

Inclusion Takes Effort: What Writing Center Pedagogy Can Bring to Writing in the Disciplines

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Writing in 1996, Donna LeCourt influentially observed the ways writing across the curriculum (WAC) programs tended to initiate students into already normalized discourses, reproduce dominant ideologies associated with these discourses, and elide difference, particularly racial, class, and gender differences as well as non-academic literacies (390). Victor Villanueva has likewise expressed a deep skepticism about WAC. It's often "assimilationist, assimilation being a political state of mind more repressive than mere accommodation" (166). He called, instead, for a critical pedagogy, one that might show students how to subvert disciplinary conventions even as they are learning to imitate them (173). In response to these critiques, scholars have proposed new WAC frameworks and approaches that draw on critical composition pedagogies. For example, Chris Anson has observed the inattention to race and racialized assessment in WAC scholarship and called for new assessment practices that take into account students' complex, individual identities. Terry Zawacki and Michelle Cox have curated fresh research that investigates WAC programming in the context of global Englishes and translingualism, arguing for differentiated instruction for multilingual learners. Heidi Harris's and Jessie Blackburn's special edition of *Across The Disciplines* on rural, regional, and satellite campuses (Volume 11) attends to the variable of place and its intersection with non-traditional student demographics, describing WAC programming that works to increase access to digital literacies. And Juan Guerra has advocated the writing-across-communities approach, which develops students' existing literacies and anticipates their writing lives beyond the academy (145ff).

To further engage difference beyond disciplinarity and to contribute to critical WAC pedagogy, this essay suggests that WAC directors and practitioners look to writing center theory and research. For over four decades, WAC scholarship has aligned writing center and WAC pedagogy. Joan Mullin noted that both pedagogies value interdisciplinary conversation as well as one-to-one and small-group instruction, and both recognize the complexity of assessment as well as discipline-specific ways of knowing (184–5). Marc Waldo went farther, declaring the writing center to be "the last best place for WAC" because writing centers help the disciplines see "what they share as a common goal" (21): analysis, synthesis, argumentation, and effective

writing processes. A separate special issue of *Across the Disciplines* (Volume 10) strengthens this connection, showing that anti-racism work can begin in the writing center and radiate out into classrooms and offices across campus. For example, a tutor who also teaches first-year composition might come to see writing as a vehicle for learning and activism, an idea he shares in the tutorial and in the classroom (Zhang). I here endorse the WAC-WC connection, arguing that together WAC/WID (writing across the curriculum/writing in the disciplines) programs and writing centers can support diversity and inclusion work on college campuses. More specifically, I suggest the premises and practices of writing center pedagogy can inform inclusive WAC/WID teaching approaches.

Writing center pedagogy has been deployed productively in the disciplines at Stanford University, where a new WAC/WID initiative places program-in-writing-and-rhetoric lecturers in departments as teaching partners. Writing specialists give in-class and faculty development workshops, support student publications, and prepare course materials—syllabi, in-class or on-line resources, or handbooks (for a summary of a Writing Fellow program quite similar to our own, see Soliday 24). In addition to teaching first- and second-year required courses, writing specialists tutor in the writing center and in their departments. At present, there are seven writing specialists in departments and programs including art history, human biology, and public policy working to develop robust cultures of writing and facilitate students' development as communicators, not just support them on an ad hoc basis.

The department of history was an early adopter of a writing specialist, eager to partner with the Program in Writing and Rhetoric to improve writing instruction. The department recognized the importance of writing to disciplinary knowledge and student success and sought new ways to teach history writing well, especially to less prepared students. I served as the history writing specialist for a year as I was interested in the chance to act as both a writing instructor and as an advocate for undergraduates within the department. In our writing center, I reach students, but the writing specialist position gave me the opportunity to interact regularly with teaching assistants and faculty, to share what I see and how I work in the writing center. In my experience as a writing specialist, I learned that inclusive writing pedagogy in the disciplines benefits from the radically student-centered perspective of the writing center that acknowledges the pre-existing strengths students bring to a department or program and focuses without wavering on what they want to learn, to say, to become. I wondered if my colleagues would agree, and asked other writing specialists how their tutoring practices and work in the departments are inclusive and how the two are related. Of the four respondents, two work in interdisciplinary science programs, one in the humanities, and one in the social sciences. I include my story in this case study because, as Wendy Bishop has argued, author-saturated texts should recognize their

“constructedness,” which includes the stance of the researcher, the questions asked, the investigative method, and the argument itself (152).

In reflecting on a set of conversations with my colleagues and on my own experiences, I see ways that inclusive tutoring practices can be adapted to work with students and faculty in the disciplines; I also see the ideological and structural factors that limit our impact. The writing specialists are able to influence curriculum and teaching practices and facilitate inter-program collaboration, but as of this writing, have less meaningfully influenced student writing assessment, even though assessment is an important dimension of much of the conversation on inclusion in writing studies and higher education. Nevertheless, this approach may be useful to universities that either do not have a freestanding WAC/WID program or, due to institutional barriers, quite separate writing centers and WAC/WID programs. In this approach, we leverage the portability of writing center pedagogy as well as the expertise of experienced writing center tutors to facilitate co-learning about writing pedagogy in the departments.

