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# WJCI

A JOURNAL OF WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

HARRIS | CONARD-SALVO & BOMKAMP | RAFOTH  
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## Letter from the Editor

Muriel Harris

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We happily introduce you to the first issue of *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*. Even though this issue is Vol. 40.1-2, it launches our new name, new format, and new direction in the history of this publication—and perhaps in writing center history as well. *The Writing Lab Newsletter* started out as a few sheets of paper sent to a small group—indicative of writing centers at that time—no organizational structure, no publications dedicated to writing center scholarship, no SIGs at conferences, no writing center conferences, no internet to use for staying connected. At a session of the April 1977 College Composition and Communication Conference, a group of us, in a session on writing center work, were all amazed to find that there were others out there also starting writing centers. We needed a way to find each other after the conference was over, to stay connected, and share what we were learning. That was the spark that led to *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, a few stapled sheets I mailed to everyone who listed their names and mailing addresses on a lined notepad I sent around as we were being pushed out of the conference room by people gathering for the next session. Slowly, snippets of information that were sent to me began to grow into short essays and then longer essays. Somewhere along the way, reviewers were called upon to read and review the contents. For all the decades since then, *WLN* continued to develop and expand its reach as well as its content.



Now, the editorial staff realizes that this publication has been something larger than a newsletter for a long time. What began as a pre-internet attempt to keep an otherwise isolated group in touch now has a global reach with readers on all continents except Antarctica (we'll work on making contact with any writing

centers there). Today, it's a peer-reviewed journal with articles reprinted in tutor-training packets and cited in other scholarly journals. *WLN* has been used as a resource for research, is the subject of several articles on its history and growth, and has had articles reprinted in books, including *The Best of Independent Rhetoric and Composition Journals 2013* and the 2014 collection. *WLN's* history matches the growth trajectory of writing centers. Indeed, writing centers have become an integral part of most institutions of higher learning in the United States as well as in numerous secondary schools, and are increasingly opening in institutions in other countries as well. After much discussion, plus conversations with many of you, the *WLN* editorial group decided on a new name for this publication that celebrates its history by keeping *WLN* in the name and acknowledges its status as a journal: *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*.

In addition to a new name, we have a new URL for the website: <[wlnjournal.org](http://wlnjournal.org)>. The website has also grown with links now to our Facebook page; Twitter feed; international blog, *Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders (CWCAB)*; open access archives (including pdfs of the beginnings of *WLN*); and *WcORD*, the new database for online resources. We invite staffs of other writing center publications to upload links to online articles in their publications to *WcORD*, and we invite writing center staffs to add links to resources on their websites—blogs, instructional resources, podcasts, videos, social media pages, etc. There are instructions on our website about how to do all this. We also acknowledge our deep gratitude and appreciation for the work of our reviewers, and list their names on the website too: <[wlnjournal.org/submit.php](http://wlnjournal.org/submit.php)>.

A further reorganization has happened within our editorial staff. We each have a multitude of different responsibilities, but it's also an appropriate time to recognize that we work as a group, endlessly e-mailing, chatting, even Skyping when we have time. I kept the title of Editor for too long, given that Lee Ann Glowzenski and Kim Ballard and I work as a team, and they do more of the heavy lifting than I do. They contribute long hours of careful scholarly thought as they work through all our complex matters of editing a journal, especially the work of coordinating with authors and reviewers. Lee Ann also heads the *WcORD* project, and Kim also oversees book reviewing. The real situation is that all three of us are Editors. Alan Benson, in his usual unassuming

way, prefers to hide the importance and extensiveness of his work under his current title as Development Editor, developing our social media sites (Twitter and Facebook) and keeping them filled with interesting content. Moreover, he set up *CWCAB* and database for *WcORD*, and handles all the work of overseeing the review process for essays sent to the Tutor's Column. Josh Ambrose, our Blog Editor, has breathed incredible vitality into *CWCAB*, the international blog, with content that gives us entry into what's going on in writing centers around the globe. Josh is assisted by his Associate Blog Editor, Steffen Guenzel. These changes are properly noted in the masthead section.

We hope to continue publishing articles that expand writing center knowledge, experience, and practice. And that will depend on you. Share what you've learned, what programs you are structuring, what research you've done, what best practices you engage in, what theoretical frameworks you overlay on your work, how you engage with current scholarship. Make connections between the theoretical and practical and set your work within the context of other scholarship in that area. All of this is relevant, valuable, and worth sharing. And as you write for *WLN*, *WcORD* will help you find links to scholarship and other resources for your writing center. Let's continue to learn from each other—to collaborate and share—as we all continue to engage in the superb world of writing centers. We await your essays, to publish under the banner of *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*.

# Public Documentation of Tutors' Work: Digital Badges in the Writing Center

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Communication. Problem-solving. Leadership. Teamwork. These are all essential skills undergraduate peer tutors build while working in a writing center. At Purdue University, an open source web-based interface system known as Passport allows tutors to display these skills to a variety of people such as fellow students, faculty, and employers. Available at <[www.openpassport.org](http://www.openpassport.org)>, Passport was developed by staff in the Information Technology at Purdue department to support interactive coursework and demonstration of competencies on our campus (Passport).<sup>1</sup> Recently our Writing Lab has begun using the software to document the projects tutors complete, skills they develop, and awards they receive. This documentation has led to greater visibility of tutors' professional development, as well

as new opportunities for tutors to engage in the larger work of writing centers.

Discussions about undergraduate peer tutor professional development have focused on training, presenting at conferences, and creating positions of responsibility to highlight administrative work and leadership skills. Writing center directors and tutors contextualize professional development on their campuses through terminology, job titles, and rewards recognized by that institution—tangible references to the value of writing center work. Others scholars have explored how tutors acquire important workplace skills for a variety of professions, from teaching (Almasy and England, Alsup, Conard-Salvo, and Peters, among others) to systems engineering and marketing (Dinitz and Kiedaisch). The Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project (PWTARP) led by Brad Hughes, Paula Gillespie, and Harvey Kail

demonstrates that tutors develop confidence, listening and analytical skills, and “skills, values, and abilities vital in their profession” (14). How do we help tutors better describe these skills and experiences to a public audience, one that includes, but isn’t limited to, potential employers? Digital badges may provide one way for tutors to connect their writing center experiences to professional growth and career preparation.

During the spring 2015 semester, we implemented Passport digital badges to record our undergraduate tutors’ professional development and give tutors agency to document this work publicly. Much of the professional development we documented was already happening through required training, additional mentoring, and existing leadership opportunities and positions available to all our tutors. Tutors also regularly included their writing center work on résumés, although not consistently or in ways future employers could always understand. But our overcommitted tutors often needed an extra nudge to consider branching out beyond their current one-to-one tutoring activities. Through Passport, our peer tutors now digitally highlight and track progress on current projects, and they also identify additional opportunities that they want or that have gone unnoticed.

