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A JOURNAL OF WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

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From the Editor

Muriel Harris

Among the unexplored areas of writing center studies are the variety of programs created by writing centers as they mold their services to the educational missions of their institution. Two such programs discussed in this issue are a service-learning program—a combined effort by Lisa Zimmerelli and Victoria Brown—and Writing Circles, a program built by Tereza Kramer. A related article is Glenn Hutchison's review of Tiffany Rousculp's recent book about writing centers' role in community literacy.

Zimmerelli and Brown view their service-learning program as an ethical model for community engagement. While they acknowledge the difficulties of creating such a program with minimal resources, the model they offer has sustained itself, helped disadvantaged students succeed, and given tutors an opportunity to learn a new form of tutoring. Hutchison's review of Rousculp's *Rhetoric of Respect* notes that community engagement also means engaging in a rhetoric of respect for the literacy needs of the community as well as creating opportunities for change.

For Kramer, the Writing Circles she set up through her institution's Writing Center and WAC program began with a request from a Great Books seminar instructor. From there, the number of Writing Circles grew rapidly and became a popular campus program. Kramer offers us a close look at the way such circles are formulated, run, and assessed.

Should anyone in writing centers have to contend with questions about automated grammar checkers, you'll find a champion in Les Perelman's extensive work explaining why grammar checkers produce false results and just don't work. Perelman's detailed work on why grammar checkers fail complements his extensive, well-known work on demonstrating the many problems with automated grading of essays.

In the last few pages of this issue, you'll also find notices of conferences, job announcements, and calls for proposals for special issues of *WLN*. We hope you find this an issue filled with good reading.

Service-Learning Tutor Education: A Model of Action

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"It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important.
You have to do the right thing.
It may not be . . . in your time, that there'll be any fruit.
But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing.
You may never know what results come from your action.
But if you do nothing, there will be no result."
— Mahatma Gandhi

Many writing centers, especially those in urban areas, have responded to systemic and structural oppression in surrounding neighborhoods by extending their services beyond the campus community. For many of us, such engagement is consistent with the liberatory ideal of democratic education. However, adding service and a social justice component to writing center obligations can feel overwhelming. Indeed, early questions directors and staff face when considering community engagement can easily sideline a potential project into a mere "we should do this one day" wish. Basic questions (Where to start? How to get funding? Will tutors commit?) and complex questions (Will my department/institution support this? What is the need? How do we know it is the need? Are we making biased presumptions about the community and its literacy practices? Might we do harm?) point to ethical considerations of community engagement. And yet, as Mahatma Gandhi reminds us, "It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important;" we can also choose to respond to the equally ethical imperative to *act*, to do something, even small, for the good of our community despite financial, institutional, or psychic barriers.

This essay is about our small action.[1] We share the integration of service-learning in tutor education as one model for writing center community engagement. After providing our project context, we detail service-learning modifications made to our

tutor education course, present benefits of service-learning, and identify what we see as four factors for success.

BACKGROUND

Dip a toe into service-learning scholarship, and you will find concerns over sustainability; this certainly is true for the two prominent community literacy models: the service-learning composition classroom and community-based writing centers.[2] In service-learning composition classes, students engage in projects that respond to a community need throughout the semester, and instructors link community engagement with coursework.[3] Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters identify sustainability as a significant challenge to service-learning projects; although the classroom environment provides a space for formalized, structured reflection (a key service-learning component), "class and term blocks can be a huge and even crippling obstacle" to the success of community-based service-learning writing projects (11). When semester and service end, the community partner is left hoping another class will pick up where the previous class left off.

University-sponsored community-based writing/literacy centers, usually off-campus and embedded in the community, provide a range of support, from skills-based tutoring to publishing to literacy advocacy. Some, such as the Salt Lake Community College Community Writing Center—under Tiffany Rousculp's leadership[4]—and the Colorado State University Community Literacy Center—under Tobi Jacobi's leadership—enjoy tremendous institutional material support, (i.e., devoted faculty and budget lines, permanent location and staff, etc.). Without such support, however, sustaining a community writing center is challenging. Tutors may struggle to commit consistently, especially if the work is unpaid, and directors face the difficulty of lining up institutional support for what can be perceived as simply an add-on program, an important but disposable part of what the writing center and institution do.

COMBINED MODELS

To address the sustainability issue that plagues both service-learning models, we combined the class- and center-based models. Project sustainability was foremost in our minds because we saw sustainability as an ethical imperative: if we were going to start the work, we wanted to ensure it continued. When we transformed our fall tutor education course, Writing

Center Practice and Theory, into a service-learning course, we knew that for at least one semester annually, the service would be mandatory and integrally tied to theory, praxis, and reflection. Moreover, because our course is an extension of a larger, more comprehensive campus program—the writing center—we hoped our community engagement would be sustained by writing center volunteers every spring. So while our service-learning tutor education course provides a necessary theoretical and critical space to process the service, the writing center sustains the program all year by providing tutors (whether students in the tutor education course or tutors from our center).

PARTNERSHIP
We also sought a suitable community partner, which is key in creating an effective service-learning class. Our chosen partner, Bridges, sponsored by St. Paul's School of Baltimore provides a range of support services for Baltimore public school system students, including summer bridge programs, tutoring, job training, and social services guidance.[5] Formerly limited to elementary and middle school students, when Bridges grew to support high school students, it needed tutors to help those struggling academically.

The partnership arrangement, established during our first semester in 2011, is largely the arrangement we continue today. Every Wednesday evening our writing center closes early to accommodate Bridges students, who arrive on a bus driven by an Americorps intern. After grabbing pizza, tutors and students pair off for about two hours to work on homework, projects, SAT prep, and college essays. Lisa and Victoria are also present nearly every week to work with students. And our plan for sustainability has worked: each spring, when our course is not offered, tutors volunteer to sustain the Loyola/Bridges program. Then, the class and program picks back up the next fall. In total, 46 tutors have tutored 40 high school students thus far.

TRANSFORMING TUTOR EDUCATION INTO
SERVICE-LEARNING TUTOR EDUCATION
Modifications to our Writing Center Theory and Practice class to accommodate service learning include a weekly tutoring obligation, readings, class discussion, and reflection assignments. Previously, tutors in the class committed four hours weekly to tutoring Loyola students. When we partnered with Bridges, we cut Loyola tutoring time to two hours weekly to allow two

hours for Bridges' students. Tutors find that working with two different groups of students offers them an interrogated point of comparison; they wrestle with important issues of implicit bias, structural and systemic barriers to education, and the effects of personal and family issues on writing process (to name a few examples).

Tutors in the class read writing center, service-learning, race and class privilege, literacy, and education texts. Each class we discuss the readings in the context of our students' Bridges and Loyola tutoring experiences, and we weave Bridges into the class when we discuss composition and writing center theory and praxis. We also create opportunities for informal and formal reflection and critical engagement with the service experience. Within 24 hours of Bridges tutoring, our students post an online reflection visible only to each other and to Lisa and Victoria. These reflections are not graded and serve two purposes: a journal for the tutors and a mechanism for any needed intervention from Victoria. Because we work with high school students, we must communicate in a timely manner issues of concern with Victoria, who can relay information to the Bridges social worker (tutors, Lisa, and Victoria also meet briefly after each Bridges session expressly for this purpose). Additionally, tutors cull through their weekly reflections, looking for themes, developments, and provocations for a final reflection paper. They select one or two essays from educational theory, local news, or service-learning or other relevant scholarship and put those essays in conversation with their reflections. Many tutors also extend their service-learning experience by tackling research topics that intersect with Bridges.