Recognizing that inclusion is an evolving pedagogy, I use our reflections on writing specialist work to illustrate what writing center practice can bring to writing in the disciplines to support student success and belonging: differentiated teaching, active reflection on the values and practices of a discourse community, a willingness to question if not test the rhetorical norms, and a commitment to engage campus partners in the work of inclusion. Working in tandem, writing centers and WAC/WID programs can support a campus-wide transformative praxis that recognizes the rhetorical affordances of social identities and linguistic variation. I begin by analyzing how writing center theory has addressed inclusion, describe how my colleagues and I practice inclusive tutoring, and then show how this teaching approach can be implemented in the disciplines.

Inclusion in Writing Center Scholarship

Today there is broad agreement about the value of diversity on college campuses (see for example, Page; Gurin; Bowman; and for a popular view, Hyman and Jacobs), leading to recruitment and admission of a diverse student body. Over half of Stanford's undergraduates are students of color and nine percent of undergraduates are international (Stanford University, “Common Data Set 2017–2018”); in addition to this, seventeen percent of a recently admitted class are the first in their families to attend college (Stanford University, “Applicant”). While all students may struggle to transition into college, those from less privileged or more marginalized backgrounds are more likely to perceive the campus climate and classroom cultures as unwelcoming or even hostile, impacting their learning negatively (Locks et al. 259; Dawn Johnson et al.). Inclusive teaching intentionally creates an equitable learning environment for all students, and through course content and design, both acknowledges students’

social identities and works to redress the systemic inequalities that inhibit learning. As Dereca Blackmon, Stanford's assistant vice provost and executive director of the diversity and first-gen office put it, "diversity is a fact, inclusion is a practice, equity is a goal." A 2017 meta-review shows that inclusion in higher education takes effort, requiring inclusive curriculum design and delivery, inclusive assessment, and a "whole-of-institution" approach (Lawrie et al. 1). At the same time, the research shows that inclusion is "elusive," evolving definitionally and in praxis (Lawrie et al. 1).

In writing studies, the conversation about inclusion has returned repeatedly to the ways that curricula privilege or handicap students for their linguistic backgrounds. The touchstone text, the 1974 Conference on College Composition and Communication resolution the *Students' Right to Their Own Language*, recognizes that students "find their own identity and style" in "patterns and varieties of language," which may include the dialect of their nurture. The resolution also asserts that "The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans" (Conference). In spite of the strong, explicit language in the resolution, pedagogies and practices have been slow to change; Geneva Smitherman has called the fight to realize students' rights to their own languages an "historical struggle." "The game plan" in composition studies, Smitherman observes after over twenty years in the field, has always been "to reshape the outsiders into talking, acting, thinking and (to the extent possible) looking like the insiders" ("Retrospective" 25). For example, in pedagogies such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) that rely heavily on genre and corpus analysis, both as a research method and as a pedagogy, students imitate the major rhetorical moves and style of the dominant writers and speakers in a field (Thompson and Diani). But when assimilation to the norms and protocols of academic literacy is mandatory, there are often costs for minoritized populations, especially when raced. Victor Villanueva, for instance, has narrated his loneliness, confusion, and loss of cultural identity as he became a successful academic (*Bootstraps*).

Drawing on the critical pedagogies of Paulo Freire and bell hooks among others, which recognize classed, raced, and gendered differences, compositionists have argued for students' integration with specialist discourse communities rather than their assimilation to these same communities (Benesch). Like Smitherman, Keith Gillyard draws on research that demonstrates the logic, systematicity, and linguistic adequacy of "nonstandard" dialects. Like Smitherman, he also argues for a pluralist approach to language teaching at the university (71). What Smitherman and Gillyard observe about many students of African descent applies to all those whose home languages and dialects are marked as "nonstandard"; they can feel diminished if not excluded in academic classes that insist on Standard Written English. When

a student integrates with a disciplinary discourse community, however, they change the community as well as being changed by it: both parties gain. The writing center is one space on university campuses where integration of novices with the disciplinary discourse is negotiated.

Admittedly, for decades the writing center itself was a tool or site of assimilation. In its early incarnations, writing centers often taught writing through worksheets, and were known as drill and skill sites. In these centers, language was treated as a static, standardized thing, tutors and teachers made responsible for prescribing correctness. More progressive models of the writing center, which treat writing as a process, have also been critiqued for their “good intentions” because their emphasis on non-directive tutoring strategies would often withhold knowledge from the student populations that needed it most, maintaining the power structures (Grimm *Good Intentions*). And in Romeo García’s estimation, “the new racism” is implicit in several decades of writing center scholarship that shows color blindness, a tacit disavowal of the privileged status of white-identified academic discourse, and ideologies that diminish the languages and traditions of people of color. But models of the writing center such as Andrea Lunsford’s, which emphasize collaborative meaning making, argue that writers and speakers bring ideas and language to the center that contribute to new knowledge. More recently, the twenty-first-century writing center has been characterized as a site of polyglot meaning making as it recognizes global Englishes and multilingualism (Grimm “New Frameworks”; Jordan). The twenty-first-century writing center has also been conceived as a site of advocacy for diverse students, especially racial, cultural, and linguistic minorities. When positioned as a change maker within the university and beyond, writing centers work in equal measure to strengthen individuals’ communication skills and to remove structural assumptions that interfere with student learning and thriving (Condon, “Beyond” 22; Grimm, “Retheorizing” 92).