Passport gives administrators—who can include directors, instructors, or supervisors—the ability to award digital badges upon completion of certain requirements. Tutors can then use the digital badges to display their achievements in various mediums such as LinkedIn, Mozilla Backpack, résumés, or curriculum vitae. The badges also provide proof that an individual has taken steps to develop a certain skill. Administrators set the parameters and requirements for earning badges, so badges can be customized to pedagogical and professional needs of an individual writing center and its tutors.

Passport has allowed instructors, primarily those teaching large sections in the STEM disciplines, to actively engage students and encourage them to take charge in meeting learning outcomes through a variety of activities. For example, Passport allows Purdue’s students in the College of Pharmacy’s drug information courses to revise assignments, take extra quizzes, and write reflections to show mastery of a certain subject within drug information. Students receive badges when they go beyond the basic requirements of coursework.

While the Passport platform is currently unique to Purdue University,<sup>1</sup> digital badges are becoming increasingly common at other universities and in other contexts. The Agricultural Sustainability Institute at the University of California at Davis recently developed a new major for undergraduate students that is based on earning digital badges. Instead of concentrating on credit hour-based courses, students focus more on experiential learning that provides hands-on training. The University of Illinois began issuing digital badges to employees and student workers in the Campus Information Technologies and Educational Services departments, and Penn State University is exploring digital badges in coursework and professional certificate programs. The website TripAdvisor issues badges to users as they gain experience reviewing travel sites or when they've earned helpful votes from readers. The public display of badges allows visitors to see how qualified a reviewer may be when they read the reviews for a location. Our use of Passport also allows public sharing of the many activities and skills that our tutors engage in and develop in Purdue's Writing Lab.

Although our university has a growing culture of using Passport in coursework, our writing center was among the first to begin using the software to document training, skill development, and other kinds of professional development, in a non-classroom environment. We developed individual badges for completing the required tutor training course, serving in an administrative role, completing ESL training each spring semester, leading a staff meeting, presenting at conferences, and facilitating workshops or ESL conversation groups. Many of these professional development opportunities were required activities or available to any tutor who wished to gain more experience. Passport allowed us to recognize these activities beyond our own internal paperwork or history, and we created new ways for tutors to engage with the writing center.

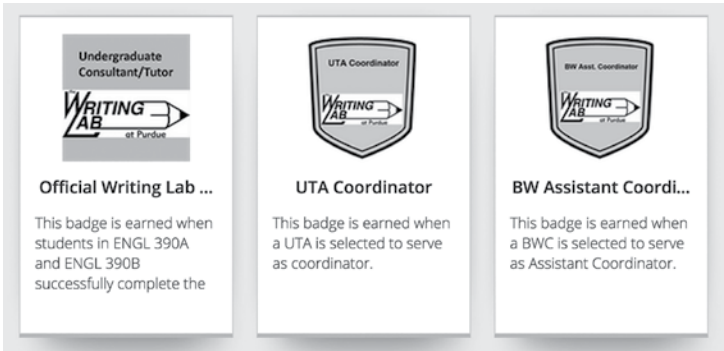
With Passport, what we do in the center becomes more public and accessible to others outside our own space. We can demonstrate how our work is connected to specific, recognizable learning outcomes that are visible to faculty, other parts of campus, and potential employers. Administrators create badges based on specific activities and goals, which is extremely important when connecting writing center work to a larger set of skills and accomplishments. For example, when we created badges for leading writing center staff meetings, the learning outcomes



focused on mentoring fellow tutors, leadership, and disseminating useful information—all skills that prospective employers, faculty, and others outside the writing center would recognize as useful for any career or field. Tutors are asked to submit reflections describing why they should earn the badge and what they learned when completing the requirements for the badge, along with other kinds of evidence to support how they've met the learning outcomes.

Administrators can include instructional materials, scaffold skill development, and bring in outside, subject matter experts to review badge submission requirements. Instructional materials can include writing center scholarship, links to specific websites, and other pertinent texts. Outside experts could include other writing center professionals and tutors, faculty outside one's own discipline, industry workers, or anyone else designated to review a tutor's work. Administrators can use the Instructor Workshop to design badges using modifiable templates or by uploading images they've created. While the badge image design process leaves little room for flexibility, the path to earning a badge is both flexible and customizable, as administrators can determine instructional materials, outcomes, and activities. Administrators must also identify learning goals for each badge and specify what a tutor must do to earn it, which can include required offline activities, open-ended responses such as reflections, submission of documents, or quizzes.

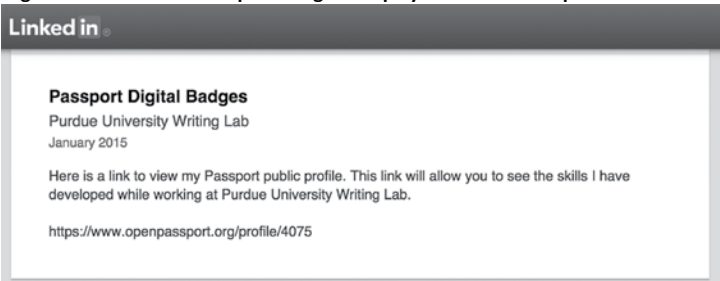
**Fig. 1. Tutors' view for earning a badge, known as a "challenge."**



The screenshot above shows what tutors would see if they were applying for a badge to serve as an undergraduate coordinator. We ask undergraduate tutors to write a detailed personal statement that addresses what the tutor brings to the position and how serving in the position will fit with personal development

goals. We have always required such a statement for this position, so writing the statement is not an additional activity for tutors. But in the past these statements were sent via e-mail to Tammy Conard-Salvo (the Associate Director of Purdue's Writing Lab), considered as part of the hiring process, and then filed away once the undergraduate coordinator position was filled. Now, if a tutor chooses to add the undergraduate coordinator badge to a LinkedIn profile, the tutor's Passport badge will be displayed, along with any documents or activities that are required to earn the badge. In the screenshot below, visitors can see how John has displayed his Passport badges on his LinkedIn profile, including the coordinator badge and accompanying personal statement. Visitors can be assured that John met the criteria for earning the badge, and they will see the specific learning outcomes that were met (in this case, mentoring, leadership, and organizational skills).

**Fig. 2. View of how a Passport badge is displayed in a LinkedIn profile.**



Digital badges offer several benefits to tutors. First, tutors have the opportunity to become involved in different activities beyond one-to-one tutoring. For example, tutors can earn badges for facilitating workshops and ESL conversation groups, which were activities normally reserved for our graduate tutors. Offering the badge as an extra incentive has provided additional motivation for engaging in these activities. This has led to tutors gaining experience with new projects as our writing center has increased services and expanded the roles of our undergraduate tutors. When John could not lead a staff meeting, a fellow tutor took charge, thus earning a digital badge. Later in the semester when a workshop needed to be developed, John created the content and a PowerPoint for the workshop, earning a badge. As tutors earned digital badges throughout the spring semester, they gained important problem-solving and leadership skills that will give them an advantage when they begin searching for

a job. Tutors shared in writing center administration and found tangible ways of connecting their writing center work to outside interests and career development. Displaying these specific badges allows tutors to demonstrate how seemingly specialized activities like tutoring, creating writing support materials, or working with English language learners might have broader applicability.

