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A JOURNAL OF WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

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Editor's Note

—

Lee Ann Glowzenski

A.T. Still University

By now, we are all likely familiar with the *This is Fine* meme, where we identify with the smiling, wide-eyed dog who sips his coffee as the walls around him burn. We close spring 2024 amid ongoing campus consolidations and closures, all while the enrollment cliff of 2025 looms darkly ahead. And yet, if there's one thing writing center people know how to do, it's dampen the fires that threaten to upend our days. Unsurprisingly, the authors of this quarter's issue of *WLN* meet ongoing uncertainty with honesty, creativity, and grit.

Responding to the challenges posed by for-profit educational technology providers, Michael Albright and Lori B. Baker outline their insourcing model for tutoring services in "Insourcing and Identity: A Writing Center's Claim to Relevance." While external vendors may tout a 24/7/365 service staffed by professional tutors, they will never be able to replace "the practical experiences and networking structures inherent to campus writing centers" that benefit students and tutors alike (7). Albright and Baker thus offer writing centers a helpful standpoint from which to argue against those who would see on-campus and external writing support as essentially the same.

In "Deschooling (and) the Writing Center," Russell Mayo introduces readers to philosopher Ivan Illich's concept of conviviality, "a positive alternative for inverting the problems of institutions that adhere to capitalist logics" (12). Mayo's study of the Great Lakes State University Writing Center as an example of deschooling highlights the strengths of a locally-based, student-staffed writing center. If outsourced tutoring is the pinnacle of industrialized schooling, then the convivial writing center holds space for deschooling: transformative learning experiences based in a meaningful peerness.

Tina Matuchniak's "Re-making the Writing Center: A Years-Long Process of Committing to an Antiracist Agenda" embodies what it means to look deep within the heart of the center and work to change that which is found wanting. Matuchniak chronicles the consciousness-raising, tutor education, and recruitment undertaken by her staff and herself as part of a larger project of "preparing a staff of diverse peer tutors who, themselves, are ready and willing to challenge racist, specifically anti-Black racist, practices" (17). This article offers administrators a powerful model on which to base their own anti-racist work.

Finally, in "Flexibility in the Writing Center: One Tutor's Suggestions for Synchronous Online Sessions," Romaisha Rahman reminds practitioners that our in-person, on-campus tools can be adapted to meet the changing nature of student needs. Rahman writes, "Our motto as writing center staff should be 'service-first,' and the best way of service is through flexibility in our sessions" (24). Remaining open to new technology is a key part of that flexibility.

At the root of all the articles in this issue is a candid examination of the writing center within the higher education landscape. Matuchniak writes, "The work of remaking the writing center is a process, a project, a commitment" (20). As we "go to print," we are mindful that it is nearly July, and next year is about to start. We hope this issue helps you rest and ready yourself for the work ahead.

From the Blog Editors of
Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders

Hello readers,

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

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ESTHER NAMUBIRU

WEIJIA LI

Insourcing and Identity: A Writing Center's Claim to Relevance

Michael Albright & Lori B. Baker
Southwest Minnesota State University

In fall of 2018, outsourcing left its calling card in the form of a link to an external tutoring provider placed within our university's learning management system. Students across our state system's 37 colleges and universities could access this free online third-party service by clicking a button with a dot-com extension from within their enrolled courses. Thanks to various online announcements, printed literature, or campus orientation sessions that accompanied this link's rollout, students soon came to discover a new-to-them option from a twenty-first-century market giant: 24/7 academic help in any discipline, including writing help, with the click of a mouse. As a third-party clearinghouse for academic support in over 40 subjects, this new option promised students quick connection times for help from degree-holding, vetted tutors—all within the institution's already-existing interface.

**MICHAEL ALBRIGHT
LORI B. BAKER**
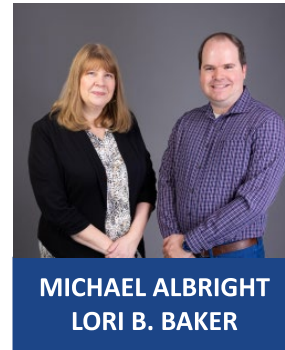
While this gateway to assistance would appear to be a boon to equally busy students and instructors, the rollout of an alternate site for writing help gave our small state school's on-campus Writing Center staff pause. We wondered what it would look like to have another option set up shop in cyberspace next to our more limited campus writing center staffed with undergraduate tutors providing a mix of face-to-face and online tutoring. We questioned how our tutors and services would compare to non-peer tutors available 24/7 synchronously and asynchronously. We fretted over whether this outsourced product would eventually replace our in-house product entirely.

Initially, we responded to the rollout by successfully petitioning for our writing center (along with other campus tutoring options) to be linked equally alongside the new outsourced option. Additionally, we engaged in some minor on-campus PR and rebranding to remind the campus community of the Writing Center and its services. At the end of the first year, we detected no significant dropoff in usage. We were still mindfully monitoring the impact of this new service when a global pandemic brought our in-person university operations to an abrupt standstill. Our Writing Center was able to adapt fairly quickly given that our tutors were already providing synchronous and asynchronous sessions; we simply moved all tutoring hours to those online options. Yet the loss of in-person tutoring, something that we had felt provided a competitive edge, made us even more acutely aware of our center's positioning. Our concerns about the outsourced service's always-on availability amid a global pandemic kairotically impelled us to refigure core elements of our identity and presence. That is, we responded to outsourcing by encouraging its opposite: insourcing.

INSOURCING AS COMPLEMENTARY PRACTICE

Outsourcing, common in the business world, extends to higher education, as institutions have historically contracted external vendors for student services, such as for housing or dining operations. However, only in recent memory have matters of teaching and learning been included in the range of outsourced possibilities with companies handling curriculum, advising, or course design. For students and educators, responses to outsourcing run the gamut, largely based on perceived outcomes and the value of what is gained—or lost—from outsourcing.

To counter these trends in the business world, some companies have made commitments to stem the tide of outsourcing by restricting new contracts or returning previously outsourced content to homebase. This process of returning or maintaining production on shore is "insourcing," and it is often heralded as a victory for domestic production and capital (Compton). The COVID-19 pandemic created a renewed interest in insourcing; CEOs had to seek "more control in an uncertain world" by insourcing talent, programming, and support systems (Gryta and Cutter). A survey of post-pandemic outsourcing trends reveals that "many companies appear keen to build capabilities in-house to mitigate the risk of a transformation failing should gaps appear in service providers' capabilities or performance" (Himmelrich et al. 5).

Our Writing Center has engaged in a similar response by actively identifying opportunities available within our already existing staffing, site, and stakeholder support. As such, we have shifted our work to focus on what we can do as a campus resource to protect against the very sense of dislocation that outsourcing tends to connote or create, effectively "insourcing" in spirit and practice with our tutoring staff to reinforce our presence, increase our reach, and affirm our purpose. In so doing, we shifted from being in perceived competition with an outsourced service to emphasizing our presence and product made possible through our localized stakeholders and campus site.

WERE WE IN COMPETITION?