A number of approaches have been formulated that can mitigate prejudice and increase feelings of belonging experienced by linguistic and racial minorities. In describing a “pedagogy of belonging,” Julie Bokser emphasizes the importance of listening and argues that tutors need to feel comfortable talking with writers about their accents and style, noting how and to what extent students *want* to adopt an academic voice. We can’t assume that they do (Bokser 58). Laura Greenfield’s “The ‘Standard English’ Fairytale” asks us to reflect on how we talk about language. Specifically, “when ‘Standard English’ is imagined as a tool to participate in mainstream society, people of color are put in the oppressive position of having not to learn to speak a particular language . . . but of ridding themselves of all linguistic features that may identify them with communities of color” (47). Instead, writing centers and writing programs can “give all students as many language tools as possible” and develop a curriculum that helps them make choices about their language that “reflect their critical thinking,

not the instructors' personal biases" (Greenfield 58). In other words, we can value all dialects and languages equally and then trust students to think about their grammar and language rhetorically, as a matter of choice given a particular situation and audience rather than as mere correctness. In demonstrating how African American Vernacular English can be communicative in an academic essay, Vershawn Ashanti Young further shows why writing programs and centers must disavow prescriptivism and instead teach grammar descriptively (65–66). Young highlights the possibility of multi-dialectalism, what he calls "code meshing," and co-learning across communities in the writing classroom and the writing center (67). Co-learning can extend to the cultivation of racial literacy, which enhances our ability to "challenge undemocratic practices" (Jane Bolgatz, qtd. in Michelle Johnson, 215). Michelle Johnson shows that engaged tutoring talk validates students' interest in race, their choice to use raced language, and their identities. When a tutor engages racial topics and languages humbly and with excitement, the student perceives that the tutor is an "ally in the difficult task of making meaning of race in writing and writing through race" (Johnson 223).

In addition to imagining new ways to work with students, writing center scholarship often strives to make change among staff and within the university, to evolve the idea of the writing center. A number of writing center directors are working to define a "transformative ethos" for the writing center (Blazer) in order to re-configure "a system of advantage" based on raced, classed, and linguistic privileges (Grimm "Rethorizing"). Frankie Condon and Bobbi Olson describe how, after blogs were published expressing linguistic bigotry on their campuses, they have "worked to construct a different kind of house altogether," a writing center that will not only make all feel welcome but that will also actively challenge linguistic supremacy (40). Nancy Grimm returns to the idea of "community of practice," which "offer[s] learners real opportunities to become active participants in the real work of the community and thus construct identities of participation" ("Rethorizing" 89). And Rasha Diab, Beth Godbee, Thomas Ferrel, and Neil Simpkins argue for the need for "self work" together with "work-with-others" to articulate both "the critique *against* racism" and "a critique *for* equity and justice." Their "pedagogy for racial justice" imagines the writing center as a site of activism (see also their "Making Racial Justice Actionable" in *Across the Disciplines*).

Writing center pedagogy thus made a number of important conceptual shifts. Writing was no longer a discrete skill but rather a way of knowing and being that requires students to develop a meta language that helps them think about writing as something complex and beyond grammar; disciplines were no longer closed, static domains that require privileged knowledge, but rather dynamic communities of practice. The space of the writing center itself became dedicated to developing diverse linguistic, racial, cultural, and social competencies. Students in these more progressive

models were no longer deficient, dependent, or flawed but rather capable of making choices and partnering in meaning making. Their languages, backgrounds, and identities are welcomed and explored as assets that might contribute to new understanding. Finally, tutors and administrators become important partners in the quest for more inclusive, socially just university cultures. One-way assimilation is an ideal of the past, transformation of all the ideal of the present.

Not all share these conceptions of language and learning, however. In my work as a writing specialist and as a tutor, I have seen margins of papers annotated repeatedly by graders with NNE (“Non-native English”) that contain, in addition to heavy line editing, responses to writing that suggest to students that there is a stable linguistic norm toward which we are all working and, more damaging potentially, that they are unequal to the task in spite of their fresh ideas and awesome research, which received less attention than their style. In Harry Denny’s view, tutors and other academic staff can instead help writers and speakers understand the ways the dominant discourse is naturalized and their cultural capital dismissed by queering our pedagogy. Denny uses the term *queering* to help us dismantle the many binaries that structure our thinking about language and learning: “mentors ought to help students bridge the multiple literacies to which they have access and those dominant forms they require for academic success” (“Queering” 49). In this formulation, no one is excluded for their home literacies and the academic literacy they may potentially need to perform is made accessible through mentorship. What this mentorship looks like more specifically and why it contributes to an inclusive university learning environment is the subject of the next section.

From the Center to the Disciplines: Tutoring Talk that Supports Inclusion

In addition to working in departments and programs, writing specialists at our university continue to tutor undergraduates and graduate students from across the disciplines in our large generalist writing center. In the writing center, as in the departments, writing specialist tutoring demystifies writing conventions for writers new to disciplinary discourse communities. It also supports writers’ relationships with their writings, taking into account all the social and cultural contexts that inform those relationships. This open stance communicates to students that their full humanity matters to the work of composing and vice versa, as Diab et al. recommend (“Multi-dimensional”). As one writing specialist explains, “My [tutoring] approach . . . is always gentle, curious, and interested not just in the writing assignment, but in the ways in which the writing assignment is connected to the tutee’s life. This is at the heart for me of an ‘inclusive’ tutoring practice.” At our center and many others across the country, inclusive tutoring practices emphasize four strategies: collaboration that honors student learning and writing goals for the session, a preference for non-directive tutoring

to reinforce student ownership of their ideas and expression, instruction when students ask for it, and a process orientation that normalizes struggle.