Passport has also given our tutors extra incentive to participate in the larger writing center community. For various reasons, very few of our undergraduate tutors would present at conferences, although we highly encouraged such activity. This past spring, several undergraduate tutors presented at the East Central Writing Centers Association (ECWCA), and they immediately applied for and displayed the digital badge for presenting at ECWCA. We also have a badge for presenting at the International Writing Centers Association, and we expect to add additional conference badges in the future. Passport provides tutors a way of highlighting academic conferences to future employers who can see a copy of tutors' presentations, which is a requirement for earning a conference badge.

When tutors graduate and begin applying for jobs, digital badges can be discussed in interviews as examples of professional development or specific experience. In an age when electronic résumés, dossiers, and networking have become increasingly common, tutors can choose how they want to publicly characterize their writing center experiences. John, for example, has begun to display Passport badges on his LinkedIn profile. These badges give him a unique advantage over many other potential applicants when applying for jobs posted on LinkedIn, when connecting with potential employers, or when employers search for and find his profile. Most LinkedIn profiles contain multiple endorsements for skills such as communication or problem-solving, and John's profile displays endorsements for volunteering and collaboration. Unfortunately, the only people who can discuss how these endorsements were earned are the endorsers, and potential employers have to trace through the networks to see the expertise of the endorsers. Endorsing a connection requires a simple click of a button. No criteria, learning outcomes, or challenges are needed, and the endorsement process can be subjective or arbitrary. Consequently, LinkedIn endorsements may not be sufficient on their own. Employers want to see proof of what applicants have done to gain com-

munication skills or problem-solving skills. Passport badges provide that proof by displaying specific academic and professional development activities that were completed or leadership roles that led to earning a badge or developing a skill. Thus, potential employers can read about completed activities required to earn the badges rather than just depending on a single-click opinion of a certain skill set.

Most importantly, the idea for using Passport came from John: our use of digital badges wasn't an idea imposed by writing center administrators but an idea generated by an undergraduate tutor who wanted to support professional development among his co-workers. This peer-led focus has brought enthusiasm to the project and generated interest among our tutors as Passport use has become a new way for them to document their Writing Lab work. John had wanted his fellow tutors to play a larger role in our writing center, and after seeing the advantages of digital badges in the College of Pharmacy, he shared his ideas with Tammy. As tutors started to hear about Passport, they offered ideas for digital badges. Proposing badges created a unique opportunity for tutors because they identified how their professional development needs could be met, and they demonstrated how their work helped them gain experience or build skills.

Margaret Marshall's 2001 essay, titled "Sites for (Invisible) Intellectual Work," discusses the difficulty of demonstrating the intellectual work of writing center administration:

While I believe it is possible to argue that tutoring in a writing center is intellectual work, it is the work of directing a writing center that usually causes more difficulty because of the time it requires, its apparent disconnection from either research or teaching, and directors' need to establish the framework within which their work is evaluated. (75)

However, describing the intellectual work of tutoring and that of tutors can still be difficult, as evidenced by the misunderstandings that some writers and faculty have (cue every narrative about students requesting proofreading help or faculty complaining about poorly written documents even after a tutoring session). Research like PWTARP empirically demonstrated what many writing center directors and tutors suspected and saw in everyday practice. The challenge has been in sharing and describing this work to an outside audience beyond a few sentences in a tutor's resume or CV—and in helping tutors leverage their writing center experiences early on, prior to graduation

and employment. We hope that Passport will give our tutors a new space to think about and describe this work to potential employers. The use of Passport in our university's courses and its use of learning outcomes can further strengthen the intellectual activities in which tutors engage: collaborative learning, critical thinking, mentoring, leadership, and written and oral communication, just to name a few. Passport can also support the intellectual work of writing center administration by connecting the work to teaching through learning outcomes. The increased use of Passport on our campus gives us a shared space and language to connect writing center work to other recognizable intellectual activities.

1. Passport™ developers are looking for a limited number of outside partners to beta test the system on their own campuses. For more information, please visit [itap.purdue.edu/studio/passport](http://itap.purdue.edu/studio/passport) and [openpassport.org/BetaRequest/Create](http://openpassport.org/BetaRequest/Create).



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# **Review of *Talk about Writing: The Tutoring Strategies of Experienced Writing Center Tutors* by Mackiewicz & Thompson**

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In the 1960s, a young sociologist at UCLA named Harvey Sacks decided to study talk—the everyday conversations of life—by examining naturally occurring speech between people in careful detail, measuring every pause, hesitancy, repetition, turn, and topic-shift. Sacks and his collaborator, Emanuel Schegloff, focused on conversations because they believed conversations are a window into the deep-

er truths of human social interaction and because other scholars at the time had either ignored or didn't quite appreciate the significance of conversations. Linguistic science was on the march and attention had turned to Noam Chomsky's generative grammar, but Chomsky's syntactic theory left no room for interpersonal communication. Speech act theorists like John Searle and J.L. Austin had established solid philosophical foundations for language use, but they tended to rely on idealized examples rather than raw observational data. And while sociolinguists were well-grounded in social theory, researchers like William Labov focused on particular socioeconomic groups and their contrasting patterns of pronunciation and language use, not the paralinguistic aspects like interruptions and overlaps that bring conversations to life. In contrast, Sacks was interested in how people formed interactions through their conversations and how they manipulated things like timing, topics, and sequencing. He and Schegloff wanted to look closely at how people control a conversation's ebb and flow because they believed that the way humans conduct conversations with one another has implications for the larger social order. The difficulty for Sacks and his colleague, however, is that everyday conversations are enormously complex. Many social scientists at the time considered them interesting enough, but as data, they were thought to be too messy to analyze in a systematic and methodologically

rigorous way. All those topic shifts, back-tracks, and tangents, not to mention coughs and mumbles—what a researcher’s nightmare!

But as we now know, the study of conversational interactions over the past 40 years has proved to be a fascinating and fruitful endeavor, capturing interest in such diverse fields as artificial intelligence, second-language acquisition, gender studies, and conflict resolution. I was reminded of this period of social science history when I first browsed Mackiewicz and Thompson’s *Talk about Writing* and saw the good sense that could be made of data recorded from the “messiness” of tutors and student writers talking about writing. Everyday conversations and tutorial conferences have much in common, but seeing what makes conferences work differently from conversations is one of the many insights to be gained from reading this empirical study. The book’s title may recall, for some readers, Beverly Lyon Clark’s *Talking about Writing: A Guide for Tutor and Teacher Conferences*, published in 1985. The two books are quite different, although Clark’s was among the first to include excerpts from tutoring sessions, as well as tutors’ reflections. And while Mackiewicz and Thompson are not the first to analyze tutor talk, they may be the first to do so with the goals of giving writing center directors, tutors, and researchers a model for conducting their own studies and a tool for training tutors. The authors achieve these goals simultaneously, presenting data, analyses, and findings as they tease out implications for tutor education. The result is first-rate scholarship and a source of inspiration for anyone interested in writing center work.