TUTORS AND BRIDGES STUDENTS' REWARDS
Collectively, the course mechanisms—weekly service, readings, class discussion, and reflection—help Loyola students connect their Bridges tutoring in various and often unexpected ways to the tutoring process. At the end of the semester, tutors often comment that their Bridges tutoring, not the writing center tutoring, provided the most "hands-on" training and experience. As Lisa's teacher-research essay "A Place to Begin: Service-Learning Tutor Education and Writing Center Social Justice" attests, the rewards of community engagement are multifarious and powerful. Lisa's essay suggests that tutors increase their capacity for connection and empathy, learn to recognize and respect

reciprocal learning, and expand their notions of literacy as social justice, all of which translate into the daily practice of their tutoring.

Being mindful, however, of the danger of lopsided benefits for those engaged in service-learning, we instituted assessments with the Bridges students, asking them to complete surveys at each semester's start and close. But the Bridges students' survey responses tended to be overly positive and rather vague: they "LOVE" the program and tell us "not to change a thing" (well, except change the food from pizza!). We informally gauged Bridges students' GPA movement, but that measure hinges on so many factors that we hesitate to use it as a program efficacy marker. The next phase of the Loyola/Bridges partnership (maybe another potential tutor research project) will be creating a comprehensive, meaningful assessment plan that factors in both Loyola tutors' and Bridges students' development and growth.

The feedback we have received, although suspect, has revealed some key findings. Almost all Bridges students cite study skills, time management, organization, and homework completion as areas where they develop most. Weekly, we witness the deepening of their understanding of how to be successful students: they learn how to ask questions about their work; they dialogue about how to approach teachers with questions they need answered; they examine their organization and develop a method for keeping track of assignments. Moreover, the opportunity to work with tutors on writing assignments is for many Bridges students their first encounter with writing as a process. From evaluating the assignment prompt to exploring prewriting options to drafting alone to processing and analyzing teachers' grades and comments, students discover how much time and thought is necessary for a cogent and thorough piece of writing. Through ongoing dialogue with tutors, Bridges students develop self-reflection and self-advocacy strategies as they evaluate their own writing and study practices.

Finally, we are struck by how much Bridges students love coming to and sharing our writing center space. By the end of each fall, they begin to consider themselves as belonging in our college campus corner. They talk often to tutors about college life—both academic and social—and learn to interact with Lisa and Victoria, not as teachers, but as mentors. Writes one Bridges student, "Bridges/Loyola will help because of the simple fact that we are on a college campus with a college atmosphere and having a

college tutor you could ask any questions [sic] may have or even get a feel of how difficult it is being a college student and what you could do to help you overcome it." For first-generation college-bound students, this early college acculturation is invaluable—and can be the first step in college retention and success.

FOUR SUCCESS FACTORS

Every service-learning project will be unique for that writing center and its community partner; nonetheless, we share the following four factors that ensured our program's success in the hopes that they will be helpful for others who begin a writing center community engagement project.

1) Presence

We recommend that directors consider carefully if they will participate in the service with their tutors. We believe our consistent engagement with the program has been critical for its success because our presence communicates to students that we value the program pedagogically and personally; it enables us to have our "eyes and ears on the ground," so we can respond to emerging issues; and it allows us to develop relationships, alongside our students, with all involved.

2) Flexibility

The first years of our service-learning partnership included extensive trial and error. We tried different week days (holidays complicate Mondays in the spring), experimented with ways to begin the evenings (favorites include ice-breakers, tutor-led grammar lessons, and writing prompts), and troubleshot who should work where (we often had to ensure some particularly rambunctious Bridges participants were separated in the center). Moreover, we carefully considered who would work together. Initially, we paired students at the start of the semester; this strategy only worked, however, if all Bridges students came weekly. We then moved to a more organic matching system; Bridges students write their names and homework on a whiteboard, and tutors sign up with a student). This semester we combined these approaches. The former approach fosters deep connections between students and a stronger commitment to the program over the semester; the latter helps generate a sense of group camaraderie.

3) Trust

We invite tutors and students to help inform and shape the program, and we trust that they can identify what the program

needs and how it needs to grow. For example, one strong program addition is the tutor-recommended "College Night." Every semester a tutor panel answers Bridges students' college questions. Tutors then lead workshops on The Common Application, college discernment and selection, and financial aid. We began this program when a tutor learned that a Bridges student thought she did not qualify for college financial aid because she "wasn't on food stamps." We also invite Bridges students to tell us what they need, such as SAT prep books or readily available binders and folders, and we then provide these materials.

4) Fun
Although we have fun every week we work together, we also plan service and social events—e.g. tree plantings, basketball games, holiday parties, and end-of-year celebrations. For the holiday party, using funds donated by the Loyola Center for Community Service and Justice, the tutors and Lisa shop at the college bookstore, selecting t-shirts, hats, keychains, and other fun items for Bridges goodie bags. For the end-of-year celebrations, Loyola faculty donate books (novels, poetry, short stories), and Bridges students pick through the piles for their summer reading.

CONCLUSION
We posit that our small action, our service-learning tutor education program, is bearing fruit for one primary reason: we have made a permanent, ongoing institutional commitment to the program and to Bridges students. We are not simply dipping into Bridges students' lives to improve our students' tutoring skills; we will see many Bridges students throughout their high school careers, and those students will see many of our tutors throughout their college careers.

For us, this program cannot fail. It is not an option. Not sustaining the Loyola/Bridges partnership would be akin to not offering the tutor education course, or shutting down the writing center during midterms. This partnership is central, not peripheral to what we do, to our mission within the university and beyond. And we communicate it as such. Every annual report Lisa submits includes a page reporting our Bridges work; every year at least one tutor presents on a service-learning project at a writing center conference; every potential tutor that Lisa interviews commits at the outset to the weekly Bridges tutoring. Every week Loyola writing tutors and Baltimore City high school students gather to eat, write, and work together.

This level of personal and professional commitment is sustained, in turn, by the small and big successes of the Loyola/Bridges program: Matthew settling into his work without prompting; Jason earning a "B" in Physics; Deeja hitting "send" on the common app essay; Craig getting accepted with funding to Morgan State University; Angela landing her dream internship.[6] And our tutors' successes are equally important: Gigi deciding to pursue urban healthcare; Alexa, a pre-law student, discovering what she calls her "civic identity and responsibility"; Kathleen carrying her Loyola/Bridges experiences into her own public school classroom. Every writing center tutor participates in Loyola/Bridges at least one semester, many more do so for two or three semesters. As the cornerstone of our tutor education, service-learning is foundational for our center and integral to the development of a thoughtful, intentional, and ethical tutoring identity.