Since the 1970s, our Writing Center has endeavored to keep up with student needs and populations, adapting or innovating as needed over time. We have always been staffed by 8-12 undergraduate peer tutors, with an occasional volunteer also in the mix. From its inception, our center has served students with any writing issue, unlike some other centers that initially started out with a focus on grammar and sentence-level concerns only. What began as a stand-alone writing center was incorporated into an "Academic Commons" for several years in the early 2000s (though always under separate direction and budget line) and moved to its own space in the library. Historically, 68% to 89% of available appointments have been filled over the past ten years; this range is fairly typical for an open-access center such as ours, with bookings cycling along with paper due dates. However, this customary fluctuation from term to term made it difficult to determine the initial impact of a new outsourced option.

Online tutoring options in the form of email exchange became available in 2006. These additional asynchronous services were initially geared toward a few specific programs that had online components or requested the service for their students. In fall of 2011, an upgrade in the online scheduling system used by the Writing Center allowed for us to provide an online platform readily available to all students. Similar to email, this initial online option allowed students to upload a paper for a tutor to review and embed comments and return. The following year, an online chat option was added. Until fall of 2019, the Center had steadily been running around 55% online/45% face-to-face.

Then came the pandemic. Although our overall usage appeared fairly steady since the pandemic, our online options have remained at over 70%, even with students' return to campus. As a "microcosm of the changes and redefinition of the academy itself" (Murphy and Law 134), the campus writing center occupies a crucial space for tracking evolution and change. We knew that with each passing semester, the outsourced tutoring option became increasingly popular system-wide, leading the central office to revise the contract to provide a greater number of available student sessions. The online outsourced option's ongoing contemporaneous availability made us wonder if this external product would eventually absorb all of our users entirely—especially when the outsourced option was emerging as a stable service offering in terms of its presence and availability.

When it comes to the threat of disappearance, which Murphy and Law address in their research, logistical transformations in an institution's delivery of services naturally invite shifts in practice, as service providers, companies, or vendors tend not to conform to "standards embraced by the writing center professional community" (Reglin). At this point, we knew who we once were but lacked a firm enough grasp on our present or future in terms of our identity. As Mary Lou Odom relates in her column "Local Work: Identity and the Writing Center Director," the establishment of a writing center's identity hinges on how it registers locally. While seeking to "legitimize our work by aligning it with established ideals," writing centers risk becoming so diffuse that "audiences are unlikely to recognize those ideals or the worth we attach to them" (Odom 27). For Odom, the very notion of "centerhood" is only "recognizable" when it's "within and unique to its own institution" (28). Thus, we began to look inward to appreciate our own center's lineage, history, and evolution and to revel in its distinction. It is from this inward position that we actively started to insource and uphold our identity.

WHAT WE COULD DO: RECLAIMING LABOR, PLACE, AND SPACE VIA INSOURCING

With time, any initial fears and the impulse to compete dissipated. We stopped looking beyond what we could control and what lay outside our own virtual and physical footprint. Instead, we focused internally on our presence as a campus resource to make it that much more visible. Lauren DiPaula chronicles a similar journey of maintaining her writing center's presence in terms of narrativity. For her, creating a "counterstory" precipitated action, allowing for an "emergence of what is possible, what might happen next" (7). For us, defining possibilities consisted of us insisting on what we could do instead of what we couldn't.

We knew that remaining open for 24 hours a day, seven days a week was impossible. We were aware that hiring professional tutors with degrees was distinctly impossible and counterproductive to our mission as an undergraduate institution. We resigned ourselves to the fact that our staff of 8-12 peer tutors was dwarfed by a full complement of virtual workers sitting behind computer screens across the country. However, all along, we recognized that there were certain experiences that only we could deliver from within, and that discovery became our small attempt to insource what we needed as a campus from *within* our campus.

One of the first moves we made in-house was to engage in publicity that highlighted our presence as an on-campus resource. We placed folded paper tents on tables at the dining hall and student center—places where, incidentally enough, students receive services that are outsourced to other entities. We made sure to join the announcement loop on the campus monitors by advertising our services and recruiting tutors. Although basic and admittedly low-tech, these moves represented our concerted efforts to underscore our presence for community members.

When it comes to how we tutored, we maintained in-person sessions when on-campus life resumed, while also increasing online sessions and available hours in real-time to correspond to exam periods. We began to enlist the Writing Center tutors to serve their peers beyond the more closed, traditional spaces of dedicated appointment slots or paper reviews. In one effort at collaboration and intentional, scaffolded support, several tutors were selected as Supplemental Instruction leaders for sophomore-level writing courses. While careful to maintain the distinctions between SI and tutoring, these leaders could strategically guide students, when appropriate, to Writing Center services. In a developmental writing course held in spring 2022, a Writing Center tutor was embedded full-time within the section, serving as a point person for the students and the instructor. The tutor was able to allocate hours so that attendance during the scheduled classes and conferences with the instructor was possible. As a result of this arrangement, the students in this section were able to benefit from a consistent, trusted peer who promised one-to-one support in ways that were not guaranteed or even available from outsourced options.

In addition to serving our on-campus and online student communities, our Writing Center made a special push to accommodate another sizable student population: the concurrent enrollment community. Our university serves nearly 100 school districts, delivering university courses to high school students across the state. As enrolled university students, these students have access to key resources from which traditional students benefit, including the Writing Center and the outsourced tutors. We had long been of the mindset that our online tutoring options were available to this population, and, historically, we had a few clients from one or two schools each term. When first faced with the outsourced rival, we made it a point to send more targeted communications to this population. When the pandemic brought learning in the high schools online, we received a strong response from cooperating teachers who wanted to integrate our services as part of their instruction. As a result, we reconfigured our operating hours and calendar within our budget to align with high school schedules that differ from ours. To further our insourcing efforts with concurrent enrollment students, in fall 2023 we revised our appointment form so that we can more accurately track their usage. The benefits of this connection cut across stakeholders. Concurrent enrollment students engage with key university resources without ever leaving their homebase. Writing Center tutors can benefit from new populations of students. And, the university as a whole is able to solidify its connection with partnering schools by making one of its key resources all the more accessible.

These initiatives were made possible by insourcing our already present talent, spaces, and identity. Writing Center tutors benefited from readily-available and local opportunities to be more active and invested on campus via placements within classrooms, online and face-to-face sessions, and outreach to concurrent enrollment clients. Stakeholders on the receiving end were able to benefit from resources that were irreplicable by other available avenues of support. In particular, the embedded placements and supplemental instruction programs accentuated the Writing Center's longitudinal presence within the university. The Writing Center and its people became more than a resource announced during orientation only to be forgotten about weeks later or a final stopover during exam periods, as it was now part of specific courses, their students, and the semester calendar.

By broadening, or reimagining, its reach, the Writing Center was able to rely on its own resources to serve its community in ways that are ultimately inaccessible or unavailable to outside entities. In this sense, collaboration within the university facilitated a certain degree of calibration that allowed us to resee or recognize how some practices we had all along were also vital insourcing practices (Powers 2). This is most apparent in recognizing how the Writing Center tutors

themselves necessarily benefit from the very opportunities they help to deliver. Our tutors exist as part of a scholarly community that simply isn't equivalent to a corporatized environment. They are supported by a faculty director who can interface with other faculty members to ensure a seamless exchange of information and feedback. However helpful they may be to writers, outsourced options do not tend to support undergraduate tutors in the way we can through the practical experiences and networking structures inherent to campus writing centers.