Our tutoring sessions typically begin with the tutor asking: What brings you here today? What do you want to work on? In answering these questions, the student defines the major learning and writing goals for the tutoring session, and tutors may travel some distance conceptually or linguistically to be sure they are connecting with their students. As a writing specialist explained,

A practice of inclusivity acknowledges that every human being is going to have a different reason for being in the writing center, even if they are from the same marginalized community and/or race, class background. I am leery of practices and theories that offer categorical suggestions for supporting belonging. I prefer to engage each individual as their own unique, powerful, complex person, connected to historical socio-cultural factors that have certainly informed their experiences, but often defined them in different ways.

A student-centered tutoring practice recognizes the idiosyncrasies as well as the community identities students bring with them to their writing. This response further suggests some of the ways students can feel and have been excluded from the writing center and by extension the university. When writing center practitioners make some reasons for visiting the center more legitimate than others or when they assume a potentially false link, often based in stereotype, between social identity and learning need, they diminish or deny dimensions of the student that may in fact be highly relevant and valuable to the task at hand. Instead, we can design learning opportunities that “meet students from all linguistic, class, and racial backgrounds *where they are* [emphasis mine].”

At the same time, tutors must help student writers consider genre and audience expectations. One specialist echoes Denny’s use of the verb *bridge* as she specifies what the tutoring conversation with the writer might address (“Queering” 49):

What becomes visible sometimes is that students may not understand what’s being asked of them in a writing assignment. So being inclusive means finding a bridge for them from the way they’re approaching something and the way they’re being asked to approach it in the context of the assignment. Not in a way that sort of shuts down choices, but to help them understand the expectations that they need to be negotiating.

This writing specialist is careful to distinguish between exploring expectations as a set of prescriptions and expectations as a range of choices that students will need to “negotiate.” Working with a tutor, students writing in the disciplines can investigate what ideas or practices from their cultural background or experience may be

shaping their writing expectations and compare those with the writing expectations of the new audience. In the best circumstances, the tutor will be able to help students see how their knowledge, experience, and language can contribute to the new discourse community.

A tutoring practice that considers the social and cultural context of a student as well as their individual circumstances must be highly flexible, responsive, and expert. When asked what tutoring practices support student belonging, one writing specialist answered, “the foundation of inclusion that guides my work as a writing tutor is the art and skill of listening. Rather than asserting my perspective or interpretation prescriptively, I strive to instead create a listening space, wherein the student comes to his/her ideas and writing/speaking development by way of support and autonomy.” Notably, we all agreed on the importance of listening to inclusive tutoring: listening that is open to the unexpected, that avoids anticipating a particular student response, and that creates “a space” for student thinking to emerge and develop.

Listening is a necessary but not sufficient condition for an inclusive learning environment. Varied, strategic tutor talk is also crucial. In an analysis of writing tutoring sessions led by experienced tutors and deemed successful, recent research describes tutoring strategies that support students to think more deeply than they could on their own as cognitive scaffolding (Mackiewicz and Thompson). This research also recognizes instruction as a valid and important tutoring strategy, disproving writing center lore that insists dogmatically on non-directiveness. In the writing specialists’ reflections on inclusive tutoring, “part of the listening role is recognizing when that is wanted and knowing how much of it will support the students . . . many students do desire more direct instruction, too.” In listening carefully and responding with a strategic and robust tutoring repertoire, tutors construct a teaching and learning environment that is broadly inclusive of diverse students and their varied learning styles. By contrast, tutoring that is exclusively non-directive may not meet the needs of students who have neither a clear understanding of academic conventions or rhetorical grammar; differentiated tutoring is what is required to support the learning of all, and especially of less privileged students (Salem 163–164). Inclusive tutoring also recognizes that in disciplinary contexts, the audience is very language or term sensitive. (For example, linguists will not use terms such as *second language learners* and *multilingual learners* interchangeably.) Tutors may need to give students the canonical or typical language they need to succeed, but there are a number of ways that can happen that protects student agency.

Lastly, an inclusive tutoring practice for the writing specialists helps students reflect on their writing process in a way that normalizes struggle. A specialist explains: “a lot of times people feel that their struggles to make sense of stuff or to get from draft to revision or from blank page to anything is somehow uniquely their problem.” More

specifically, they may have produced a draft, but the writer sees that “it’s not there. And it’s an inclination to see that as a failure.” This “fixed mindset” can produce writing apprehension and distance novice writers from academic literacies (Dweck). In the inclusive writing tutorial, however, a tutor can help students see that “the draft is successful when it gets them to see what the next step is. And that is something that is normal. It’s right. And it’s writing when it works right. More advanced writers write more drafts. Have more flaws. Have more process. But they just don’t have the self-criticism.” I’ve helped students come to a more nuanced, forgiving understanding of the drafting process by describing my own, at times uneasy, experience with writing. I can also show writers what a topic sentence looks like in a particular genre and what it looks like in a first, highly imperfect draft. I assure novice writers that specialist writing won’t always be difficult by emphasizing what’s distinctive about learning to write in the disciplines: the content and genres are new. Our shared vulnerability in these moments builds trust and acknowledges the emotional labor of writing and learning.