1. For the sake of clarity and consistency of voice, we employed plural first person in this essay. Lisa Zimmerelli solely made some curricular and pedagogical decisions, and Victoria Brown solely made some logistical decisions, but our program is collaborative.

2. For recent scholarship on community literacy engagement, see Cella and Restaino; Deans; Deans et al.; Rose and Weiser; Rousculp; and Ryder. For scholarship that speaks about benefits of service-learning for tutor education, see Ashley; Condon; DeCiccio; Gorkemli & Conard-Salvo; Green; Moussu; and Spillane.

3. A description of service-learning at Loyola University Maryland is located at http://www.loyola.edu/department/ccsj/servicelearning. The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse at <gsn.nylc.org/clearinghouse> offers the most comprehensive list of service-learning resources.

4. See Rousculp for a compelling reflection on her community writing center and the articulation of her discursive theory of literacy. See p. 28 for Hutchinson's review of her book.

5. See <www.stpaulsschool.org/page.cfm?p=827> for more information.

6. All Bridge's students' names have been changed. Loyola tutors have given permission to use their names.

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CALL FOR PROPOSALS: *WLN* Special Issues

Reading in the Writing Center | Proposals Due March 15.
Ellen C. Carillo, University of Connecticut, Guest Editor

Prior to a 2012 change in the Conference on College Composition and Communication's (CCCC) call for proposals, Mariolina Salvatori and Patricia Donahue found that it had been almost two decades since composition's professional organization encouraged panels and presentations on reading at their annual convention. Despite the long silence surrounding reading in composition, in the last five years or so many compositionists have returned to crucial questions related to reading, writing's counterpart in the construction of meaning.

For more information, see <https://wlnjournal.org/redirect.php?item=1>.

The Affective Dimension of Writing Center Work | Proposals Due May 31.
Kathy Evertz and Renata Fitzpatrick, Carleton College, Guest Editors

During any given conference, writing center consultants and writers may experience feelings that range from joy and satisfaction to anger and frustration, any of which can foster or impede a writer's or tutor's development or performance. We invite writing center workers to help spark a conversation that foregrounds how emotions, motivations, values, and attitudes can influence what does or does not happen in writing conferences, both for those who visit and those who staff our centers.

For the complete CFP, see <https://wlnjournal.org/redirect.php?item=2>.

Grammar Checkers Do Not Work

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Daily I thank the powers that be for the computer spell checker. I never could spell decently. In grade school my work was always marked down for poor spelling. In undergraduate and graduate programs, I painstakingly reviewed papers with the *American Heritage Dictionary* to correct my numerous spelling mistakes. By the time I wrote my dissertation, I managed to cajole my then partner, now wife, to proofread it for spelling errors. (She is still collecting on that favor.)

All that changed in 1983 with WordPerfect's incorporation of a spell checker. My productivity as a scholar and teacher increased exponentially. Now when I type a spellchecked set of comments, I have no fear of embarrassing myself. Spell checkers also greatly influenced student writing. When Andrea Lunsford and Karen Lunsford's 2008 study reproduced the 1988 Robert Connors and Andrea Lunsford study of student writing errors, the greatest difference was in the major decline in the frequency of spelling mistakes. While spell checkers are often unable to identify homonyms such as *too* for *two*, overall they work well. Grammar checkers, however, do not work well.

The first grammar checkers, such as Writer's Workbench's grammar modules, began in the 1970s; MS Word and WordPerfect added grammar modules in the 1980s. By the late 1990s grammar checkers were mostly aimed at K-12 and post-secondary education—with products such as ETS's Criterion, Pearson Writer, and Measurement Incorporated's Project Essay Grade, along with stand-alone products such as Grammarly, WhiteSmoke (the grammar checker used by Pearson Education), and Ginger. We know spell checkers are usually accurate in detecting misspellings; that is, they are reliable. But are grammar checkers reliable?[1]

This question breaks down into several related ones:

- Does a grammar checker detect most, if not all grammatical errors?

- When it detects grammatical errors, does it correctly classify them in a manner that will allow writers to understand the errors and improve their writing?

- Does it classify some instances of perfectly grammatical prose as errors to produce false positives?

The answer to these questions is that grammar checkers are so unreliable that I can assert that they do not work.[1] At best, they detect around 50% of grammatical errors in a student text (Chodorow, Dickenson, Israel, and Tetreault; Gamon, Chodorow, Leacock, and Tetreault; Han, Chodorow, and Leacock). More troubling, because almost all grammar checkers use statistical modeling (more on that later), increases in the errors they identify will be accompanied by increases in false positives of perfectly grammatical prose being identified as an error (Gamon, Chodorow, Leacock, and Tetreault; Measurement Inc.). This phenomenon is most apparent when grammar checkers analyze an expert writer's prose. Using the online service WriteCheck, which employs the grammar checking modules from ETS's e-Rater,[2] I submitted 5,000 words (maximum allowed) from a favorite essay, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals" by Noam Chomsky. The ETS grammar checker found the following "errors" or "problems":

TABLE 1: WriteCheck Errors - Chomsky Article

Missing comma	9
Article error (missing or not needed)	15
Beginning sentence with **coordinating conjunction**	14
Spelling	4
Incorrect Preposition	5
Passive Voice	8
Sentence Fragment	2
Verb Form Error	1
Proofread. This part of the sentence contains a grammatical error or misspelled word that makes your meaning unclear.	2
Run-on sentence	1
Compound These two words should be written as one compound word.	1

Of the 62 problems identified in Chomsky's prose, only one could possibly be considered an error, a sentence fragment used for emphasis. All the other identified "errors" consisted of perfectly grammatical prose. The other sentence identified as a fragment was an independent clause with a subject and finite verb. I also ran a segment of 10,000 characters (maximum allowed) through WhiteSmoke. It identified 3 spelling errors, 32 grammar errors, and 32 problems in style.[3]

Grammar checkers often flag certain correct constructions as errors because those constructions are most often ones that computers can easily identify. Thus, although a sentence beginning with a coordinating conjunction has been accepted in almost all written English prose registers for at least 25 years, grammar checkers cling to the old rule because it is so easy for a computer to identify that "mistake." Once the algorithm has a list of the coordinating conjunctions, it simply tags any occurrence that begins a sentence. Similarly, most grammar checkers tag any introductory word or phrase, from *thus* to a prepositional phrase, that is not followed by a comma.

Articles and prepositions are difficult for machines to get right when they analyze the prose of expert writers, and they are difficult for English Language Learners. I ran a representative paper of 354 words from an advanced English Language Learner through seven grammar checkers: 1) MS Word; 2) ETS's e-Rater 2.0 in Criterion; 3) ETS's e-Rater 3.0 in WriteCheck; 4) Grammarly (free version); 5) Whitesmoke; 6) Ginger; 7) Virtual Writing Tutor; and 8) Language Tool. I identified 28 errors in the text, which I classified as major, middle, and minor errors. The 12 major errors consisted of incorrect verb forms or missing verbs; problems with subject-verb agreement; article misuse or omission; incorrect or missing preposition; and incorrect use of singular or plural noun form. I selected these errors because when they are read aloud, they are immediately apparent as errors to native speakers. The seven middle errors, still somewhat serious, included such problems as confusing shifts in verb tense and comma splices. The nine minor errors consisted almost entirely of missing commas, with one trivial usage problem.