Thanks to dedicated practicums and meetings, the Writing Center offers the space for staff to develop as writers, learners, and tutors. Certain majors require experiences that are inexpensively made possible via peer tutors who know the classes and instructors of the community in which they serve. Moreover, in their roles, they frequently collaborate across departments with their fellow students and professors to engage in academic discourse intrinsic to the university.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the years, our Writing Center has evolved to keep pace with students' needs. The days of exclusive face-to-face appointments yielded to online scheduling and virtual paper sessions that operate alongside traditional, in-person meetings. The fixed presence of the Writing Center gave way to a new, dynamic model of instruction and service, which saw tutors being embedded in classrooms, serving distant student populations, and following their peers throughout entire semesters instead of discrete sessions for specific paper assignments. By focusing on our assets instead of deficits, we were able to avoid entering in what would have been an impossible level of competition. Instead, we found ourselves embracing an identity that was strong because of core elements of institutional place and localized labor. We looked inward to ensure our outward reach by insourcing talent and resources already available in order to remain relevant and present for our stakeholders.

Our work allowed us to engage in what William De Herder calls an "active investigation," which could "break through the sacrosanct practices and designs, challenging center staff to critically reflect on how their centers can transform to meet the demands of new social projects and technologies" (7). Even if the technology in question features thousands of tutors stationed 24/7 to assist students in over 40 subjects, including writing, writing centers can evolve and capitalize on their inherent advantages in proximity and community to exist concurrently and complementarily with outsourced corporate giants. Our campus Writing Center has not only continued to exist since the 2018 inception of a new option but has also evolved to respond dynamically to the exigencies of the university in ways that a more distant and removed online product cannot.

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Deschooling (and) the Writing Center[1]

Russell Mayo
Chicago Public Schools

Writing center praxis can be enriched by noting the affinities between peer tutoring and "deschooling," a concept first articulated by social critic Ivan Illich in 1970.[2] While Illich did not seek to banish schools, he did critique them in an effort to open up other possibilities for education beyond formal, top-down schooling. Ivan Illich's proposals for alternative educational arrangements, such as peer matching and skill acquisition, resemble writing center spaces and the work of peer tutoring. Connecting deschooling with writing center scholarship, I describe how peer tutoring resonates with Illich's vision for what education might look like in a deschooled society: convivial, user-initiated learning that resists the competitive, commodified logics of traditional schools. According to Illich, schooling turns knowledge into a commodity, measured through grades and diplomas, and the social capital that degrees confer leads learners to view classroom learning as superior to interactions and experiences that happen outside of classroom spaces, such as voluntary learning with peers.

RUSSELL MAYO

To illustrate the connections between Illich's ideas and writing center tutoring, I draw on qualitative research conducted at the Great Lakes State University Writing Center (GLSU-WC), a writing center at a large, urban university with high levels of racial, economic, and linguistic diversity. The daily work of GLSU tutors demonstrates connections between writing center tutoring and Illich's deschooling vision. I also describe how Illichean approaches can help writing centers empower writers and tutors by challenging traditional educational beliefs and practices.

DESCHOOLING AND RADICAL WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

Writing center scholars have long described their work as radically out of step with the mainstream ideologies and practices of higher education. Lil Brannon and Stephen North claim that writing centers offer "a different model of teaching and learning" (7) that exists on the metaphorical "margins" of English studies and higher education writ large, and they argue that such marginality offers generative possibilities. Neal Lerner argues the transgressive nature of writing center work is based on decades of resistance to standard classroom pedagogies. Likewise, Andrea Lunsford suggests that tutors and directors constitute "a subversive group" that "pose a threat as well as a challenge to the status quo of higher education" (9). In short, scholars of writing centers—and composition more broadly—have a long history of critiquing mainstream educational practices and advocating for critical pedagogies. Such arguments can also be seen in the works of educational critics such as Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, but these connections have not been explored frequently in writing center scholarship.

More recently, an exception has been Anne Geller et al. Their analysis of everyday aspects of writing center work links peer tutoring with deschooling but mentions deschooling only in passing

(9, 70-71), leaving readers with only a vague understanding of Illich's ideas and how they might relate to writing centers. Seeking to extend the work of Geller et al., I see affinities between deschooling and writing centers. Moreover, I see the beliefs and practices of GLSU-WC peer tutors as connected with Illich's deschooling claims. Understanding and appreciating deschooling could impact how we train tutors to navigate the tensions between traditional schooling and peer tutoring.

LEARNING THROUGH CONVIVIAL ALTERNATIVES

In *Deschooling Society*, Illich questions formal educational structures and practices while offering suggestions for alternative educational arrangements. Beyond his critiques, he also seeks "to show that the inverse of school is possible: that we can depend on self-motivated learning instead of employing teachers to bribe or compel the student to find time and the will to learn; that we can provide the learner with new links to the world instead of continuing to funnel all educational programs through the teacher" (73). Illich views informal, user-initiated "educational networks" as preferable to most forms of schooling. This alternative to schooling follows what Illich describes as a "convivial" tool or model of design that is reminiscent of writing center praxis. Conviviality[3] is an essential concept for comprehending Illich's vision of deschooling society and for understanding the potential connections between deschooling and writing centers. For Illich, conviviality is a positive alternative to the problems of modern institutions. Conviviality is central to Illich's insistence that "educational networks" —also referred to as "learning webs"— are preferable to schooling. While this idea entails diverse possibilities, Illich proposes four specific examples (see fig. 1). These arrangements present a learning landscape that is generally user-initiated rather than compulsory, collaborative rather than competitive. Referring to these as "webs" and "networks," Illich highlights the fluid, ecological nature of his approach to learning as opposed to the traditionally top-down, teacher and curriculum-driven approach to education structures.
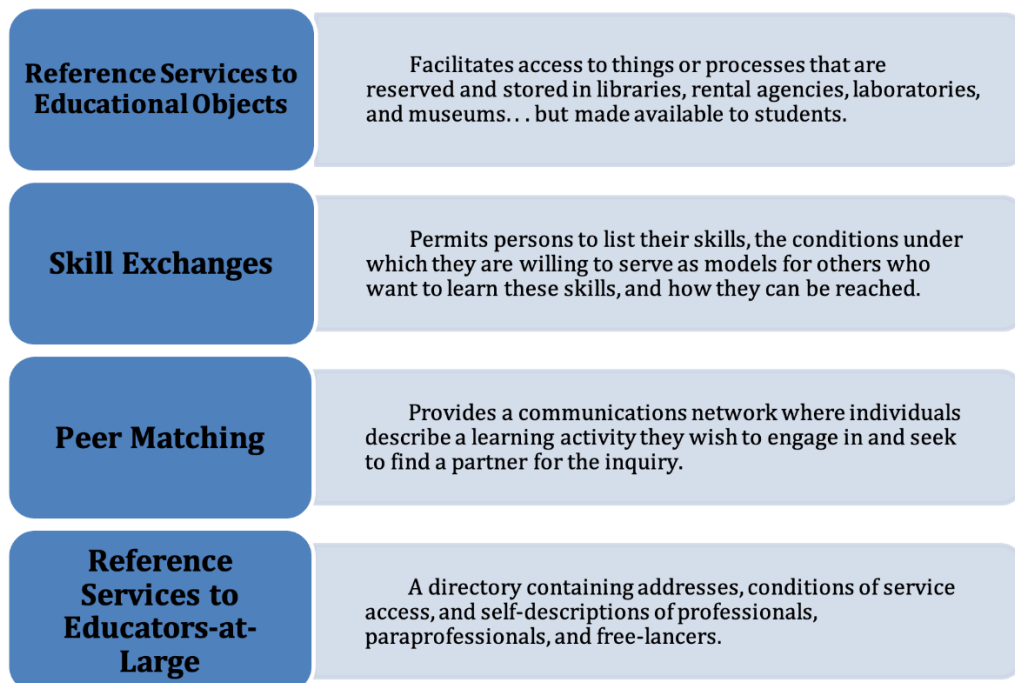
Reference Services to Educational Objects	Facilitates access to things or processes that are reserved and stored in libraries, rental agencies, laboratories, and museums. . . but made available to students.
Skill Exchanges	Permits persons to list their skills, the conditions under which they are willing to serve as models for others who want to learn these skills, and how they can be reached.
Peer Matching	Provides a communications network where individuals describe a learning activity they wish to engage in and seek to find a partner for the inquiry.
Reference Services to Educators-at-Large	A directory containing addresses, conditions of service access, and self-descriptions of professionals, paraprofessionals, and free-lancers.