What Writing Specialists Do: Toward an Inclusive Disciplinary Writing Pedagogy

As we have seen, writing center pedagogy has responded vigorously and productively to the racial and linguistic diversity of its tutors and students (Blazer; Condon, “Beyond”; Denny, *Facing*; Diab et al.; García; Greenfield; Greenfield and Rowan; Grimm, “New Conceptual” and “Re-theorizing”; Jordan; Johnson; Young). WAC scholarship has also contended with racial, socio-economic, and linguistic diversity. LeCourt called for WAC practitioners to recognize writers’ “multiple discursive positions as a way of allowing for student difference and alternative literacies to find a space within disciplinary discourses” (399). WAC practitioners might “take courageous action,” in the words of Diab et al, and find ways to “reshape [the] WAC curriculum to value linguistic diversity,” exporting the social justice agenda of the writing center to the disciplines (“Multi-dimensional”). As writing specialists, we were able to apply many of the ideals and best practices of the writing center to our work with students and faculty in the programs and departments, but not all.

Writing specialist pedagogy emphasizes in equal measure students’ identities as writers, their relationship with writing, and the disciplinary communication protocols they will need to succeed as writers in their fields. The pedagogy scaffolds rhetorical reading skills that help novice communicators identify the content and methods, the range of stylistic variation, and the writing opportunities of the discipline; in short, the chance to say something new and, in the best cases, a new way to say it. Writing specialist pedagogy thus emphasizes a version of what Graff and Bernstein have called in the title of their popular book, “They say, I say,” an ability to recognize “the moves that matter in academic discourse” so that one can make a contribution. When practiced in

the departments and programs with the goal of inclusion, however, writing specialist pedagogy takes Graff and Bernstein's approach one step further to cultivate what Sarah Vacek has called "meta multiliteracy," one's ability to explain strategies for communicating across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. For example, writing specialist pedagogy supports the ability of students to articulate the affordances and limitations of colloquial versus professional language, the languages of literature versus history, or even, more specifically, those of specific sub-disciplines such as academic versus public history and the ability to then compare and integrate those academic discourses with the languages of the many communities to which they belong. Ultimately, writing specialist pedagogy seeks to empower and cultivate students' "critical agency as academic writers" (Hendrickson and deMueller 74).

The students I worked with in history are socioeconomically, linguistically, and racially diverse. They are often interested in the recovery work of figures or communities marginalized by dominant history—and of documenting the agency and historical contributions of these populations. Their sense of belonging in history varied according to their ability to explore their interests through existing coursework and with faculty as well as their success at reaching faculty readers and earning high grades. The belonging of these individual students matters, but so too does the vitality of the discipline. As Lisa Delpit has argued, discourses are not changed by conforming to them, but neither are they changed when students by design or by choice remain outside of them (292). Indeed, Jay Jordan observes that "discourses often thrive on the value novices add as well as on the disruptions they represent" (45). The task of the writing specialist is to convince the stakeholders of the merit of this point of view as well as to build a teaching infrastructure that will help students make transformative contributions to the disciplinary discourse communities. Writing specialists are called on to mentor not just the students but also the teaching assistants and faculty, helping them to make an important conceptual shift from difference as deficit to cultural and linguistic diversity as resource. In this shift, diversity is recognized as a fact, to return to Dereca Blackmon's formulation. Moreover, rather than working to get undergraduates to pass as experts, or asking everyone to sound the same, "language flexibility" becomes the learning goal (Blazer 22). This learning outcome includes audience and genre awareness plus the ability to adapt and mix languages and cultural traditions strategically, so that no one tradition, disciplinary or otherwise, is privileged to the exclusion of another.

An important step in this process is to help faculty make writing expectations explicit, which research has shown is one of the foundational requirements for writing assignments that promote deep learning (Anderson et al.). Transparent assignments further support student belonging, particularly among first-generation, low income, and underrepresented college students (Winkelmes et al.). One writing specialist

drew connections between her writing center experiences and her work with faculty: “Writing tutoring pedagogy comes into play in consultations with faculty. . . . They are also producing a piece of writing. It’s an assignment. [I ask them] What are you trying to accomplish?” This respondent found herself modeling tutoring philosophy as she worked with faculty on assignment design: “It’s important to be uncondescending and to approach it in a very collaborative and dialogic way At its core, [writing center philosophy] is about not coming in as someone who always already knows what the best way is.” She notes that faculty often have unspoken expectations and goals: “There’s a reason they’re assigning it but it’s unarticulated.” The writing specialist helps faculty describe the goals of a writing assignment, its rationale, genre, and component parts, so that students have a clear target. In her conversations with faculty about assignment and syllabus design, the writing specialist approaches her work with the “same principle” that underlies her writing tutoring: “respect for their intentions and purposes and trying not to take over that.” As this writing specialist elicits explicit writing expectations, she models a strategically non-directive teaching approach that has been championed in writing center literature (Corbett).

Of course, writing expectations can be conflicting, a byproduct of disciplines’ “dynamism,” to use a term that Ann Gere and her fellow researchers have recently used (245). As I sat in on history classes, I heard professors articulate very different premises for historical writing. Moving between classes, students may be confused by conflicting disciplinary expectations; they wonder, what sources do I need to engage, when, how, why? Another frequently asked question in the sciences: can a writer use the first-person? In tutoring, workshops, and assignment prompts, writing specialists can help novice writers understand that disciplinary norms such as personal voice shift by narrating a brief, relevant history of the discipline as well as by articulating the rewards and risks of a particular rhetorical strategy. To take the issue of the first person in science writing as an example: a writing specialist noted the tendency of scientists to “confuse” “the first person with a kind of subjectiveness . . . [but in the] last decade or so, [the] tide has completely turned. Having a conversation about that shift can show that norms can shift and that people can play a role in the shift.” In this approach, the writing specialist can show the student that practitioners change the discipline for reasons linked with the discourse community’s “values”:

Norms about voice are connected to the values of this enterprise and so to the extent that these voices reflect values that people agree with or reflect them well, we can stick with them. That conversation has to speak to the domain of value of the discipline that they’re working in. . . . There’s nothing absolute.