Of the 12 major usage errors, one grammar checker identified only one error; two identified two errors; one identified three; one identified four; and two identified five errors. Three of the grammar checkers also each produced one false positive. These

results largely replicate a more comprehensive study by Semire Dikli and Susan Bleyle, who compared error identification by two instructors and e-Rater 2.0 using 42 ELL papers. That analysis demonstrates that e-Rater is extremely inaccurate in identifying the types of major errors made by ELL, bilingual, and bidialectical students. The instructors coded 118 instances of missing or extra article; Criterion marked 76 instances, but 31 of those (40.8%) were either false positives or misidentified. One representative example of misidentification occurred when a student wrote the preposition *along* as two words *a long*, and Criterion marked it as an article error. The instructors coded 37 instances of the use of the wrong article; Criterion coded 17, but 15 (88.2%) of them, again, were either false positives or misidentified. The instructors coded 106 preposition errors, while Criterion identified only 19, with 5 of those (26.3%) being false positives or misidentified.

Grammar checkers don't work because neither of the two approaches being employed in them is reliable enough to be useful. The first approach is grammar-based. In the past 57 years, generative grammar has provided significant insights into language, especially syntax, morphology, and phonology. But the two other areas of linguistics—semantics, the meaning of words, and pragmatics, how language is used—still need major theoretical breakthroughs to be useful in applications such as grammar checkers. One main feature that governs the use of articles in English is whether a noun is countable or uncountable.[4] Although a class of English nouns is almost always countable, such as car, many other nouns are countable in some contexts and grammatical constructions but not in others:

1. Elizabeth saw a lamb.
2. Elizabeth won't eat lamb because she is a vegetarian.
3. Linguists seek knowledge of how language works.
4. Betty is developing a keen knowledge of fine wines.

Indeed, linguists now no longer classify nouns into the dichotomous categories of countable and uncountable, but have established various gradations of countability along a continuum (Allan; Pica).

Similarly, prepositions are appropriate in some contexts and not in others. Prepositions also serve multiple purposes. The preposition *by*, for example is used to indicate both the *instrumental case*, which indicates a noun is the instrument or

means of accomplishing an action, and the *locative case*, which indicates a location. The major grammar checker currently employing a grammar-based approach is the one integrated into MS Word. The inherent flaws in employing such an approach with our limited linguistic knowledge, especially in the fields of semantics and pragmatics, can be easily demonstrated by writing in MS Word the following sentence with the grammar checker set to flag the passive voice:

The car was parked by the side of the road.

MS Word will recommend the following revision:

The side of the road parked the car.

Over time, MS Word has become more limited in what it flags. It no longer identifies article usage problems.

During the past 20 years, there has been a movement away from trying to build grammar-based grammar checkers to employing statistical analysis of huge corpora of data. This approach uses "big data" to predict which constructions are grammatical. A huge corpus of Standard English documents is fed into the machine, which performs regression analyses and other statistical processes to predict the probability that a construct in a new text is grammatical. The problem with such an approach is that it attempts to use an extremely large corpus of data to predict grammaticality for what is an infinite set of possible expressions in natural language. Even with immense computing power, this "big data" approach, like those used to predict winners at horse races,[5] stock market profit, or long-term weather forecasts, produces results that are not really useful. The sets of possible outcomes are simply too immense. In the case of grammar checkers, the imprecision of the statistical method translates as balancing the identification of all the errors present in the text against mistakenly tagging false positives, which will confuse students, especially bidialectical and bilingual students and English Language Learners. Overall, ETS's Criterion detects only about 40% of the errors in texts, while 10% of its reported errors are false positives. (Han, Chodorow, and Leacock). In identifying preposition use errors, Criterion only identifies about 25% of the errors present in texts, and about 20% of its tags on preposition use are false positives (Tetreault and Chodorow). In detecting article errors, Criterion correctly identifies only about 40% of the errors, while 10% of its reported errors are false positives (Han, Chodorow, and Leacock). The best results I have seen are

those of a study by Measurement Inc., of its scoring engine, Project Essay Grade (PEG) in which both human readers and PEG marked almost 2000 sentences. PEG identified 52% of the errors and had only 1% false positives (Gamon, Chodorow, Leacock, and Tetreault). However, the specifics of this study, including descriptions of the specific writing task, the nature of texts, and the students who wrote them, are not reported.

Clearly, the inaccuracy of these statistical approaches is probably not helpful, and it is perhaps harmful to students. Although they often appear similar, grammar checkers are much more unreliable than spell checkers. Students can be easily deceived into thinking grammar checker corrections are comprehensive and reliable. They are not. Some grammar checkers warn that they may be inaccurate, but I have never seen one explicitly state something like "On average, 10% of the errors identified will not really be errors, and our product will identify only about 50% of errors in a student's paper."

For four years, Microsoft Research engineers worked on developing a grammar checker for English Language Learners based on statistical approaches (Chodorow, Gamon, and Tetreault) before discontinuing the project in 2011 (Gamon). Given that Microsoft has abandoned further work on grammar checkers, especially those using statistical approaches, and the other products on the market appear to be unreliable, why are grammar checkers still being used not only for classroom use, but also as a component of scoring engines for high-stakes tests?

The answer to this question is two-fold. First, with a few notable exceptions, such as the Dikli and Bleyle study, almost all research on the efficacy of grammar checkers has been done by researchers either employed by the organizations producing and selling the grammar checkers or by individuals associated with one or more of them. Many of the studies had no control group, or the control group consisted of students receiving no feedback at all (Chodorow, Gamon, and Tetreault). Second, that research community has redefined terms in an almost Orwellian fashion, which has made inaccurate grammar checkers seem precise. Researchers did away with the metric of accuracy, and substituted two measures, precision and recall (Chodorow, Dickinson, Israel, and Tetreault.) Deceptively, recall, the number of real errors detected by the system divided by the total number of real errors, is a transparent measure, except for its name, of accuracy. Precision, on the other hand, the number

of correct errors identified by the system divided by the sum of the correct errors detected by the system and false positives, is simply a measure of how well a system avoids false positives, marking correct constructions as ungrammatical. In some cases, like this one, the researcher explains what the measures mean:

> "In detecting article errors, Criterion's precision is about 90% and its recall is about 40%. That means that when the system reports an error in a student's writing, the human annotator agrees about 90% of the time. However, Criterion detects only about 40% of the errors that the human marks (Han et al., 2006)." (Chodorow, Gamon and Tetreault p. 427)

However, in many instances the terms are used without explanation, and an administrator hearing that the precision of the system is 90% might be impressed while wondering what *recall* means.

Although the abilities of grammar checkers already look unimpressive, additional questions need to be raised and researched.

- Grammar checkers are used as a major component of Automated Essay Scoring (AES) machines used in high stakes testing from K-12 and the TOEFL through graduate admissions tests such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT). Given the unreliability of grammar checkers, should AES machines continue to be used in high stakes testing?