Fig. 1. Learning webs as proposed by Ivan Illich (*Deschooling* 78-79).

Illich suggests that his ideas of convivial learning webs would contribute to a deschooled society by inverting educational structures into convivial opportunities for all learners. Although Illich's books were once widely read and discussed, his call for radically rethinking institutions was never seriously considered, and today his ideas are largely unknown. Nevertheless, my experiences suggest that deschooling can be understood in the everyday work of peer tutors. I've found that tutors who have never heard of Illich seem to enact pedagogies that parallel Illich's proposed learning webs.

DISCOVERING PEER TUTORING AS CONVIVIAL LEARNING

I conducted a 15-month case study of learning in the GLSU-WC from fall 2017 to fall 2018. As part of a large, diverse, R-1 public university in the urban Midwest, the GLSU-WC has been operating for four decades. This stand-alone center, funded by the Department of English and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, offers peer tutoring services to all students or community members. My central questions were: (a) How does learning occur at the GLSU-WC? and (b) How do various participants understand the learning that takes place at the GLSU-WC?

My study employed ethnographic methods of data collection including participant observation, interviewing, and document collection for observing and analyzing participant's beliefs and practices. Participants were drawn from three specific categories: current and former GLSU-WC directors (n = 7), current GLSU-WC tutors (n = 33), and novices who were students in the tutor training course during their first semester in the GLSU-WC (n = 6). Through open-ended individual and focus-group interviews with participants, I conversed with a wide range of individuals connected to the GLSU-WC for a total of approximately 18 hours. These data were triangulated with around 70 hours in the GLSU-WC as a participant-observer sitting in on tutoring sessions, staff meetings, and the tutor training course. Weekly field notes and interview transcripts were coded, organized by theme, and analyzed further.

Overall, I found that participants described this learning space in ways surprisingly consistent with Illich's conceptualization of conviviality and learning webs. In terms of how learning occurs at the GLSU-WC, my results suggest that literacy learning via peer tutoring pedagogies can be understood as tacitly enacting a model akin to those described in *Deschooling Society*. I view GLSU-WC's tutoring pedagogy as combining four specific nodes of Illichean learning webs (see fig. 2). As a participant-observer in the GLSU-WC, I repeatedly noted the importance tutors placed on facilitating participation over correctness. Tutors sought conviviality with writers, an atypical pedagogical approach learned through their tutor training courses. The GLSU tutoring handbook crafted by past and present directors states the following goals for tutoring: "In addition to helping with writing and building partnerships with writers, the tutor has the responsibility of creating opportunities for the writer to participate" (Aleksa et al. 5). Tutors typically begin sessions by setting the agenda *with* the writer rather than approaching writers through a deficit lens and presuming that they know how to diagnose and fix "bad" writing.
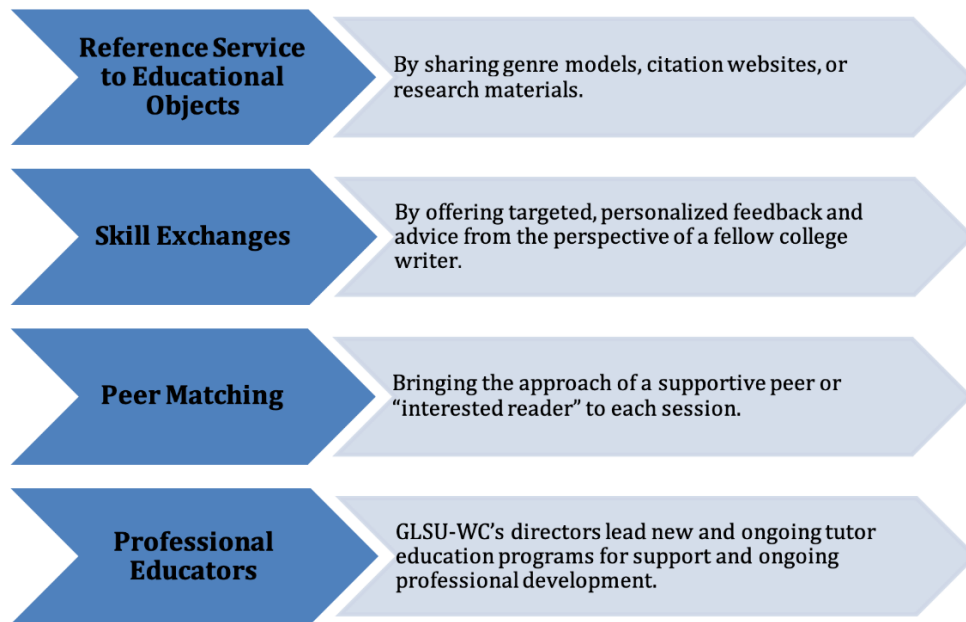
Reference Service to Educational Objects	By sharing genre models, citation websites, or research materials.
Skill Exchanges	By offering targeted, personalized feedback and advice from the perspective of a fellow college writer.
Peer Matching	Bringing the approach of a supportive peer or "interested reader" to each session.
Professional Educators	GLSU-WC's directors lead new and ongoing tutor education programs for support and ongoing professional development.

Fig. 2. Learning webs as seen in the GLSU-WC.

While the start of a tutoring session resembles a pair of college students casually chatting, this is intentional. Tutors report that this move helps them to learn about the writer's needs while simultaneously reducing the anxiety of meeting with a stranger for writing help. When tutors arrive at the table to begin a session, they develop rapport with writers by introducing themselves and then eventually ask: "So, what should we work on today?" Tutoring doesn't begin with the schooling approach, which asks, "What should someone learn?"; tutors instead enact something more akin to deschooling by asking, "What kinds of things and people might learners want to be in contact with in order to learn?" (Illich *Deschooling* 78). Peer tutors do not teach, grade, or implement a curriculum; rather, they offer fellow students what writers need, namely an interlocutor who can respond to their writing during the writing process, one who is familiar with different rhetorical expectations and academic genres of GLSU's myriad discourse communities.