In response to calls for writing center researchers to conduct more data-based, replicable empirical investigations, the authors begin with the theoretical framework of scaffolding, developed in psychology in the 1970s and ‘80s and closely associated with Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD). The core idea is that teaching in the context of one-to-one tutoring starts with the learner and what she knows or can do on her own; it then advances toward mastery as the tutor’s support recedes and the learner can perform the task independently. The focus of the investigation in *Talk about Writing* is ten first-visit conferences between first-year students and experienced tutors. All tutors had completed a semester-long practicum; three were undergraduates and seven were graduate students, most but not all in English. The conferences totaled five-and-a-half hours

of talk and were examined for topic episodes at the micro-level and tutoring strategies at the macro-level. Using quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the audio- and video-recorded sessions, the researchers zeroed in on three types of tutoring strategies: instruction, cognitive scaffolding, and motivational scaffolding.

Few concepts have informed teaching and tutoring as much as ZPD. One might ask, do we still need to study the ZPD, and if so, do we also need fine-grain analyses of tutorial conferences? Is knowing the minutiae of conversations worth the painstaking effort required to record and analyze them? Is this knowledge necessary for doing writing center work? And perhaps, do close-up analyses of tutoring sessions tell us anything about writing centers that context-laden research like case studies and ethnographies have not already revealed?

*Talk about Writing* answers yes to all of these questions and does so with a clear rationale, theoretical framework, methodology, and set of explanations, examples, and discussions. These aspects of the book are drawn together in the opening chapter to show readers what can be uncovered when two conferences are examined closely. In the first, a tutor comments on how a writer can improve his paper's focus, and in the second, a tutor explains how to make certain revisions. Each excerpt is the kind of sample one might find in any book or article about tutoring. Seen through *Talk about Writing's* analytical lens, though, these excerpts reveal movements that take place below the surface: a writer's shifting priorities and how he is led to discover broken connections between ideas, how to repair them, and how to put the ideas in his head on paper in a way that is clear and satisfying to him. The ten conferences at the heart of the research for this book include sessions focused on brainstorming, revising, and proofreading, as well as writing in a discipline, a first visit, and a repeat visit. One of the later chapters is devoted to a writing fellow (former tutor) for a business and professional writing course. But from the first chapter to the end, readers see how short frames of verbal exchanges—the bursts of speech that make one-to-one tutoring unique—assemble to confront the big problems of teaching, learning, and motivation.

Tracking the appearance of discourse markers also shows what can be gained from close analysis. The analysis of topic episodes in Chapter Four confirms a consistent finding in conversation analysis, namely that speakers control movement from one top-



ic to another by signaling transitions with words like “so,” “now,” “O.K.,” and “well.” Tutors, for whom conversation is a primary tool of the trade, ought to be aware of discourse markers in their own speech and that of others because the way such markers are used, and responded to, tells something about what speakers’ intentions are. Like many people, tutors might have a habit of using them too often or not enough, or they might not pick up on the ways others use them. Tutors who listen to their own audio-recorded sessions are usually surprised at how frequently they repeat common expressions. In *Talk about Writing*, observational data like this is offered as a tool for reflection and action, a way for tutors to share their experiences and learn from them.

Thinking of my own center, I often feel I skim the surface of what is really happening when tutors describe their sessions to me or even when I observe them. No doubt, I say, confidence is being built, questions posed, ideas developed, and advice given. But between us (assistant director, lead tutors, and me) we also witness stumbles and missed opportunities, times when things might have gone differently if maybe the tutor had approached the problem differently or with a larger repertoire of strategies. And while it’s important to notice these moments, it is just as important for us leaders to be able to name and analyze them because doing so deepens our understanding of how they operate. In many centers, I suspect, we search for ways to describe our observations because we lack a conceptual and analytic vocabulary, and so we resort to telling: “the tutor said. . . . then the writer said. . . . then they discussed. . . .” and so forth. What we need, however, are terms that refer to the gears and pulleys of a writing conference so we can dissect them and figure out what difference, exactly, a tutor makes.

*Talk about Writing* helps to close the gap between what we see and experience and the vocabulary available for talking and thinking about these things. Its conceptual apparatus is good for staff meetings but also for research agendas, tapping into methodological resources we associate with fields close to writing centers like composition and education, and with those more distant fields, like psychology and discourse analysis. The book’s point of entry into other fields is the multi-layered concept of *scaffolding*. Mackiewicz and Thompson use an eight-part coding scheme based upon work by researchers in math and reading. Using this scheme, the authors found that *reading aloud* and

*responding as a reader or a listener* are two strategies tutors used often, but what is interesting is seeing how tutors used those strategies and how they combined them with other strategies. Many implications and take-aways like this one fill the nine chapters of the book.

Empirical research is interesting to read when it is rendered transparent enough for readers to engage with it themselves, and the eight strategies Mackiewicz and Thompson identify in their coding scheme are open to further analysis, debate, and modification. For example, *pumping* refers to questions or statements intended to direct the writer's attention, such as "Where does a comma go in this sentence?" or "How can you incorporate those ideas into your draft?" Pumping makes it easier to respond because it narrows the writer's gaze. The fact that experienced tutors in the study used the pumping strategy relatively often suggests that we can expect our own experienced tutors to be using it. It also suggests that tutors believe pumping leads to a desired response. But whether it actually does or not would be a very good thing to know. Mackiewicz and Thompson help us to see, for example, that a key aspect of the pumping strategy is the degree of constraint it imposes on the writer's response, and this creates many opportunities to reflect on the give-and-take that occurs in tutoring. For example: Too much constraint in the pumping strategy may make the writer feel that the tutor is controlling, or too little constraint may lower the chances of a successful response. The result may be that the writer loses motivation, perhaps even signaling the opposite by nodding and smiling just to get things over with. How can a tutor know when pumping has become counterproductive? Or take the example one step further and consider that a tutor who is good at posing open-ended questions (low-constraint and therefore usually more difficult) is able to challenge motivated writers and keep them interested. Or perhaps the pumping strategy leads us to reflect on an entirely different set of issues. As an artifact of school discourse, the strategy imposes limits for some students on access to higher education generally and the writing center in particular. *Talk about Writing* does not take up this line of inquiry, but by focusing on the strategies, episodes, and sequences of tutoring, unraveling their implications both in its examples and illustrations, it helps us see our own contexts more clearly.