- What are the effects of grammar checkers on student writing, especially on ELL, bilingual, and bidialectical students? Specifically, what are the effects of randomly (at least to anyone but the computer) identifying some errors but not others? Clearly, random marking of papers differs from the individualized approach of writing center consultants helping students understand, within the context of their own style and a specific genre, why an error is a mistake and how to avoid it in future writings.[6]

- Do anomalies inherent in the statistical techniques of grammar checkers privilege ELLs from some language groups and discriminate against others through skewed false negatives and false positives?

- How do grammar checker limitations affect arguments,

such as that by Paul Deane, supporting a role for computers in assessing specific components of the writing construct such as grammar and mechanics?

Finally, when administrators want you to use automated tools for instruction in grammar and mechanics, ask for pieces of their best prose and a favorite Op-Ed and run them through ETS's e-Rater by spending $10-$20 at <en.writecheck.com>. The results should end the conversation.

1. In addition to studying automated grammar checkers, I have been a critic of computer evaluation of writing, both in the classroom and in high-stakes testing, such as the essay portion of the SAT. See the *New York Times* article by Michael Winerip and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* article by Steve Kolowich.

2. ETS denied me access to the new Criterion version unless I allowed them advanced review of any presentation or publication and the option to require removal of any reference to ETS or their products from the presentation or publication. I obtained e-Rater 3.0 access by buying a limited subscription to WriteCheck.

3. Screen shots of the output from WriteCheck's analysis are available at <lesperelman.com/writing-assessment-robo-grading/parts-noam-chomskys-essay-grammar-checked/>.

4. Interestingly as I write this essay in MS Word, a green squiggly line has appeared under *governs* because the parser cannot recognize that the subject of the sentence is singular.

5. See Michael Nunamaker (2001). <web.archive.org/web/20011109073203/http://nationalturf.com/nunamaker/>.

6. I assume such assistance is offered after rhetorical concerns have been discussed or when such discussion is not needed.

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Looking for more good reading about writing center work?
There's the blog, "Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders" (a global connection for all writing centers). Post your news on Twitter and Facebook pages, and use WcORD to search for links to web resources on writing centers:

WLN blog:	www.wlnjournal.org/blog/
WLN Twitter:	twitter.com/WLNjournal
WLN Facebook:	www.facebook.com/wlnjournal
WcORD:	wlnjournal.org/wcord.php

Writing Circles: Combining Peer Review, Commitment, and Gentle Guidance

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This is a story about small-group peer discussion, soft-gloved guidance, the necessity of commitment, and collaboration across campus. It describes a way to combine the rich potential of both writing groups and writing center pedagogy. The new Writing Circles—weekly small-group workshopping through a partial-credit class—seem to be filling a gap on our campus, Saint Mary's College of California, and extending quite widely the reaches of our center work. Ours is one of those fairly unique writing center and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) combined programs, and my directorship encompasses both. In addition to Writing Circles, we offer one-to-one sessions and workshops for students, plus faculty development workshops and curriculum guidance for faculty.

Our center's experiment with formal student writing groups began quite small, quite humbly, in response to a request: I was asked to design a writing support program for our college's Great Books Collegiate Seminars. During seminars, class time is devoted to deep discussion of texts. Half of a student's grade is based on the quality of discussion, but the other half is based on essays that spring from that discussion. Despite the emphasis on writing, there is little to no discussion about writing during class, and the seminars are taught by faculty from across the disciplines who might not be trained to facilitate writing development. The Seminar Program viewed its need for writing support through two lenses: faculty who were frustrated by student essays that did not interrogate the texts profoundly or that were riddled with error; and students who felt adrift, not knowing exactly how or what to write.

While considering how to respond, I knew I did not want to create some kind of remedial tutorial system under which

seminar students perceived as weak would be treated differently than other students walking through our center doors. And I did not want to propose a class that would be dominated by an instructor and look like an additional composition course. Either model might be unattractive to students and frankly less than fully effective. Another option, writing fellows, was not encouraged on our campus at that time.

I decided to try to capitalize on the powerful potential of writing workshops and peer review, during which students view their writing through each other's eyes and learn to analyze and deepen explorations of both content and expression. I agree with Laurie Grobman's description of the benefits of peer review when it in fact results in deep, reflective critique: "Learning the nuances of critique can in and of itself lead to improved writing abilities" (47). However, students do not always and inevitably grow as writers through peer review: under-structured sessions can lead to fumbling without focus; students who are not trained in discussion-based critique can give misguided, too little, or too much advice; and well-meaning instructors can sit down and join in, trying to help students reflect but instead inadvertently taking over, with students hanging on every word of the instructor instead of listening to each other. As for independent critique groups, those too can fall short of their potential: despite best intentions, students who arrange groups with no commitment other than their enthusiasm can find that more pressing commitments encroach; additionally, many peer-only workshops lack guidance in how to analyze and discuss writing.

I hoped to set up our new program in ways that might sidestep potential pitfalls right from the start. So I proposed creating small writing groups governed by our writing center pedagogy and ethos of guiding without directing. We dubbed these "Writing Circles." Each week, three to five students discuss their work for an hour, with a facilitator sharing writing strategies as needs arise but mostly helping the students discuss productively with each other: the facilitator guides students to describe each other's drafts via post-outlining and offer detailed, readerly feedback to each other. As Stephanie White and Elisabeth Miller argue in *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, describing their journey toward adding center coordinators to the small-group table: "coordinators have a vital role in teaching students to drive their writing groups by providing direction along the way" (5). I began

our Writing Circles following a similar logic, creating the position of Circle facilitator. We have found this role to be a complex one: a facilitator is a step removed from a writing adviser (tutor); in essence, the facilitator is trying to guide students to be writing advisers for each other. Just as with one-to-one advising, facilitating small-group dialogue is an interesting balancing act—at its worst, bluntly directive, but at its best, minimalist, gentle, and collaborative.

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

The Circle facilitator needs to be able to discuss writing without sliding into telling the students what they should be writing. As in one-to-one sessions in the center, there are brief moments when the facilitator's role looks like a teacher's (such as when explaining methods to analyze texts or to write thesis statements), but during most of the Circle, a facilitator relies on the techniques of collaborative minimalism (such as open-ended questioning) that characterize writing center pedagogy.

Most of our Circle facilitators have pedagogical training and experience in writing center work. Nevertheless, before beginning to guide Circles, facilitators participate in daylong discussions of research on collaboration and effective strategies for leading groups. They learn how to guide students in giving curiosity-driven responses to each other and deconstructing each others' texts. Facilitator training continues throughout the semester: we meet monthly to share our best and most problematic Circle moments and brainstorm ways to encourage discussion; we maintain a reflective blog—each facilitator posts about that week's frustrations and successes and asks for suggestions—and we observe each other's Circles and discuss our observations. This multi-layered, ongoing collaboration among facilitators helps us continually improve. It also maintains an appreciation of our need to be always learning and always humble as we facilitate student discussion.

Some of the facilitators are veteran undergraduate and graduate-student writing advisers in our center. Most are adjunct instructors who were writing advisers while they were graduate students. The remaining facilitators include me, our center's associate director, and a couple of adjunct instructors without previous writing center experience, whom we have had to hire because of increasing demand for Circles. We ask these adjunct instructors to do extra observations, and we tailor training for them that includes one-to-one writing center

pedagogy; furthermore, they benefit by working and discussing alongside the other facilitators who are already comfortable with peer collaboration.