The GLSU-WC aligns with Illich's definition of a "convivial" learning space. For Illich, conviviality is a positive alternative for inverting the problems of institutions that adhere to capitalist logics. Conviviality is at the heart of Illich's proposal that "learning webs" or "educational networks" should take the place of formal schooling arrangements: he describes examples such as skill-sharing, peer matching, and access to educational resources and professional educators on an ad hoc basis. The WC blends these networks: writers select or are matched with peer tutors who bring a skill set of writing and pedagogy and who help connect writers with various digital educational resources, such as finding samples of particular genres, navigating research via the GLSU library, and integrating sources with the help of Purdue OWL, while also having directors on hand to help solve other problems that tutors or writers encounter. The GLSU-WC operates without formal teachers, grades, or a curriculum, and yet my observations and conversations with tutors demonstrate the tremendous amount of experiential literacy learning that occurs for peer tutors. During a focus group interview, Flora, a GLSU tutor and a health studies major, excitedly explained this to me. She reported that tutors repeatedly experience the writing process by "seeing it firsthand . . . that writing and rewriting makes good writing!" Fellow tutors Bran, Claudia, and Amy agreed, each offering examples about how they developed experiential

knowledge through hours of conversation and textual analysis. The experiences of these participants suggest that through tutoring they came to better understand what Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle describe as the variable, complex, unique nature of the writing process (52).

Illich believes that "conviviality" is key to deschooling education between learners, and this idea is very useful for understanding the aims of peer tutoring. A similar concept can be found among the everyday work of GLSU-WC tutors—"peerness." According to the GLSU-WC tutor handbook, "what makes peer tutoring distinct from other educational methods is its emphasis on the tutor's responsibility to create 'peerness'—that is, respectful relationships with other students and opportunities for those students to participate in a conversation about their writing" (Aleksa et al. 4). My participants described this relational attribute of peerness in tutoring as akin to "hospitality," "professionalism," "respect," "empathy," and "camaraderie." The goal of peerness seems to be a fluid pedagogical orientation and process as opposed to a fixed final product or disposition, such as improved grades or corrected errors. Peerness also seems to encapsulate the commitment of GLSU staff to make the space an Illichean peer-matching endeavor, rather than a skill-sharing endeavor without the goal of "peerness."

Study results represent an insider view of GLSU-WC tutor pedagogies that contrast sharply with the outdated, stereotypical view of writing centers as a site of remediation. From such a perspective, one might assume that tutoring reinforces ideologies implicit in compulsory schooling. This tension speaks to the importance of GLSU's tutor training course. As the training materials and lead writing center administrators make clear, this course is meant to challenge novice tutors' ideas about writing, tutoring, and education; otherwise, the center's senior directors worry that tutors would inadvertently reproduce the hierarchical, oppressive school model that they've internalized through years of schooling.

DESCHOOLING (AND) WRITING CENTER WORK

Overall, I have made the case that writing centers such as GLSU's may operate in a similar logic to that of deschooling. The implications of this view are pertinent for writing center theorists and practitioners. Convivial tutoring pedagogies offer opportunities for teaching and learning simultaneously: writers gain insights about writing and rhetoric by receiving feedback while participating in their sessions, and tutors understand the composing process *in situ* while engaging with diverse disciplinary content and genres. Writing centers, therefore, can offer a sort of "deschooling" learning environment for students to acquire a deeper understanding of rhetoric and writing. Most importantly, centers can educate tutors and fellow colleagues about the ways in which writing centers themselves offer effective hands-on forms of rhetorical and pedagogical education. Face-to-face meetings with other students who have questions or need assistance on various projects seem to lead tutors to quickly read, listen, and adapt. Over time, tutors build a mental toolkit as they become increasingly familiar with the academic forms and expectations common to discourse communities across the university. Tutors learn "threshold concepts" of writing (Adler-Kassner and Wardle) as they develop social, rhetorical, and metacognitive understandings of writing through repeated tutoring encounters.

Peer tutoring offers a flexible, low-cost approach to literacy learning that can meet the diverse needs of writers in person or online, synchronously or asynchronously. Seen through the lens of Illich's deschooling thesis, writing center tutoring offers an alternative educational network for learning beyond traditional classroom spaces. In the end, there may be writing center practitioners who disagree with Illich's critiques of schooling—that is exactly how education

theorist Neil Postman felt when he first encountered Illich's work in the 1970s. Eventually, Postman suggests we take Illich's unsettling ideas seriously, and he identifies three specific questions that help educators to begin the process of "deschooling" to reform their own practices: "(1) Will the innovation make resources more widely available? (2) Will it tend to deemphasize the importance of teaching as against learning? (3) Will it tend to make students freer, and their learning less confined?" (146). By using these questions to audit our own educational practices, the implications of Illich's deschooling vision become clearer.

It is possible that many writing centers offer models of convivial learning arrangements that should be supported and studied as models of resilient educational adaptations that align with Illichean notions of how education can empower individuals and transform communities. While the idea of "deschooling" educational spaces may seem far-fetched, even contradictory, novice tutors can read excerpts of Illich's *Deschooling Society* alongside other pieces of critical pedagogy and then reflect on and discuss their own experiences of learning in and out of schools. If tutors and directors see resonance with deschooling concepts in their writing center—if they come to view learning as "unhampered participation in a meaningful setting" (39)—they may relate to writers and each other in more generative, convivial ways that reject the capitalist logics that continue to permeate modern educational practices.

NOTES

1. Sections of this manuscript were part of the author's unpublished 2020 doctoral dissertation: *Finding Ivan Illich in the Writing Center: A Case Study of Deschooling and Literacy Learning.*

2. It may seem contradictory that university writing centers exist within educational institutions while engaging in "deschooling" practices. This contradiction existed throughout Illich's own life. After earning a PhD in history, Illich served as an educational administrator in Puerto Rico, founded the educational Center for Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC) in central Mexico, and later worked as a lecturer at Penn State. For more, see Todd Hartch's The Prophet of Cuernavaca.

3. In his 1973 book *Tools for Conviviality*, Illich defines conviviality as "autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment," which he contrasts with "industrial productivity" (11). Conversations in the GLSU-WC can be considered "convivial" in that they are creative, dialogic interactions between individuals who are seeking to and improve a piece of writing collaboratively. Tutoring sessions aren't scripted, as tutors are trained to develop ideas generatively with writers rather than making changes or corrections for them.

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Re-making the Writing Center: A Years-Long Process of Committing to an Antiracist Agenda

Tina Matuchniak
California State University, Long Beach

Following the brutal murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, conversations about and critiques of conventional writing center pedagogy and practice necessarily became more urgent and charged. It was no longer sufficient (or even possible) to merely talk about race and the pervasiveness of racism in our institutions; it was time for action, revision. It was time to consider the role of our writing center in participating in and perpetuating injustice, or at the very least, in maintaining the status quo. And, perhaps more importantly, it was time to consider what action could be taken, right now, to build an antiracist writing center, specifically one that challenges anti-Black racism, given the current

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and historical racist context in the U.S. The events of 2020 brought into sharp focus the need for a campus-wide effort to acknowledge that whereas *all* racism is reprehensible, not all groups have the same lived experience of racism.