I also found surprises in the book. For example, the researchers uncovered relatively few instances of *demonstrating* in the ses-

sions they analyzed. This finding is surprising because demonstrating seems such a valuable way to teach and learn, to show not tell. Why didn't it occur more often in this study? I imagine my own tutors demonstrating how to cover all but the last line with a blank sheet of paper when proofreading, or showing how to read a paper from the bottom up to spot sentence-structure errors, or navigating to the hanging indent button in MS Word or the CMS section on the Purdue OWL. But are they actually engaging in such demonstration? Do they avoid it because it feels too much like doing the work for the student? Do they really know what they are doing in their sessions? In one of the later chapters, the authors reveal that one tutor who used the most demonstrating strategies was a writing fellow who tutored at her desk. These sessions involved more formatting than sessions with freshman papers, but the availability of a computer was also a factor, as well as the fact that the consultations were all with repeat clients, which expanded the opportunities for time-intensive strategies like demonstrating.

Another strategy the tutors in this study used rarely was *forced choice* as in, "Do you think the strongest support for your thesis is in this paragraph or in that one?" When writers are feeling overwhelmed with so many decisions to make, asking them to pick door number 1 or door number 2 serves an important function. It can help students prioritize their options and in doing so can settle one thing so writers can move to another. Forced choice is a cognitive strategy that also serves to motivate and teach. Why isn't it used more often? Are tutors reluctant to force writers into making a choice? Or is the analysis failing to detect it?

Not so much a surprise but a confirmation was learning the experienced tutors in this study were about as remiss as my own tutors when it comes to closing the session and planning the writer's next steps. A few years ago I found my tutors to be fairly consistent about negotiating an agenda in the opening phase of their sessions. But then at the end, before they wrapped things up, they neglected to talk about work the writer still needed to do before handing in the paper, though we had talked about this important step in staff meetings. Mackiewicz and Thompson's macro-level analysis of three stages of tutoring—opening, teaching, and closing—showed that only two tutors they studied summarized their sessions and set goals with the writer for work still to be done. One of my most experienced tutors re-

cently told me that closing with summary-plus-goal-setting is a hard thing to pull off because it makes her feel authoritative and intimidating. I want to know why.

In the 40 years since Harvey Sacks' research, the field of conversation analysis has been a theoretically rich, vital, and useful enterprise. It has paved the way for scholars like Deborah Tannen, for example, to study talk in the workplace and in families. It has also opened doors for studying a broad range of human interactions, from doctor-patient interactions to eye-witness testimony. One work to come out of conversation analysis had a particularly strong impact within the research community. In 1974 Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson published a DIY linguistic analysis in the highly regarded journal *Language*. In 2003 that article was recognized for being the most cited and most requested article in the journal's 80-year history, according to journal editor Brian Joseph (cited in Heritage 300). What made the piece valuable were the tools it provided to study conversations across contexts. *Talk about Writing* has the potential to be used in this way by writing center directors, tutors, graduate students, and composition researchers in a wide range of settings, not only because it describes a well-designed and thoughtful study but also because, as forms of human interaction, conferences and conversations are wildly interesting.



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Joseph, Brian D. "Reviewing our Contents." *Language* 79.3 (2003): 461-3. Print.

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# Undergraduate Student Perceptions and the Writing Center<sup>1</sup>

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How students perceive the writing center and how the writing center perceives itself can often be at odds with each other. Staff, faculty, and students who work in the writing center may tend to consider it in its idealized form. After all, they are trained—according to Stephen North and Jeff Brooks—to “improve the writer, not the writing” through consultations that focus on strategies and tactics writers can use on other papers and projects and in their career (Hawthorne 1). Writing center staff also often know their centers are intended for all students at the institution rather than, as stereotypes suggest, only first-year students, international students, and/or those lacking what are often thought of as “basic writing skills.” That informed vision, however, may not be held institution-wide. In other words, those who work in a writing center may perceive it much differently than others on campus who do not share the idealized view of writing center work, or of writing, that those trained to work there do. Our project focuses specifically on the issue of undergraduate student perceptions of the Howe Writing Center at Miami University. We focus on undergraduates because, in our writing center, like at many centers, undergraduates are major constituents and consumers of writing center resources, make up a large number of stakeholders, and serve as a major focus of a writing center mission. We believe understanding undergraduate student perceptions of a writing center can be critical to shaping a particular center, its mission, and its success. The goals of our project include: 1) Determining attitudes of students toward our writing center and writing in their major, 2) Understanding why they use or do not use our writing center, and 3) Providing recommendations to our writing center and other centers based on students’ perceptions.

In her article examining the ideal of the writing center versus the reality of the writing center, “Whose Idea of a Writing Center is This, Anyway?”, Jeanne Simpson argues that, depending on the stakeholder, many different ways to view the center exist:

One professor imagines the writing center as an editing service. Another person perceives it as a place to “teach finishing.” Students perceive the writing center as sanctuary, as dust bin, as fix-it shop, as all kinds of things. Administrators may see it as part of retention programs or as an element of their CYA strategies. Sometimes the perceptions are pieced together from the semantics of the phrase “writing center.” Sometimes they represent analogous thinking, a belief that the writing center is like a car-wash with detailing service. (1)

As Simpson points out, perceptions of the writing center differ widely among students, faculty, and the administration. The perceptions of the writing center can be, and often are, so widely varied that no single coherent vision of the center functions at the institution. In his essay “Comparing the Idea with the Reality of a Writing Center,” Jake Gaskins also suggests the idea of the writing center and the reality of the writing center can be widely divergent. But just because people perceive a writing center in widely divergent ways does not mean that one perception is “more correct” than another. Rather, different viewpoints highlight the importance of perceptions for how people think about, and interact with, the writing center at their institutions as well as the ultimate success of the center. As Simpson states:

We need to accept a simple principle: people’s perceptions come from their legitimate experiences and reference points, even if they lead to conclusions we don’t share. Just as we do in tutoring, we need to find out what people actually know, how they know it, and what they believe about their knowledge. (1-2)

Validating a spectrum of perceptions is the necessary first step in recognizing that these perceptions are grounded in “legitimate experiences and reference points.” Viewed in this way, perceptions of the writing center are just as important as, and perhaps even more defining than, the ideal of the writing center. In regard to perceptions, writing center staff need to decide whether to shift the center to meet perceptions or, more likely, to shift the perceptions of the writing center to align it more with the ideal of the center.

Our project explores the perceptions of our writing center among students to determine if their perceptions correspond to the ideal of the writing center. At our writing center, the mission is “To assure that Miami University prepares all of its graduates to excel in the writing they will do after college in their careers, roles as community and civic leaders, and personal lives.”<sup>2</sup> Our center operates in five locations on campus and completes nearly 4,000 student consultations annually, as well as writer’s workshops, international writer’s workshops, graduate student writing bootcamps, and faculty writing bootcamps and workshops. As is the case with most writing centers, we make numerous student outreach attempts, including summer orientations, calendars, workshops, class visits, t-shirts for consultants that promote the Center, Greek community outreach, and numerous workshops targeting specific demographics of students.