Circle students fill out surveys at the end of each semester, and the majority of their comments reflect what we are striving for. Here is an illustrative comment: the facilitator "guided us in the right direction, but gave us room to talk about our own ideas and problem solve with one another." Another student said the facilitator "made sure that everyone got their input and that their opinions were heard." Many survey comments reveal that students also see their facilitators as motivators who help create a comfortable forum for discussion: the facilitator's "role was very comfortably pushing us into our own thoughts as we would write," a student commented. Another said the facilitator "helps students feel secure and confident about their writings." Reading through the dozens of comments each semester, we see facilitators described most often as leaders of discussion, and sometimes even as inspirers.

Nevertheless, some students have written comments about facilitators which appear to be positive but which give us pause, such as this one, describing the facilitator as "very helpful with reviewing my writing and giving feedback." We reflect on the reality that facilitator feedback might be perceived as more important than the feedback of student peers. Yet there are times when facilitators do not want students to walk away with problems unsolved: what to do, for instance, when discussion is headed in a decidedly wrong direction? Holding back critical information is not useful for anyone. How, then, to guide discussion back to productivity without shutting down the input of students? These are some of the dilemmas we discuss during our meetings.

While some students seem more comfortable with a student facilitator versus an instructor facilitator, that preference seems to vary from group to group and therefore is not a dominant focus of concern. One instructor facilitator looks so young that his students sometimes initially assume he is a student, and he easily develops rapport with them. It was revealing that on his students' surveys, they wrote about him as they might an instructor, not as a facilitator at all. This caused him to reflect that even when the Circle conversation is fluid and informal, he needs to remain vigilant about not straying into offering comments on the students' papers.

Occasionally, students have seemed less inclined to discuss in earnest when the facilitator is a student: one group became so comfortable, even rowdy at times, that it was hard for the student facilitator to keep them on task; I hovered in the background one day, working on a project, and that took care of the problem. It is worth noting, at the same time, that some of the most engaging Circles have been led by students—could that be because the peer dynamic comes more easily in such configurations, or because of the unique abilities of those student facilitators to balance authority and camaraderie, or because of the unique grouping of students?

PROGRAM DETAILS

The student facilitators are paid through our center's student payroll. Instructors are paid as they would be for any other course. In addition to having a facilitator at the table, I felt that another important criterion was that the Writing Circles be linked to pass/fail course credit. Students must attend regularly in order to pass and therefore are likely to remain true to their own good intentions; furthermore, they can count on their peers to stick around, allowing them all to increasingly trust and respect each other—growing together as writers and discussers of writing as the semester builds, week by week. The course also needs to be pass/fail so that it remains true to the writing center ethos of eschewing judgment. Students must be able to converse creatively and openly, to ask questions, and to be unafraid that potentially wrong explorations could impact their GPAs. It is further advantageous that on our campus, quarter-credit courses are perceived as participation courses: they're used, for instance, for yoga and themed reading groups. Courses driven by academic content typically are full-credit courses. That paradigm helps our Writing Circles be viewed as a commitment, yet one that is low stakes and even enjoyable.

We offered COMM190: Writing Circles as an experimental course in fall 2012, and enough seminar students enrolled for it to be feasible. Because student response was positive, we continued offering seminar Circles in spring 2013, and we decided to see whether there might be broader interest. I reasoned that Circles could include students in any course that includes writing-to-learn. As soon as we started talking to other department chairs about the Circles, the response was nothing short of overwhelming: it was like barely lighting a match and a bonfire starts. We began to receive unsolicited inquiries from

program directors, instructors, and individual students.

Strategic scheduling has become a topic of conversation at the start of each semester, as we put together what we affectionately started calling "the playing board," factoring in students' courses, facilitators' specialties, and students' preferences for group members. We schedule groups of three, four, or five students. For some types of group projects, larger teams can work well, but through my own trial and error as a teacher of peer review, I have observed that groups of three lend themselves particularly well to collaborative discussion. Therefore, we prefer to create Circles of four to account for absences and the occasional student who drops the course. When Circles become large—with five students—it can be difficult to balance time on everyone's draft and also to encourage contribution by all peers. We experiment with ways to inspire productive discussion. For instance, if two students in a Circle contribute often but three are mostly silent, during the next session, the facilitator might offer each peer a specific way to enter the conversation: one discusses the merit of sources, another the analysis of sources, another the introduction, and so on.

We try to form Circles of students who are working on the same types of writing projects and ideally enrolled in the same course section. I am not sure whether these boundaries are necessary, but students often deem it more productive to work with writers they view as true peers. Circle students might be writing in Communication, Sociology, or Spanish, to name a few disciplines, or they might be writing dissertations. Even though the Circles are often organized by content, they do not turn into a sort of content-based group tutoring because the discussion is focused on writing in that genre; there is plenty of writing to discuss, as the students do Circles for courses that use writing-to-learn.

Just as the Circles began in response to one request, so they have evolved request by request, in unpredictable ways. Some of the collaborations have been instigated by faculty, some by students. For instance, one of our writing advisers wondered whether Circles might be a good fit for two programs she's involved in: her major, Integral,[1] and the High Potential Program[2] for first-generation college students, for which she serves as mentor. She and I met with leaders of both programs, and they both were immediately interested. Because of her initiative and outreach, all first-semester High Potential students now

participate in Circles, and we have a close working relationship with Integral professors, who encourage students to do Circles and also recommend students to become writing advisers. And as time goes on, more and more departments are suggesting that their capstone-writing students enroll in Circles.

ASSESSMENT

Circles are not a sideline to our center's role on campus but rather are helping define it. Granted, all of our services have grown significantly since our center's first year (2011-2012): faculty development workshops as well as student services, including one-to-one sessions, peer-review facilitating, and writing workshops. However, the expansion of the Circles has been the most dramatic. Now, more students sign in for Writing Circles every week than for one-to-one sessions or workshops. Across both semesters of the experimental first year of Circles (2012-2013), a total of 38 students participated. That compares with 233 students the next year, due to collaborations with several departments, and then 391 the third year (2014-2015). By way of context, Saint Mary's is a liberal-arts college with about 2,800 undergraduate and 1,700 graduate students.

The case for Circles has been easy to support because of demand and also because of student feedback. For instance, in the spring 2015 surveys, 98 percent of the students reported having effectively discussed writing during their Circles. In their open-ended responses, many students wrote about new brainstorming strategies they will continue to use, such as "how to effectively organize my thoughts and outline my papers." Others referred to having learned how to analyze the audience or prompt, or to critically read a text, as illustrated by this comment: "New ways to examine prompts and articles."

Many students spoke appreciatively about their peers' collaborations. One wrote that "talking out how things made sense to a reader versus the writer was helpful." And another: "My peers' comments allowed me to get a better understanding of how to structure my arguments in a more efficient manner." Students also offered perspectives into the process of their conversations. One student wrote, "We kept each other on track and whenever one of us had the wrong idea, we gave each other constructive criticism to help each other."