Take the case of a commonly-cited example—routine law enforcement engagement with the public. According to a report published by the Public Policy Institute of California, there are great disparities in traffic stops by law enforcement across racial groups. Black Californians, for example, are more than twice as likely to be searched as white Californians (20% vs. 8%). Furthermore, the report noted that Black Californians were targeted disproportionately to their population in the state. For example, Black residents make up 7% of the state's population, but they account for 16% of stops by law enforcement. The study also noted differences in stop experience across the races. Asians and Latinos, they found, were less likely to be searched after a traffic stop compared to Blacks (Loftstrum et al.). These findings, together with the unforgettable image of Derek Chauvin kneeling on George Floyd's neck, make it clear that anti-Black racism is both qualitatively and quantitatively different from racism writ large. It is, as Kihana Miraya Ross puts it, "more than just 'racism against black people' . . . It's a theoretical framework that illuminates society's inability to recognize . . . [Black people's] humanity." Within this context, therefore, it is incumbent upon us as writing center professionals to re-make our writing centers as antiracist spaces with the understanding that racism operates differently and uniquely across racial and ethnic groups.

College writing centers in the U.S. have sometimes been conceived of as politically neutral student support services whose central mission is to "help" students to write. Such centers, it is assumed, have democratizing effects, as they level the playing field for those who are disadvantaged in some way, be it through their race/ethnicity, primary language, or immigration status. Drawing on postcolonial theory, Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski reject this construct of an uncritical, acculturationist writing center, where students are assimilated into the (academic) discourse of privilege. They propose, instead, a model of the writing center as a contact zone

where "marginalized students become aware of how and why academic discourses situate them within certain power relationships and require of them particular subject positions" (44). Such a radical writing center necessarily challenges conventional theories and practices, especially those situated within an orthodoxy steeped in ideologies of individualism, colorblindness, and linguistic neutrality. Wonderful Faison, Romeo Garcia, and Anna K. Trevino have, further, critiqued the writing center mission to "help" students as one that assumes the superiority of the white rhetorical tradition and, correspondingly, relies on "white benevolence," an arguably racist stance (83). They propose, instead, an approach that values "collaborative benevolence" where everyone needs and benefits from assistance (92).

Based on these critiques, it could be argued that the success of any writing center's mission rests squarely in the hands of the tutors who staff it as well as its leadership. Whom we hire as tutors, how we prepare them to do their work in a culture of equity and inclusion, and how we all develop personally and professionally to become agents of change is central to forwarding an antiracist agenda in the writing center. Thus, I made it a priority to re-make our writing center with an expressed and actionable goal of recruiting and preparing a staff of diverse peer tutors who, themselves, are ready and willing to challenge racist, specifically anti-Black racist, practices.

Our writing center is housed in the Student Success Center of a Hispanic-serving, four-year institution with a largely non-white student body, approximately 55% of whom come from minoritized groups.[1] It is open to all matriculated students, undergraduate and graduate, across all disciplines. We offer one-to-one tutoring (both in-person and via Zoom), course-embedded tutoring, and workshops. Our staff is comprised of one part-time faculty director (me—Indian), one full-time staff person (Latinx), and 20-30 peer tutors, most of whom also identify as non-white (in 2020, 36.36% Latinx; 25.72% Asian; 4.55% Black). These tutors have either completed (or are co-enrolled in) a three-unit rhetoric and composition course focused on the theories and practices of writing instruction, a course that grounds our writing center praxis. Additionally, tutors receive thirty-six hours of pre-service and in-service training over the course of a year. This article, then, will describe our writing center's effort to re-make itself taking a three-pronged approach: Consciousness-raising to prepare ourselves to do the work of an antiracist agenda, revising our tutor education to center antiracist literature in the writing center, and refining our tutor recruitment practices to reach and recruit more Black peer tutors in alignment with our efforts to challenge anti-Black racism and advance Black student success.

CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING AND SELF-WORK

Before we started, I realized that I would have to do some self-work; I had to turn inward and take stock of my own understanding of and positionality in the racist structures at my institution. As an immigrant from India (a racially homogeneous but ethnically, culturally, religiously, and linguistically diverse country), my understanding of race and racism in the United States was limited and filtered through a white lens. Furthermore, I live in an urban, progressive part of the country, where I am sheltered from overt acts of racism and shielded from microaggressions as a result of my light-skinned privilege. Reflecting on my own positionality was an important step toward facilitating a culture of thoughtful and deliberate antiracism in our writing center.

Soon after the brutal murders of Arbery, Taylor, and Floyd in the summer of 2020, I checked in with my staff to see how they were doing. Several expressed the need to talk about what had just occurred, so we assembled online to share in a way that was both cathartic and productive. As a group, we decided to channel our discussions by reading two books that were getting a lot of buzz

at the time: *White Fragility* by Robin D'Angelo and *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi. These readings provided us with a lens and a language with which to examine the events that had just occurred. We read one book in July and the other in August and talked about the issues and themes contained therein. Reading these texts helped us to both enter the ongoing conversations regarding racism as well as understand our own unique positions in a racist society. We asked ourselves the following questions: Who am I? What positions (of privilege or otherwise) do I occupy? What in these texts resonated with me? What made me uncomfortable? What do I know now (about racism and about myself) that I did not know before reading these texts?

At the end of the summer, I distributed an IRB–approved survey to nine participants asking them to describe their experiences in the book club. Tutors expressed a variety of motivations for joining the book club, from wanting to learn/deepen their understanding of racism, to wanting to participate in the "racial reckoning" of the Black Lives Matter movement, to wanting to develop their own professional identities as emerging educators who cared deeply about the lived experiences of their students. They also said that the experience influenced their practice in a variety of ways, from an increased sensitivity to racial issues, to reflecting on their own implicit biases regarding race, to understanding the hegemonic impact of "standard" notions of writing and the accompanying erasure of the self. As much as any other institution, inside or outside of higher education, we were contributing to the reproduction of the status quo, and we had to acknowledge that, examine it with a critical eye, and start to talk about it openly and honestly. How did racism play out at the university? What writing center practices contributed (overtly and covertly) to the maintenance of the status quo? And what were we going to do about the under-representation of race/ethnicity groups in positions of power? This preliminary work paved the way for me to think more deeply about how to construct a tutor education curriculum that actively and intentionally engaged in an antiracist pedagogy.

The self-work that began with the antiracist book club continued through the fall of that same year. First, using freewriting, twenty tutors (including four tutors from the summer book club) unpacked what came up for them when they heard words such as "racism" and "privilege" and "antiracist." Then, students put their responses into a word cloud to see common themes. Next, they discussed their reactions to some of the terms and the emotional impact they had on them, personally and professionally. Finally, they filled out a social identity profile (Davis) and discussed the following questions:

Given what you've learned about yourself . . .

- How might your experiences with higher education differ from your tutees' experiences?
- How do your experiences with higher education influence your expectations and interactions with tutees?

Asking tutors to see themselves not only as a composite of multiple and intersectional identity markers but also in relation to equally complex others (their students) helped them to constitute their work in the writing center as complicated (not straightforward) and critical (not neutral). Some, for example, saw themselves in their students' experiences. They could identify with the disorientation and alienation that comes from being a member of a marginalized group, be it Black, Latinx, first-generation college students, immigrants, or, as in the case of many, identifying with multiple identity groups. Others noted a disconnect, in as much as their lived experiences aligned with some of their students' experiences but not all. Virtually all of them expressed that their own experiences in higher education influenced their expectations and practice in the

writing center. In this way, tutors came to identify their positionality in the tutor-student relationship and understand the impact such positionality might have on their practice.