In this answer, the writing specialist concurs with a phrase Andrea Lunsford invoked to locate control, power, and authority in the writing center, “the negotiating group”; the group determines what values are prioritized by the discipline and how those values are realized on the page (8). By including the novice communicator in this negotiation, the writing specialist makes the student a part of the group, the community of practice. In this frequent scenario, the writing specialist communicates writing expectations with the goal of empowering students to make rhetorical choices that are informed by their understanding of their professors’ and the fields’ expectations as well as their full linguistic and rhetorical repertoires.

One writing specialist explained why students must broadly understand the expectations of disciplinary writing:

I think if you’re talking to an audience that has a certain kind of expectation, it is going to be less effective to that audience if you are well outside that range, and you can make an informed choice about not delivering to people’s expectations, but you can only make that choice if you really understand what that expectation is. . . .

For this writing specialist, communicating disciplinary writing expectations is crucial if students want to meet a new specialist audience. Yet, the writing specialist is careful to say students may work within “a range,” and they must be aware of its non-negotiables and limits in order to make “an informed choice” about *how* and *to what extent* they adopt and adapt disciplinary language. The specialist continues: “It’s a disservice to students to say *just be yourself in this new domain*. Because it also suggest there’s nothing transformative about education. Learning stuff is going to transform you and that’s going to be reflected in the kinds of voices you’re able to have.” While she doesn’t elaborate on why students can’t “just be themselves,” she suggests that experimentation with new disciplinary language and logic is not only mandatory, but also a boon that promises transformation. Indeed, in her view, in entering a new discourse community, students are changed for the better as the range of voices they’re able to deploy is expanded. That range is achievable only if the discourse community expectations are made explicit, their values articulated, and writers given the freedom to imitate, critique, and re-imagine.

That freedom can be engineered in in-class workshops given by the writing specialists. These workshops often begin by inviting students to rhetorically analyze discipline-specific examples, prompting identification of major components of argument as well as the disciplinary values that drive those components. There is often also an exploration of the benefits and limitations of particular rhetorical choices. For example, in a workshop I led on thesis statements in history arguments for an upper-division class, we looked at a number of different thesis paragraphs published

in the undergraduate history journal. I asked students to rank the statements and defend their rankings. In this way, students were invited to describe what makes a thesis in the discipline more or less effective and to articulate their own values as readers of specialist discourse and to compare those values with the editorial board of the department's publication. Often a broad consensus emerges and the favorite theses are mined for disciplinary norms, such as use of the past tense, degree of certainty, and degree of specificity. In the variety of theses presented, however, students also come to see that writing in the disciplines is not a fixed target: there is no formula that will help a writer achieve a perfect thesis, and norms are determined through conversation much like the one in the workshop.

Writing specialists can also facilitate rhetorical analysis of published work, especially arguments that broke ground in the discipline in terms of content and style. For example, in a workshop lesson on topic sentences, I brought in representative paragraphs from George Chauncey's *Gay New York*, a crossover book that reached both academic and public audiences and was widely admired for its style and rich archival research. Students experienced the ways that a more inclusive history might be addressed to more than one audience and push the discipline in new directions. I asked them to tell me what made the topic sentences effective and if they might have written them differently. Encouraging students to name and assess rhetorical moves for themselves draws on their cognitive and cultural resources and passions, rather than reinforcing their deficits; it also helps to define their own writing goals.

As Helen Sword's recent research has shown, successful writers from across the disciplines both conform to and exceed conventions. For example, psychologist Alison Gopnik has worked out her writing style through email, conversations with family members, and careful attention to audience and style. In this way she is able to move from a first draft, "something that reads like a developmental psychological article" to "a spontaneous voice talking to you," many, many drafts later (Qtd. in Sword 69). Some of the faculty Sword interviewed encourage their graduate students to actively avoid reinforcing disciplinary conventions that diminish new knowledge; a professor reports asking his students, "How do you write your research up in First Nation studies in ways that don't reproduce those 'othering' discourses that have plagued anthropology or sociology or other disciplines for so long?" (Qtd. in Sword 82). Because not all academic experts aim to write to narrow disciplinary expectations and because in many fields those expectations may be contentious, Mary Soliday recommends that WAC/WID practitioners teach "typicality," which emphasizes the recurrence and context-specificity as well as negotiability of disciplinary conventions (39). (She also narrates a more optimistic model of student assimilation to specialist discourses, one that requires that students "creatively rework" others' words [39].) Instead of a rigid and deterministic insistence on imitation, in extended workshops, I

would ask students: What is *your* model of greatness? What rhetorical moves can you adapt to your purposes?

Overall, writing specialist workshops in the departments and programs support a process orientation to writing, specifically the research and composition process in the disciplines. In one popular workshop I gave, we assessed how the outline of the same history project evolved over several weeks' work, culminating with a reverse outline of the published paper. Much like a tutoring session, I created a safe space to observe, question, discuss and invent. After assessing the change of an argument's structure over time and sharing a number of arrangement strategies, I invited students to begin to arrange their own arguments in a non-linear outline, using sticky notes. Other writing specialists similarly saw links between the writing tutoring pedagogy and their workshop design. For example, "I use listening skills quite often . . . when I deliver workshops. We usually start the workshop with a question and answer session with the professors to make sure that we keep the session directed on the student needs." Writing workshops that are informed by writing tutoring pedagogy demystify communication protocols and scaffold learning, but they do so in response to student concerns, questions, and goals, not according to an inflexible script.