While we have been heartened by survey comments about how much students appreciate their peers' feedback and sometimes

even complain that they want more peer response, we consider this both a good sign and a potentially problematic one. How can we build in even more opportunity for peers to give each other comments? One alteration is to stop scheduling mini-lessons into the semester calendar. Instead, a facilitator reaches for a mini-lesson as need arises—having at-the-ready our center's handout on effective thesis statements, for instance, for whenever students happen to be at that stage of their process.

UNIVERSALITY

A Writing Circle helps students navigate projects collaboratively, as illustrated by this student comment: "My peers' comments helped me clarify the goals of the assignment and make sure I have the right thought process and organization for my papers." Through sharing and discussing, under the gentle guidance of facilitators, students learn lifelong skills for analyzing and discussing writing. Facilitators also help students make connections across courses and genres. Toward the end of each semester, we build in reflective discussion that guides students to predict their uses of writing in the future. Our Writing Circle adventure continues to be an interesting extension of our work, our identity as a center. We are learning—from each other and from the students—creative ways for writers to work collaboratively. The Writing Circles are effective because students and facilitators are learning side-by-side and—importantly—because writing center pedagogy infuses every Writing Circle moment.

1. Integral Program majors attend few regular classes, earning their liberal arts degree through small group seminars (humanities and social sciences) and individual tutorials (mathematics and music) and laboratories (sciences). Seniors write a culminating essay, which they defend before Integral peers and faculty.

2. The High Potential Program helps first-generation college students of promise, including those from underrepresented college populations and low-income families, successfully negotiate the college experience.

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Book Review

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Rhetoric of Respect: Recognizing Change at a Community Writing Center by Tiffany Rousculp. Urbana: NCTE, 2014. 185 pp. Print.

Writing centers can contribute to positive social change. Besides helping students revise assignments for a class or other writing projects, we can help writers from the larger community express themselves as citizens and address problems that matter to them. More writing centers are rethinking their mission and seeing how community engagement can connect and enhance the work they are currently doing. Therefore, I highly recommend that all writing center directors and tutors read Tiffany Rousculp's book, *Rhetoric of Respect*, because we can learn much from the important work being done at the Community Writing Center (CWC) she started while working at Salt Lake Community College. This book will prove useful for those just beginning to engage in community writing projects and for those with experience too. Most importantly, this book encourages more conversation about how writing center staff can think about change in its political, social, and ethical dimensions.

Rousculp explores some of the successes and challenges she faced as the CWC founding director from 2001-2010. Part of her college but located off campus, the CWC began with the mission to assist community members with writing "for practical needs, civic engagement, and personal expression" (6). Readers new to community writing centers will value the philosophical and pedagogical explanations that inspired such work. For example, Rousculp refers to educational approaches as a means of social change (Paulo Freire), service-learning scholarship (Ellen Cushman, Thomas Deans, Paula Mathieu, and

others), and peer tutoring (Muriel Harris, Harry Denny, Kenneth Bruffee, and others). Rousculp wanted the CWC to be a place where community members "from all different backgrounds could come to work on any kind of writing task" (47). And in Chapter 3, such community work creates opportunities for tutors as they help plan new workshops, create CWC initiatives, and play a stronger role in the center's decision-making process. Rousculp's book intersects with the community writing center work of institutions like 826 Valencia, a non-profit Dave Eggers co-founded in 2002. If you haven't visited 826 Valencia, I urge you to do so or to read about their work online (826national. org). They have seven chapters in cities across America. These free K-12 community writing centers possess a playful feel to their spaces, including a pirate supply store in San Francisco and a superhero shop in Brooklyn. Behind each storefront of things that children might like, there's a writing center, where they are encouraged to write and publish their work. Although the centers are different in design and audience, both Rousculp's CWC and 826 Valencia want to help writers, especially those without access to adequate resources, to benefit from the power of individual tutoring and writing workshops.

For those who have volunteered at 826 Valencia, or perhaps those who have worked on behalf of universities like Carnegie Melon University and the Community Literacy Center in Pittsburgh, *Rhetoric of Respect* helps us think critically about community writing centers. As Rousculp's CWC collaborated with 5,000 people and 130 different groups in Salt Lake City, including a homeless shelter, nursing home, and cancer support group, Rousculp learned the importance of developing a "rhetoric of respect" for such community-based writing initiatives. She defines this rhetoric of respect as a "[relationship] that is grounded in perception of worth, in esteem for another—as well as for the self" (24-25). Rousculp adds that such an approach "entails recognition of multiple views, approaches, abilities, and importantly, limitations (especially our own)" (25).Writing center staff certainly can connect inclusive tutoring practices with this methodology.

Because of the emphasis on respect, Rousculp explains in Chapter 4 how the community work and its partners helped the CWC rethink its mission of "change" (91). For example, she discusses the dangers of "need-based discourse" that uses terms like "outreach" (93). If we think of community work as

"outreach," we might create a hierarchical relationship between the university and the community. Also, Rousculp reflects upon her own preference as an activist teacher who wanted writing projects to have a political, social dynamic. In order to respect community members, she learns not to force participants to be political when they wanted something else in their writing. Rousculp shares an effective example of the tension between the personal and the political by describing a project where CWC volunteers helped people with disabilities from a nursing home write about their experiences. The organization promoting the event wanted participants to write about the bad conditions at the nursing home; however, participants' stories were more "nuanced" (109) and didn't neatly follow the organization's original objectives. Rousculp, then, explains that writing projects need to respect the wishes of participating individuals and avoid pushing agendas that other, more privileged groups may want them to support.

Using ecocomposition theory, Rousculp explores the importance of a writing center's space and environment, reflecting upon the CWC as an organism that can change based on the collaboration between people, the effect of institutions, and a sense of place. For instance, as the CWC became a more stable part of the institution and moved from the Art Space near a homeless shelter to a location adjacent to the Salt Lake City Public Library, Rousculp describes how the new site affected which community members participated and made the CWC more institutionalized. Rousculp, then, seeks a balance between strategy and tactics, ideas drawn from Paula Mathieu's *Tactics of Hope*, to explain how the CWC clarified its mission. After achieving the more attractive location, the CWC decided that future writing projects needed to connect with at least two of the following criteria: projects should involve "underserved, underrepresented, or vulnerable populations;" focus on "activist writing;" or assist students from different grade/college levels with their writing (151).

In future scholarship, the activist writing as described in *Rhetoric of Respect* can connect with students on campus. At universities, community colleges, and high schools across the country, students are facing tough problems, ranging from the possibility of immigrant students and their families being deported to worries about expensive college loans to racism in the judicial system. Rousculp's book can also encourage others

to find more intersections between service-learning and writing center theory. One main point of the book is the importance of respect between the community writing center and the community. As I was reading Rousculp's book, I started thinking about the role respect plays in writing center sessions on campus, the importance of listening, and the non-hierarchical relationships that many tutor training books emphasize. I am curious to know more about how university writing center work connects with community writing center work. In addition, how should tutors/volunteers be prepared for CWC work and how can we gain support from our institutions?