TUTOR EDUCATION

Following the year of self-work, we undertook a more formal course of antiracist preparation. To our usual course texts (Mackiewicz and Babcock; Murphy and Sherwood), I added several critical texts that addressed racism and antiracist practices more broadly, including *Performing Antiracist Pedagogy in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication* (Condon and Young), *Radical Writing Center Praxis* (Greenfield), and *Tutoring Second Language Writers* (Bruce and Rafoth). I supplemented these with handbooks that dealt with the practical nuts and bolts matters of the tutoring process. In this way, I foregrounded the conversation around racial diversity and equity while still providing tutors with the practical knowledge they would need as practicing tutors.

At the end of the semester, surveys distributed to the twelve newly-hired tutors who took the course indicated that they were affected both personally and professionally as a result of reading these texts. On a professional level, they spoke of how reading these texts fostered a critical consciousness about race and racism. One tutor, Jack, wrote

> "Addressing Racial Diversity" (Barron and Grimm) was helpful because it provided real conversation between scholars of the process of transforming a writing center into a more racially-conscious space . . . . It emphasized the importance of changing the consciousness of individuals to benefit the collective in [a] way that did not sugarcoat the sometimes difficult part of deconstructing individual's status-quo worldviews . . . and help such individuals recognize the personal and collective benefits of the need for cultural change.

Several talked about the writing center as a space for transformation. One, Aliya, noted that the "ties between language and identity mean that writing centers cannot be neutral spaces and, therefore, must serve as antiracist spaces." This connection between language and identity being material to writing and learning was echoed by Jack, who said the texts and discussions around them helped him to "deconstruct notions of academic language that [they had] passively accepted as 'correct.'" Similarly, these training components helped Daniel to recognize how Standard Written American English and "the standardization of American schooling work[ed] to silence POC and minority groups." This silence, this erasure, serves to shape the stories people (students, tutors) tell about themselves in academic spaces. And as Jack noted, "When people's individual stories are silenced, brushed aside, or otherwise invalidated, these individuals are forced to shape their identities around narratives that have been validated by status-quo gatekeepers, mostly at the expense of [their] cultural identity."

TUTOR RECRUITMENT

My first call to action, based on reading antiracist literature, was to revise and expand our recruitment practices such that we were not only *including* Black students in our search, but proactively *reaching out* to them to apply for the position. By expanding and diversifying the applicant pool, we felt confident that we would find highly qualified Black tutors to staff our center. Our rationale for such a targeted approach to recruitment is that greater representation is vital to resisting the structural factors that support and contribute to anti-Black racism through a process of mutual understanding, mutual respect, and dialogue amongst the staff. Furthermore, the more Black tutors we employ, the more opportunities we have to foster a community of care in which Black students have access to peers and shared cultural values, which, as we know, can be crucial to their success. To that end, we took a two-pronged approach to recruitment: Revising

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the language of the job description to include language that explicitly advanced an antiracist agenda and expanding our recruitment efforts in order to reach more Black applicants.

The first revision we made to our job description was to explicitly affirm our commitment to an inclusive, antiracist agenda by moving our diversity statement to the very top of the list of qualifications, which now reads: "Minimum Qualifications: Commitment to an antiracist, inclusive agenda and/or expertise in working successfully with a diverse student population." Next, we moved the GPA requirement to the bottom of the list of minimum requirements, indicating that it was the least important of our minimum requirements. Third, we removed any language about English grammar because we had already said "strong writing skills," and we did not want to promote Standard American English as being dominant over all other Englishes and languages. Finally, under the Preferred/Desired qualifications, we added a preference for proficiency in Spanish. As a Hispanic-serving institution, we thought it important to recruit more Spanish-speaking tutors so that students could choose their preferred language in which to communicate during the sessions.

In addition to revising our job description, we also expanded our recruitment efforts to include conventional channels such as flyers and career center posting, as well as targeted recruitment and outreach to student organizations such as the Black Student Union and La Raza. I went to each of these organization's meetings and spoke to the students there about our commitment to recruiting a more diverse tutor body and encouraged them to apply. I also told them that I was happy to mentor them through the application process. Third, I reached out to the department chairs of the Ethnic Studies Departments (Africana Studies, Chicano/Latino Studies, American Indian Studies, and Asian American Studies) to distribute and post the position in their respective departments. Finally, I reached out to my own faculty network, formally via email but also informally at meetings or chats over coffee, to help me spread the word about recruitment to students who might be good candidates for the position.

The results of these recruitment efforts were mixed. Whereas our writing center had previously had a decent record of recruiting a majority of non-white tutors, we didn't meet our target of hiring a tutor cohort that more closely represented the population of students that visit our writing center. We had far fewer Black students (compared to Latinx, Asian, and white) students applying to be tutors, and as a result we hired fewer Black tutors, which resulted in a final first-time tutor cohort of 3.14% Black tutors, compared to an overall campus population of 3.7% Black students. At first glance this seems fair, but when considering that the proportion of Black students who *use* the writing center is 5.73%, it is evident that our tutor cohort is not as representative of the population we serve. Clearly, we need to do a better job of attracting Black students to apply to be tutors in order to meet our objective of creating a community of care in which Black students feel affirmed and empowered to succeed.

WINS, LOSSES, LEARNINGS

The work of remaking the writing center is a process, a project, a commitment. It is ongoing at our center as it is at our institution. The consciousness-raising continues as each year passes and as each new cohort of tutors takes its place in the writing center. We continue to add to and refine our tutor education curriculum and continue to have formal and informal conversations about race, racism, and the writing center. On the plus side, we have accumulated a robust set of literature to inform our work and have acquired a new language with which to talk about race and racism in the writing center. We understand that the work is never finished, that it is provisional and subject to revision, that it requires us to work in collaboration with each other,

but also with partners across the campus. On the minus side, we did not see the outcomes we had hoped for. Our recruitment efforts did not attract substantively more Black applicants. We need to do more effective outreach, the kind that demonstrates our commitment to an antiracist agenda writ large. We need to build more trust, and through that trust, more partnerships with students and organizations across the campus. And finally, perhaps the biggest lesson has been in the area of *how* we approached this work. What started as a reactive, ad hoc process undoubtedly provided invaluable momentum and motivation, but the work of remaking the writing center calls for a more intentional, proactive stance to an antiracist agenda, one that takes an ecological approach, wherein intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, and policy factors are considered together in order to facilitate healthy, successful outcomes for all.

NOTES

1. I use the term "minoritized" here to indicate groups who have been historically disadvantaged (e.g. Cambodians) versus groups who are fewer in number (minority) but who may nevertheless not be disadvantaged (e.g. Japanese).

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Flexibility in the Writing Center: One Tutor's Suggestions for Synchronous Online Sessions

Romaisha Rahman
University of New Mexico

In my eight years of working as a writing tutor in four different institutional writing centers, first as a graduate student and now as a professional, I have had multiple occasions where my flexibility as a tutor was tested. While flexibility is perceived differently across disciplines, how I see flexibility in one-to-one teaching or tutoring is the ability to switch from one instruction technique to another, catering to the needs of specific students. My ideology of flexibility in tutoring is similar to what Muriel Harris has described as a grab bag for one-to-one teaching conferences. To Harris, "the notion of a grab bag . . . implies that all of us can select what looks useful for ourselves and switch from one strategy to another when the first one doesn't work" (107).