One-to-one collaboration with students in their departments similarly begins with the writer and their relationship to writing rather than with the target writing, the disciplinary conventions. One respondent explained: "Conceptually, writing center pedagogy has informed so much of my one-on-one tutoring. In both [the writing center and the department], I always start the same way. I want to know who the person is first, what brought them there, how do they feel about writing in general? What are their writing habits? Strengths? Fears? Needs?" She notes that the needs are very diverse, from translating technical knowledge into a grant proposal, to fine tuning sentences for clarity, to working on writing productivity. She respects the diverse reasons writers come to see her, never presuming that she knows what's at issue, but rather allowing the writer to represent their needs and goals to her first. To assess the writing task, she uses the same rhetorical approach as in the writing center, asking the writer: "Who is the audience? What is the purpose? How do [the answers to] these questions inform the structure, tone, style, length, organization?" Again, this approach draws on the writer's strengths and knowledge. She further notes, "it always amazes me how much students want to talk about these things, how much they just need somebody to listen to them and with some gentle guidance help them to move forward." Here the writing specialist positions herself as a trusted and wise coach. She recognizes that writers in the disciplines need encouragement and confidence "to finish their work." In the one-to-one work with students, writing specialists toggle back and forth between discussing the rhetorical issues on the page and what may be playing out in the writer's head and heart.

Recognizing the emotional labor of integrating prior languages and identities with a new academic language and identity is part of an inclusive writing pedagogy. Michelle Iten explains, “This [integration] is hard work: sorting through dissonant value sets; surmounting regular waves of feeling deeply out of place; dealing with fears that adding an academic identity requires losing or betraying one’s home identity . . .” (38). Some students can become discouraged or resistant, especially those whose style specialist readers consistently find problematic. In one-to-one meetings, writing specialists can help students negotiate this feedback, to understand that a lot of line edits are not a poor reflection on their character or effort, to help them see patterns, and to learn revision strategies to avoid the style issues that trouble their readers most consistently. At the same time, a writing specialist might talk about ways to highlight students’ contributions to the scholarly conversation, whether through a new comparison, fresh archival evidence, or a neologism that brings the languages of their research and home communities together. Other students are eager to become disciplined. To these students, I offered instruction when requested, but also encouraged reflection at the end of conferences. I often asked students to reflect on their experiences writing in history to compare and contrast them with writing in other discourse communities. These conversations give students the chance to own their growing expertise in History and their research and writing choices.

The Affordances and Limitations of Writing Center Pedagogy in the Disciplines

As a program that bridges the writing program, writing center, and departments, the writing specialist initiative contributes meaningfully to a “whole-of-institution” approach to inclusion. And most writing specialists felt that by modeling alternative approaches, they were able to influence more inclusive writing curriculum design and delivery in the departments or programs. Many assignment sheets and syllabi improved: skills were more strategically scaffolded, writing expectations made explicit, success accessible. One specialist also noticed a subtle but foundational change in attitude to writing *per se*. For a writing specialist who largely works with scientists, her work validates writing as a skill and set of habits that can be cultivated, as something that needs to be taught:

Faculty and students know that writing well is important, but it is always the act that comes after the truly important work—which is the science experiment or the data collection or the project design or the problem set. So my goal has always been to get them to see writing as included IN these processes, as part of the skill set, not the aftermath.

Without an institutional commitment to explicitly teach advanced writing in the disciplines, it can be easy for students and faculty alike to fall back on deficit discourse, the idea that some people are too unprepared or just plain unable to produce discipline-specific prose. But like the writing center, which maintains that all writers can benefit from working with skilled readers and tutors, some departments and programs with writing specialists have been able to center writing in their conversations about curricula and student learning to move beyond conceptions of writing pedagogy as remediation. The result is that help-seeking is no longer stigmatized. One specialist shared that she believed her presence in a program had encouraged “a willingness to admit to not being a strong writer and to seek help and support because their ego is not attached to it as a skill they should have. So in terms of inclusivity—I think . . . they are ok with being ‘included’ as people who need writing support.”

However, progress has been uneven, dependent on the goodwill and interest of the individual departments and professors as well as the conceptualization of writing and the writing teacher. In some spaces, some professors continue to cherish a narrow view of writing as surface style, largely a matter of correctness. In these cases it can be difficult to advocate institutionally for the idea of linguistic diversity as resource we saw so prominently in the writing center scholarship. That kind of advocacy may be contained within the one-to-one dynamic of tutor and student. As a writing specialist reported: “I make sure that students who are dealing with minor, yet challenging, grammar issues still feel engaged as thinkers and writers and never reduced to a comma error.” They further remarked that one writing specialist alone in a department—untentured, part-time, temporary—

is not enough to really counteract dominant faculty narratives on student deficit. . . . Much of the faculty imagines my role in the department to be one of helping “bad” writers. In this capacity, I get sent struggling writers and am listed on many syllabuses as this kind of resource. Conceptualizing the [writing specialists] in this way may actually work against the cultivation of inclusive learning environments.