To begin our project, we sent electronic surveys to students.<sup>3</sup> In an attempt to narrow the study and because of a desire to avoid delving into the numerous and complicated factors that can go into L2 writer research on perceptions, we only interviewed native English-speaking students. Eighty students completed the survey, and none had previously worked or were currently working as consultants in the writing center. Survey questions included basic demographic questions (academic year, major, etc.), frequency of writing center use, reason(s) for use, and a variety of questions about student perceptions of the writing center. To add qualitative insights to our quantitative data, we also interviewed 12 students; these students were chosen in order to constitute a representative sample of three subjects from each undergraduate academic year. During the interviews, students described their experiences with our writing center, whether the center is relevant to their major and undergraduate education, why they use or do not use the center, and how the center can be more relevant to them. Because this project focuses on the important issue of perceptions, we relied only on students self-reporting their answers rather than on the data and figures reported from our writing center.

We encountered some problems with data collection, such as a small sample size, that could have affected the results of the surveys and interviews. We were also working under time constraints; the nature of the research project paired a doctoral student and undergraduate student in a collaborative project, which limited the research and analysis time to one semester.

Despite potential drawbacks of the data collection, we believe our work begins the important process of cataloging undergraduate perceptions of writing centers as well as suggests ways that writing centers can work to change student perceptions.

### **ANALYSIS**

In this section we explore the survey results and use the interviews to supplement our survey questions, which focused on student perceptions of the Howe Writing Center. Students were initially asked for their academic years (Figure 1).

**Fig. 1. Students (N=80)**

First Year	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
8	24	33	15

We were able to gather responses from students in each academic year. Sixty-six students (86%) indicated that the Writing Center was an important resource on campus, one student (<1%) indicated it was not, and eleven students (14%) were unsure whether it was an important resource or not. Clearly, most students perceived the center as an important resource on campus—the question is for whom this resource is meant. We then asked if, and when, those surveyed visited our center for a consultation. Out of 80 students, 28 indicated that they had been to our center for a consultation, while 52 students indicated that they had not. Of the 28 who had experienced individual consultations in our center, 22 indicated they did so during their first year, 11 during their second year, 5 during their third year, and none during their senior year. Students self-reported that if they used our center, it was primarily during their first year.

We next needed to determine which groups of students the survey respondents believed use the center and which groups students believe use it most frequently. Together, the next two figures highlight the predominant perceptions of the Howe Writing Center among Miami University undergraduate native English speaking students, including whom the center is primarily geared toward. The results in Figure 2 were in response to the question: “In your opinion, which demographic uses the Writing Center?” Students were able to indicate as many categories as they wanted. The results in Figure 3 were in response to the question: “Who uses the Writing Center the most?” Students were able to indicate only one category.



**Fig. 2. In your opinion, which demographic uses the Center? (Students N=76)**

First Year	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	5th Year	International	Graduate
73 (96%)	39 (51%)	17 (22%)	21 (28%)	10 (13%)	47 (62%)	11 (14%)

**Fig. 3. Who uses the Writing Center the most? (Students N=76)**

First Year	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	5th Year	International	Graduate
46 (61%)	3 (4%)	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	22 (29%)	1 (1%)

In Figure 2, students overwhelmingly indicated that they believe the Writing Center was meant for, and used by, first year students and international students. Meanwhile, as the percentages indicate in Figure 3, students believe that 90% of students who use the Writing Center are either in their first year or are international students. Only 10% of those surveyed believe that sophomores, juniors, seniors, 5th year, or graduate students use the Writing Center the most. Interviews with students suggest the same results as the survey.<sup>4</sup> According to a junior biology major, “[t]he writing center is for developing a base, so they [students] feel like they don’t need it anymore.” And, according to a first-year student with a double major in anthropology and biology, the Writing Center’s role is “to prepare students for how to write a college essay.” The takeaway from the surveys is that many native English-speaking students in our study perceived our Writing Center as a place for first-year students and international students, not for native English-speaking students who are in upper-level classes. Regardless of how students form this perception (personal experience, anecdotes, faculty members, staff, or previous assumptions), it appears as the prevailing opinion among students at our universities, as both figures indicate.

The survey data confirms many of the assumptions that Howe Writing Center staff had made about student perceptions, including that students may view the center as a place for first-year students, international students, and basic writers. It also supports previous student data from our center that suggests students believe writing centers, including ours, are directed toward first-year and international students. To determine why students do not use the Writing Center, we asked students, as Figure 4 reports, “Why do students not use the Writing Center?” Students were allowed to choose one of five common reasons people do not use the center, drawing from their own beliefs as well as their observations.

**Fig. 4. Why do students not use the Writing Center? (Students N=76)**

	Number	Percentage
Too lazy	5	6%
Other	6	8%
Have few writing classes/assignments	9	12%
Sought help from other services/people	17	23%
Don't feel the need to attend	39	51%

This data correlates with Wendy Bishop's observations in "Bringing Writers to the Center: Some Survey Results, Surmises, and Suggestions." Bishop argues that "the higher the class level, the less likely the student was to have attended the writing center" (36). Bishop also notes some of the most prevalent reasons students do not use the writing center: "[Students believe] [t]hey don't need tutoring or don't have time to be to be tutored" (36). As Bishop points out, upper-level students are less likely to use the writing center than first year students, and students often need an incentive to attend. However, this phenomenon does not explain why some students use the writing center, why some students return often, why some students only use the writing center once, and why some students never use it. As Figure 4 suggests, the idea that students don't feel a need to take advantage of the Howe Writing Center runs through the perceptions of our institution's students in many academic years and majors. A senior accounting major, for example, states "[I] don't use it [the Writing Center] because I have a level of confidence in my writing." Meanwhile, a senior zoology major states "People are becoming more confident/know what professors are looking for [as they get older]." That such a large percentage of students feel no need to use the services provided by the Writing Center remains problematic because writing centers often position themselves as a resource for all students and not simply high traffic students.

Meanwhile, the perceptions of students who used the Writing Center confirm the overall perceptions of our center among students. We collected the data in Figure 5 from students who self-indicated they had gone to the Writing Center for a consultation when we asked: "How many times have you used the Writing Center?"