ROMAISHA RAHMAN
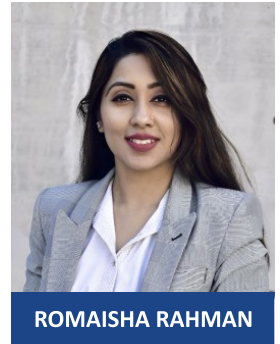
Since Harris' first mention of the concept, the field of education has undergone technological evolution and our grab bags have come to include newer technologies and web-based applications. Our conferencing strategies have also extended from just paper consultations to include computers (Holmes) and, currently, fully remote online sessions (Remington; Hamby). Teachers and tutors are now expected to have digital and technological literacies and the expertise to lead sessions fully online. However, despite all the training and preparation we put into tackling technology in our synchronous online sessions, the digital and web-based applications tend to, at times, fail us. I describe one such personal experience below and explain how I utilize flexibility—my grab bag—to salvage my session.

Picture this: It's 2020—our educational institution has gone into lockdown to mitigate the unfortunate spread of the coronavirus. We are still sorting out the virtual tutoring policies. During this period of experimentation, we, as a writing center, have decided to conduct our tutoring sessions temporarily via Google Docs. What our current sessions look like is: 1) our student writers email us an electronic copy of their writing before the appointment time, along with stating their writing concerns in the body of the email, 2) we then turn those attachments into Google Docs and send the links to the Google Docs to our student writers before the appointment time, and 3) we provide synchronous feedback to them in real time using the built-in comment and chat features in Google Docs.

This current format seemed to be working fine until, in one of my sessions, a graduate student complained they could not see any of the comments I was leaving synchronously on the Google Doc. Though the student was able to view all of the markings I was making with the highlighting tool, they were unable to see the comments or chat messages I was posting within the document. To solve the problem, the immediate measures that the student and I took were refreshing the document and then signing out and signing back in again; however, this did not work.

So, I proposed downloading the Google Doc with the comments and sending it back to the student as an MS Word file (a built-in download option in Google Docs) through email; the student, however, seemed hesitant to pursue the asynchronous option and showed interest in continuing a synchronous online conversation. Since the student could not see my chat messages in Google Docs, we were emailing each other, back and forth, to continue our conversation about their writing; this method was becoming too tedious and time-consuming. I had to quickly think of a tool I could use to make the session effective and easy for the student to navigate.

As I already had their phone number from the sign-up sheet, I decided to use Google Voice messaging system to chat with them. I highlighted the sections in different colors in Google Doc and texted them my feedback on their writing using Google Voice messages. In my texts on Google Voice, I referred to each section of the Google Doc by color and put the comments for each corresponding section accordingly so they could understand which comment aligned with each section of the Google Docs document. Using the Google Voice messaging system also meant that the student was able to text me instantaneously and directly to ask for clarification regarding the feedback—just like they would have been able to with the chat feature in Google Docs. The student seemed relieved to have this option and thanked me for my effort. They also left a very positive review in the online feedback form for the session.

In this particular session, I had to exercise flexibility and make an instantaneous decision to utilize two separate apps together in one session. I used Google Voice and Google Docs features, relying heavily on Google Voice for the session's success. Both apps are simple, common, and free-of-charge tools—some things that I have, over time, taught myself and included in my grab bag. When it comes to tutoring sessions, we should be aware of multiple options. Erin Andersen and Sean Molloy highlight the importance of presenting clients with technological choices such as WCOnline, Zoom, Skype, and Meet, among others to make tutoring sessions accessible and productive.

Personally, my grab bag is always growing. As both a current writing instructor and a professional writing tutor, I seek out new tools, applications, and formats to enhance my conferencing sessions; some of the tools I teach myself in my downtime through reading, watching video tutorials, and using hands-on navigation, and some other tools I learn as part of my job requirement. In addition to Google Voice, another example of a self-taught tool for me is Microsoft TEAMS. Either way, I do not shy away from experimenting with new tools in case a need arises.

Nonetheless, I am aware that each writing center is unique, and writing tutors—especially new recruits—may not always have the knowledge or the liberty to improvise their sessions and utilize resources and tools available to them. Writing centers can navigate these limitations by encouraging tutors to learn new technological tools that are allowed. During tutor training sessions, center coordinators can emphasize the need for and importance of technological literacy and help tutors create personalized plans for how they can utilize their downtime to learn about new tools. During follow-up training sessions, tutors can share what they've learned with one another and suggest other technological tools that they believe might be helpful.

Because some writing centers may restrict certain tools and applications due to institutional privacy policies, it is important for tutors and coordinators to discuss what can be included in the tutor grab bag. In the example that I shared, I used Google tools because it was easily accessible and I had the liberty and expertise to do so. However, some writing centers prohibit such web applications, requiring tutors to be creative in learning how to use alternative uses of their existing systems, such as Microsoft platforms or WCOnline. For instance, if the default campus

platform is Microsoft but all writing center sessions are conducted in WCOnline, it may be helpful for the tutors and staff to talk about using Microsoft tools such as TEAMS and Online Microsoft Word as an alternative to WCOnline in case the platform malfunctions. Some other, free-of-charge, alternatives are Google tools and conferencing platforms such as ZOOM and Skype.

Web-based applications and tools are ever-evolving and their features ever-changing. Thus, writing center tutors and coordinators should keep conversations regarding flexibility alive and replenish their grab bags often. As I have already mentioned, each writing center is unique in that they have their individual practices and policies based on the community they serve. However, having experimented with different modes and formats of tutoring, I have come to the realization that some service in the writing center is much better than no service. So, approaching tutoring sessions with flexibility can ensure maximum efficiency and productivity. I hope to encourage tutors and coordinators to explore and find available, and allowable, options they can use as alternatives if and when regular applications fail. Our motto as writing center staff should be "service-first," and the best way of service is through flexibility in our sessions.

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CONFERENCE CALENDAR

June 11-14, 2024: European Writing Centers Association, Limerick, Ireland
Website: https://europeanwritingcenters.eu/conference

October 18-20, 2024: National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, Tacoma, Washington
Conference information: ncptw2024@gmail.com
Website: https://www.thencptw.org/tacoma2024/

October 21-27, 2024: International Writing Centers Association, virtual
Website: https://writingcenters.org/events/2022-iwca-annual-conference

March 21-22, 2025: Secondary School Writing Centers Association, Provo, UT
Conference information: conference@sswca.org
Website: https://sswca.org/2025-conference-views-from-the-trail/

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Secondary School Writing Centers Association, March 21-22, 2025
Brigham Young University, Provo, UT
Conference partners: SSWCA and Central Utah Writing Project.
"Views from the Trail"

For questions about the conference, contact conference@sswca.org. Proposals for in-person and virtual sessions are due on Monday, October 21, 2024.

Archives, Resources, and Submissions:

Visit wac.colostate.edu/wln for archive access, Digital Edited Collections, resources, and manuscript submission guidelines.

An Artist's Guide to Tutoring Creative Writing Submission Conference Calendar

A JOURNAL OF WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

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