in the writing center when they do. We will survey both instructors and students about their perceptions of the effectiveness of the materials and of their students' interactions with tutors.

In potentially expanding development of such tools to other campuses, the key elements would be to:

1. Make use of a compensated intermediary. In our case we were fortunate to have writing fellows already on staff to fill this role, but on other campuses various mechanisms could be used. Tutors could work on special projects full-time or adjunct faculty could be compensated by grant money or other resources.

2. Limit the impact on a faculty member's time by making use of materials already developed (e.g. rubrics) that might be based in consultations between faculty and intermediaries.
3. Make sure that tutors involved in the development and editing of the materials are compensated for their time and have frequent opportunities to offer feedback and to field test the materials in the writing center.

This interactive, team approach respects the different roles that tutors and instructors have in relation to students, but it finds ways that they can work together through the mediation of the writing fellows. It provides an important mechanism through which the tutor and the instructor, as two professionals engaged in the common task of helping the student to succeed in the course, can coordinate their efforts, and work together for the benefit of their students' writing.

### *Note*

The DATT project that this article explores is the product of many people's work. We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the writing fellows who developed the DATTs that we show here: Laurel Harris (program planning), Janice Capuana (occupational therapy), Alberto McKelligan (social work), and Elizabeth Alsop / Jack Spear (Writing 300). Laurel Harris also played a significant role in editing the initial manuscript. We also thank the participating faculty and the tutors and staff at the York College Writing Center, for their ongoing contributions to the project.

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### WRITING A SYNTHESIS: SYNTHESIS VS. SUMMARY

In this paper assignment, you are being asked to synthesize, not summarize.

To summarize means to restate, in your own words, the content of one reading. Summaries are usually shorter than the original reading, and provide the reader with the main ideas of a particular reading. On the other hand, to synthesize means to restate and *combine*—again, in your own words—the content of *more than one* reading.

A summary is a restatement, in your own words, of the main points of a particular reading. A summary is typically shorter than the original reading, and provides the reader with the main ideas of the reading. It does not contain the opinions of the writer, or information on how the reading relates to other, related readings. Also remember that while the organization of a summary tends to follow the structure of the original source, the organization of a synthesis is determined by the writer.

- For example: You might summarize what one article argues about the impact of the Great Depression in the rural south. But in a synthesis, you would include multiple perspectives and arguments from several articles on the same topic.

Exercise:

Write summaries of the introduction of two articles that you have read in class. When you are done, share your summaries with your group, and ask your peers to choose a part of your summary which is particularly effective (one or two sentences). Discuss what makes it effective. When you are done choosing a section from each student's summary, go to the chalkboard and write the sentences there.

York College WAC and Writing Center