In this scenario, the presence of a writing specialist in a department or program potentially reinforces deficit constructions of less-experienced students and the impression that some students are more welcome or able to participate in specialist discourse than others. These caveats indicate that a writing center approach alone will not create a more inclusive approach to teaching writing in the disciplines. Other significant factors that support an inclusive writing pedagogy in the disciplines include the perception of the writing teacher as a professional identity, the status and security of the writing and WAC programs on any given campus, and the centering of traditionally

underrepresented voices on syllabi and in the classroom, ideas that are well supported by the research on inclusion (see for example, Lee, et al.).

Two other growth opportunities in our program are worth noting. I heard little reflection on grading practices, even though our original definition of inclusion isolated assessment as a major feature of inclusive learning environments. While I worked to eliminate linguistic and racial bias from my assessment of and feedback on student work-in-progress in my one-to-one work in the history department, I had limited opportunities as a writing specialist to intervene in grading practices. I was able occasionally to draft rubrics and give teaching assistants relatively brief, one-off workshops on commenting on writing. In drafts of rubrics I could downplay an emphasis on correctness and instead reward process, but I was not involved in applying it to student writing. At our university, it may be that grading is still felt to be the purview and prerogative of the faculty, or it may be that our WAC/WID initiative has not yet made writing assessment a priority. In either case, this area reveals one of the salient limitations of writing center pedagogy. Tutors are often counseled to motivate writers with moderate praise, but not to predict or comment on grades (see for example, Fitzgerald and Ianetta, 50 and 61–63). Further, writing center philosophy has generally been agnostic about what makes writing “good” in order to center student writing goals and acknowledge diverse, community-specific, and evolving writing standards. Inspiration for inclusive writing assessment practices in WAC/WID programs may thus need to come from other sources than the writing center literature. Asao Inoue’s *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future* would be a good place to start. And even though much of the scholarly conversation on inclusion in the writing center uses the rhetoric of social justice, I do not hear this rhetoric made explicit in the reflections I gathered from my colleagues, though I think the logic is there implicitly. I see this as an opportunity, and as an example of the ways writing center pedagogy might advance WAC/WID diversity and inclusion initiatives. Mya Poe has already argued that WAC/WID programs can teach race and writing together to support more effective assignment design, assessment, and classroom culture (“Re-Framing”). I am hopeful the anti-racist agenda of recent writing center scholarship can find new energy and approaches in WAC/WID programs, including mine.

Conclusion

I have argued that inclusion is the work of WAC/WID practitioners and that seeing their work through the lens of writing center philosophy and practice highlights why. Writing center pedagogy can be exported to the departments to help practitioners reframe conversations about student deficit as an opportunity for shared growth and for approaches to teaching that emphasize linguistic variation as resource. Research

suggests this is already happening. Zawacki and Cox note that recent research on second-language readers' adaptive strategies to heavy college reading loads shows faculty encouraging students to draw on their own experiences and cultural resources to succeed (24). With its emphasis on collaboration, writing center theory and practice can also help WAC/WID practitioners plumb faculty expertise on inclusion (Lunsford; Ede). For example, social scientists will likely be familiar with sociologist Dorothy Smith's "institutional ethnography," which values the standpoint of diverse lived experience in order to demystify ruling relations and promote social justice. And scientists may reference Londa Schiebinger's research that has recently argued that diversity in research teams leads to better science because new questions and methods are considered (Nielsen et al.); or they may remember physicist Evelyn Fox Keller's biography of Barbara McClintock, which revealed that McClintock's "feeling for the organism," an alternative way of knowing and naming the enterprise of biology, led to breakthroughs in genetics and eventually a Nobel Prize. Through conversations with faculty about inclusion in their particular fields, WAC/WID practitioners gain insight into discipline-specific learning challenges and opportunities, faculty teaching expertise is leveraged, and new teaching approaches emerge.

While the writing center has been theorized as a place where writers and tutors develop, less frequently it's recognized as a space of professional development for all who teach writing at the university. Patti Hanlon-Baker's and Clyde Moneyhun's article "Tutoring Teachers" is one article that describes the writing center as a place where teachers become expert at radically student-centered writing pedagogy. I extend their argument to observe the ways WAC/WID professionals can bring their writing center work into the disciplines and departments. WAC/WID programs might consider requiring all of their staff as well as their faculty partners to tutor in the generalist campus writing center. In the generalist center, differences other than disciplinary difference remain salient as tutors work to support students' academic literacies while recognizing and affirming linguistic variation. One-to-one writing center work with writers from across the disciplines reminds instructors and writing pedagogy professionals what it's like to read a writing assignment sheet for the first time, how novices respond to new writing tasks, and why the varied identities writers bring with them to their writing practice matter; in other words, we are reminded how and why we center student writing goals as we work to make meaning and progress together with students. As a result of her work, a writing specialist sees changes in the writer and the discipline: "Helping people to own their written voices is a big part of helping them to own their expertise. That's a part of the transformation. You authentically own a voice you craft for yourself in your writing. . . . When you develop a voice for yourself, you're impacting the range of voices that other people can do . . . the way you do it is going to be yours." Inclusion in this model is not just about the student being heard,

though that's important, it's also about encouraging and cultivating diverse points of view, diverse expression, and diverse voices, on campus and in the field. Writing center and WAC pedagogies and programming can and should continue to inform each other, even in, perhaps especially in, WID initiatives. The writing center is often presented as an alternative to the classroom—and it is commonly set apart—but if we imagine the university as one big writing center, we might devise more equitable, inclusive pedagogies.

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