More writing centers are engaging in community-based writing initiatives as seen in the first Community Writing Conference held in Boulder, Colorado, in November 2015. Also, Lisa Zimmerelli and Victoria Brown's article in this issue of *WLN* shows how more tutor education courses are including service-learning components. Rousculp's excellent book can help with such projects as we build more relationships between our writing centers and the communities in which we live.

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WcORD of the Day

Once a day, the "Writing Center WcORD of the Day" Facebook page posts interesting finds from WcORD (the Writing Center Online Research Database). <facebook.com/WcORDoftheday>.

Share your finds! Send an email to Patrick Hargon at <hargonp2@unk.edu> with URLs for online writing center re-sources you have or know about. Do you have podcasts? Video clips? Mission statements on your website? Policy statements? Yearly reports? Interesting websites that could be useful? Tutor training materials? What else?

Your help is needed to build a useful site for all of us.

Announcements

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: IWCA SERVICE AWARD
IWCA Muriel Harris Outstanding Service Award

Named after its first recipient and given every second year at the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) conference, the Muriel Harris Outstanding Service Award recognizes outstanding service that has benefited the international writing center community in significant and broad-based ways.

For materials to include in the nomination packet and submission instructions, see the full nomination announcement: <http://wlnjournal.org/redirect.php?item=3>.

All materials must be received by Clint Gardner by June 30, 2016. The winner will be announced at the IWCA Conference in Denver, Colorado, October 14-16. 2016.

CFP: IWCA 2016 "WRITING CENTER FRONTIERS"
October 14-16, 2016 - Denver, Colorado

For information about types of presentation, possible topics, and proposal submission page, see <writingcenters.org/2016/01/call-for-program-proposals-for-iwca-denver-2016-writing-center-frontiers>. Deadline for proposal submission: April 1, 2016. For questions regarding the proposal submission process, contact John Nordlof, Program Chair (jnordlof@eastern.edu; 610-341-1453).

CFP: NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PEER TUTORING IN WRITING
November 4-6, 2016 - Tacoma, Washington

For information about conference proposals and the complete CFP, see <www.pugetsound.edu/academics/academic-resources/cwlt/ncptw-2016/call-for-proposals>. Deadline for proposals: April 15, 2016. Conference website: <www.pugetsound.edu/academics/academic-resources/cwlt/ncptw-2016>. For further information, contact Julie Christoph: <ncptw2016@pugetsound.edu>.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT: WRITING CENTER DIRECTOR
Hamilton College | Clinton, New York

We seek an experienced and energetic professional to build on the success of a well-established writing center by bringing awareness of the national conversation on writing instruction to our campus.

The successful candidate will hold an advanced degree in a field relevant to writing instruction (Ph.D. preferred) and demonstrate a commitment to WAC and peer tutoring. An ideal candidate would have research experience in composition, writing pedagogy and assessment, peer tutoring, writing centers, or a related field. Experience teaching writing at the college level, including working with students with diverse backgrounds, is required. Administrative experience working in a writing center or equivalent academic support program is desirable; experience working in a peer tutoring program is preferred.

Please submit a résumé, cover letter, and the names and contact information of three references to Interfolio at <apply.interfolio.com/33639>, addressed to Penny Yee, Associate Dean of Faculty, Hamilton College. Your cover letter should address ways in which you raise issues of diversity in your teaching, scholarship, and/or service. Experience teaching or working with diverse student populations is an asset. Review of applications began on February 1, 2016, and will continue until filled.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT: WRITING CENTER DIRECTOR
University of Denver | Denver, Colorado

The University of Denver Writing Program seeks a new Director of the Writing Center. This 12-month position carries the initial rank of Teaching Assistant Professor or Teaching Associate Professor, depending on qualifications, and reports to the Executive Director of Writing. The position begins August 1, 2016.

Minimum Qualifications: 1) Terminal degree in Rhetoric/Composition, English, or related field; 2) Graduate coursework in writing theory, research, or pedagogy; 3) At least two years of significant writing center experience that includes a supervisory or administrative role.

Submit letter of application, CV, and references information, and complete application form at <dujobs.silkroad.com>. A detailed letter should explain the education, accomplishments, professional experiences, and perspectives that will qualify you for the position. We encourage you to review <du.edu/writing>, and situate your application in relation to our mission, goals, initiatives, and courses, all located in a selective independent university.

Review of applications will begin March 1, 2016. Initial interviews will be conducted by telephone or video conference. Final interviews will take place on campus visits, with all expenses paid by the University of Denver. DU is an EEO/AA employer.

Conference Calendar

March 3-5, 2016: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in Cedar Rapids, IA
Contact: Conference website: <www.midwestwritingcenters.org>.

March 4-6, 2016: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Alliance, OH
Contact: Danielle Cordaro: <cordarda@mountunion.edu>; conference website: <www.ecwca16.com/>.

March 5, 2016: Writing Centers Association of Japan, in Tokyo, Japan
Contact: Conference website: <sites.google.com/site/wcajapan/upcoming-events>.

March 10-12, 2016: South Central Writing Centers Association, in Lafayette, LA
Contact: Denise Rodgers <drogers@louisiana.edu> and Jim McDonald <jcm5337@louisiana.edu>; conference website: <scwca.net>.

March 18-19, 2016: Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, in Philadelphia, PA
Contact: Janel McCloskey: <jfp48@drexel.edu> and Lisa Zimmerelli: <ldzimmerelli@loyola.edu>; conference website: <mawca.org/2016-Conference>.

April 2, 2016: Northern California Writing Centers Association, in Santa Clara, CA
Contact: Denise Krane: <dkrane@scu.edu>; conference website: <norcalwca.org/events/conference-2016/>.

April 2-3, 2016: North East Writing Centers Association, in Keene, NH
Contact: Erin Durkin: <durkine@centenarycollege.edu> and Richard Severe: <severer@centenarycollege.edu>;
conference website: <www.northeastwca.org/2015-conference/>.

April 21-22, 2016: Middle East-North Africa Writing Centers Assoc., in Muscat, Oman
Contact: Ryan McDonald: <rmcdonald@squ.edu.om> and Susan Finlay: <susanf@squ.edu.om>; conference website: <menawca.org>.

May 26-27, 2016: Canadian Writing Centers Association, in Calgary, AB, Canada
Contact: Lucie Moussu: <moussu@ualberta.ca>; conference website: <is.gd/bBo1xK>.

July 8-10, 2016: European Writing Centers Association, in Lodz, Poland
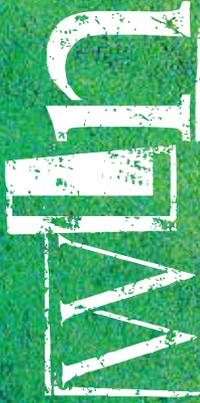**Contact:** Łukasz Salski: <lpsalski@uni.lodz.pl>.

October 14-16, 2016: International Writing Centers Association, in Denver, CO
Contact: John Nordloff: <jnordlof@eastern.edu>;
conference website: <writingcenters.org>.

November 4-6, 2016: National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, in Tacoma, WA
Contact: Julie Christoph: <ncptw2016@pugetsound.edu>;
conference website: <www.pugetsound.edu/ncptw2016>.

WLN

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