**Fig. 5. How many times have you used the Writing Center? (Students N=28)**

One time	Two times	Three times	Four times	Five or more
7	8	6	3	4

Students who used the Writing Center once were 75% more likely to use it at least one additional time. However, these same students were most likely to use the Writing Center in their first and second years, rarely in their third year, and not at all during their senior year. In interviews, students indicated that either instructors were not assigning writing or that they had already “mastered” all of the necessary writing skills for their major.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Drawing on the data from our surveys and interviews, we were able to draw a few conclusions as well as suggest possible recommendations and research avenues for changing the perceptions of the Writing Center. First, quantitative data from our survey reinforces long-held assumptions about student perceptions of our center. Despite rigorous outreach and attempts to change student perceptions of our center, undergraduate native English-speaking students at Miami University continue to view its primary clients as first-year students and international students. This perception may negatively affect the way students in their sophomore, junior, and senior years relate to the Writing Center. Another potential factor in student perceptions, continually raised by students during interviews, is that most instructors don’t recommend the Writing Center to them outside of composition classes. Next, our data indicates that it is difficult to change undergraduate student perceptions by marketing directly to them. We do not endorse ending direct marketing to our students, but we speculate that other types of outreach are needed if undergraduate student perceptions are going to align with the ideal of the center held by our staff.

We also have a few recommendations we are implementing at the Howe Writing Center to help change the perspective of the center as a place primarily for international and first-year students to a perspective of the center as a place that improves writing for all majors, academic years, and skill levels. Since student outreach appears not to be effective in changing undergraduate student perceptions, we see undergraduate non-composition faculty outreach as the next avenue for changing student perceptions of our center. At our center, faculty outreach will be a key aspect of future development, including adding more faculty workshops and implementing a writing fellowship for faculty members.<sup>5</sup> But, perhaps most importantly, the Howe Writing Center is continuing and aggressively expanding one-to-one outreach to faculty members to educate them

about our services. We believe faculty outreach will be effective because if faculty members understand the services we offer, they can better suggest our services to their students. As part of our outreach, we let faculty members know our center can address writing in all disciplines and majors and can help students in their major-specific classes. While not all faculty members will be on board with our message, one-to-one outreach is the best opportunity to get our faculty to support our center.

This project has provided us with valuable insights into Miami University undergraduate student perceptions. It also sought to validate undergraduate perceptions as grounded in student experiences and understanding. Furthermore, the methods and procedures included in the study can be duplicated and expanded in other programs. Future research planned in the Howe Writing Center includes surveys and discussions with faculty members to determine their perceptions of our center. By pursuing additional avenues of research, we hope to align perceptions with the goals of our Writing Center while strengthening the center for the future.

1. This project was supported by the Doctoral-Undergraduate Opportunities for Scholarship. As part of the program, undergraduate and graduate students collaborate on a project that links scholarship and teaching at Miami University as well as contributes in an important way to issues that have implications beyond Miami University.
2. "About Howe Writing Center." *Miami University*.
3. <[www.surveymonkey.com/s/HoweWritingCenter](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HoweWritingCenter)>.
4. Student comments do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the authors or all students.
5. The fellowships are being designed as we complete this article. Currently, our plan is for faculty fellows to receive a course reduction in exchange for work within our center. The fellowships should encourage positive relationships between the Writing Center and faculty throughout the university as faculty fellows experience and learn about what we do in our center and how we accomplish our goals.



Bishop, Wendy. "Bringing Writers to the Center: Some Survey Results, Surmises, and Suggestions." *Writing Center Journal* 10.2 (1990): 31-45. Print.

Gaskins, Jake. "Comparing the Idea with the Reality of a Writing Center." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 30.10 (2006): 13-16. Print.

Hawthorne, Joan. "'We Don't Proofread Here': Re-Visioning the Writing Center to Better Meet Student Needs." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 23.8 (Apr. 1999): 1-7. Print.

Simpson, Jeanne. "Whose Idea of a Writing Center is This, Anyway?" *Writing Lab Newsletter* 35.1 (Sept. 2010): 1-4. Print.

## Tutor's Column: "Tutoring a Friend"

Adam Greenberg

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A defining feature of our writing center is the fact that we only tutor other undergraduates. Because we work with our peers, we have an exceptional opportunity to foster, if not a tight-knit community, then an intellectual space where we can safely challenge one another, ask questions, and take risks. As we contemplate how we'd like this community to look—after all it's up to us to form it—this brings us to an important distinction: there is a difference between being *friendly* towards someone and being *friends* with someone.

Assessing a collection of comments from peer tutors at University of California, Berkley's writing center, Thom Hawkins writes, "Tasks are accomplished because there is a mutual effort between friends, a situation of closeness, not distance, that fosters a sense of community" (66). Upon reading this, I find myself asking what Hawkins means by "a mutual effort between friends." Perhaps it is different for Hawkins, but in my experience it is rare to see tutors helping friends in the writing center. In the words of one of Hawkins' anonymous tutors, "If someone keeps after you enough, maybe, just maybe, a trusting relationship will emerge" (66). If this tutor's comment is any indication, closeness is as rare as it is possible.

In my experience, it has never been an issue that tutors need to be friendlier with their students. If anything, we can often stand to be a little less friendly, as when a student tries to get you to do his work for him, or when blunt honesty about an essay's deficiencies will do a student more good than the usual dose of cheerleading. Perhaps all Hawkins means to say is that tutors should strive to foster an environment that maximizes the potential for close relationships to eventually bloom, at which point tutoring will be most effective. If this is Hawkins' point, then I most certainly agree. Nevertheless, I lack answers for how

to arrive at this level of friendship with new acquaintances. I'd like to focus instead on how to treat students who are already our friends.

A good friend recently sought my help in the writing center, surprising me with her visit. I had never imagined a close friend coming to my office hours, so I was forced to adapt on the fly. On the one hand, I wondered if I'd been too directive in my approach. I knew that my friend would report her grade to me, and perhaps this had caused me to instruct her rather than allow her to come to her own conclusions. On the other hand, maybe I had overlooked her paper's most significant faults. I know I couldn't stand to insult her intelligence, and though I wasn't conscious of it at the time, maybe I'd walked on eggshells in a way I wouldn't with another student. It was difficult, then, to draw any tangible conclusions.

Still, I found our familiarity helped our ability to communicate. When students normally agree with me, I might struggle to discern whether they're just nodding their heads. Even when I check for understanding, they might be too shy to admit they're confused. With my friend, on the other hand, because I was familiar with her body language and because she felt comfortable enough to be vocal, I had a better sense of whether I was confusing her and could adjust my strategy accordingly. In addition, I often feel awkward during moments of silence. As tutees twiddle their thumbs, I start to feel the time pressure, and I may misinterpret their arguments or jump to hasty conclusions about how best to revise. Fortunately, with my friend I felt no such tension; I knew I could take my time thinking and responding. On the whole, I was at ease with my friend. I was able to relax.

When I asked my fellow tutors what they thought, I was surprised to find that there were two polarizing schools of thought. First there were the *helpers*, tutors who delight at the chance to tutor a friend and who welcome the opportunity to use a more directive approach. As one tutor said, failing to acknowledge friendship in a session could undermine the relationship. Another tutor called friends a "godsend" in the writing center. No time or energy is wasted on developing a tactic because it can be found from within the friendship itself. If advice needs to be nuanced, phrasing it for a friend can be much simpler because effective methods of communication have likely been previously established.

To my surprise, however, there was a significant constituency of *avoiders*, tutors who would prefer to leave friendship outside of the writing center. They point out that the personal nature of the tutor/tutee relationship can complicate the chance for honest discourse. It can be difficult, maybe even impossible to tell friends that their writing is flawed, and the added element of likely finding out what grade they get on their papers inevitably influences the process. Another strange side effect, one tutor identified, we might call the “How do I look?” problem. If a friend comes into the writing center hours before his paper is due, there may not be enough time to offer adequate help. It’s hard enough to tell someone his shirt and pants don’t match as he walks out the door. Now try telling a friend that his paper isn’t ready to hand in.

After I talked with these tutors, it seems the reason we don’t often see friends in the writing center might be that we give them special treatment. If a friend thinks to ask, many tutors are glad to help—outside of the writing center, that is. Even though I had a positive experience tutoring my friend, she admitted that the only reason she came for help was that her professor had all but required it. As tutors, perhaps the fault is our own. Perhaps too many of us are afraid of patronizing our friends by fitting them in with our other appointments. Perhaps we want to edit our friends’ papers because it’s efficient. But at what expense? It might seem awkward to invite friends to the writing center, but isn’t this preferable to editing their papers elsewhere?

When I set out to write about this topic, I thought I might be able to draw some conclusions about the best approach to tutoring a friend. I’ve realized, however, that just as every tutoring session is different, so is every friendship. Ultimately, what makes our writing center a unique site on campus is the fact that it is free of hierarchy. Friends or not, students are able to work together with nothing to lose. If the session is not productive, no one gets a bad grade, and more often than not we learn by failing anyhow.

Trent Mikesell, a tutor at Brigham Young University, proposes that “we must approach [all] tutees as friends,” but I think this is the wrong conclusion to draw (14). Once again it is important that we not gloss over the friends/friendly distinction. When I say that we hardly need to work on being friendlier with the tutees we don’t know, I mean to say that good tutoring is pred-

icated on honest discourse. It's not important how friendly we are but rather how honest we are. The advantage of being a peer is the chance to treat tutees as equals, and this is not the same thing as treating everyone as a friend. It is impossible to share the type of closeness with non-friends as with friends, and there is no sense in pretending otherwise.

By the same virtue, when it does come to tutoring our friends in the writing center, perhaps it's not how we do it that matters but that we do it. If there's one thing we can do as a community, it's to convince the avoiders among us to welcome their friends to the writing center. With my friend I felt less constrained than usual, and I think this only facilitated open discourse, collaboration, and experimentation, the processes that I want to engender when I tutor. While I firmly believe that friendships worth maintaining will endure a dose of honesty, ultimately I can never devise a formula that every tutor can apply to every session with a friend. What I do know is that if we don't do more to convince our friends to come to the writing center, we'll only be letting them down. That is, I say we begin to treat all students as our peers—even our friends.



Hawkins, Thom. "Intimacy and Audience: The Relationship between Revision and the Social Dimension of Peer Tutoring." *College English* 42.1 (1980): 64-68. Print.

Mikesell, Trent. "Mi Amigo, Mein Freund, My Friend: Understanding the Language of Friendship in Tutoring." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 31.5 (2007): 14-15. Print.





## Announcements

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### **Noreen Lape's Article Selected for Best of... Series**

Congratulations to Noreen G. Lape! Her article, "Going Global, Becoming Translingual: The Development of a Multilingual Writing Center," published in *The Writing Lab Newsletter* 38.3-4 (2013):1-6, was selected for inclusion in *The Best of the Independent Rhetoric & Composition Journals 2014*, to be published by Parlor Press.

This is the second year in a row that WLN has had articles accepted in this series. The 2013 collection included Eliot Rendleman's article, and now Noreen Lape's article will be in the 2014 collection.

### **The Capital Area Peer Tutoring Association**

**October 2, 2015 | Fairfax, VA | George Mason University | 8 a.m.—2 p.m.**

Sessions will include the following: For tutors: tutor research, strategies, leadership; for directors: strategic planning, tutor training, data & research, networking, and resources; for administrators: supporting and sustaining writing centers, leveraging impact schoolwide.

For more information, e-mail: <capta.connects@gmail.com>; Conference website: <www.captawritingcenters.org>.

### **IWCA Conference**

**October 8-10, 2015 | Pittsburgh, PA | "Writing Center (r)Evolution."**

Keynote speaker: Ben Rafoth

This year's conference focuses on the ways in which we create our writing center pedagogies, practices, spaces, and programs through artistic and technological innovations. To register for the conference, login (or create an account) at <www.iwcamembers.org>. Once logged into the system, you will see an option to register under "Available Conference Registrations." Click "Register for this Conference."

Program Chair: Russell Carpenter: <russell.carpenter@eku.edu>; <859-622-7403>. Conference website: <writingcenters.org/events-2/past-conferences/iwca-2015-writing-center-revolutions/>.

### **Nebraska Writing Center Consortium**

**September 11-12, 2015 | Omaha, NE | University of Nebraska-Omaha**

"The Consultant-Writer Experience" | Keynote: Stephen North

There will be an informal meet-and-greet Friday evening, Sept. 11, 2015, followed by the full meeting on Saturday, Sept. 12. This year's theme is an opportunity for consultants to explore writing center theory, scholarship, and experience with peers outside of their college or university. More information/conference website: <nebwritingcenters.org>

For information or questions about payment, contact Patrick Hargon: <hargonp2@unk.edu>. For questions about registration, proposals, or the meeting, contact Travis Adams: <gtadams@unomaha.edu>.

## Michigan Writing Centers Association

Annual Ideas Exchange | October 17, 2015 | Dowagiac, MI

Southwestern Michigan College | “Blurred Lines: Focusing the Academic Kaleidoscope through Collaboration and Creative Thinking”

We will focus on topics such as diversity, plagiarism, relationships, use of language, cross-curriculum writing, and other writing-centered ideas. The pricing structure is as follows: High school students \$10; Writing center staff \$20; Faculty/Directors \$60. Credit cards and college checks only.

For questions and information, contact the Conference Chair, Louis Noakes: <Inoakes@swmich.edu>. Conference website: <www.swmich.edu/mwca>. The website also lists the conference sessions and room numbers.

## Calendar

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**Sept. 11-12, 2015: Nebraska Writing Center Consortium**, in Omaha, NE. Contact: Patrick Hargon: <hargonp2@unk.edu>.

**October 8-10, 2015: International Writing Centers Association**, in Pittsburgh, PA. Contact: Russell Carpenter: <russell.carpenter@eku.edu>; Conference website: <writingcenters.org/events-2/past-conferences/iwca-2015-writing-center-revolutions>.

**October 17, 2015: Michigan Writing Centers Association**, in Dowagiac, MI. Contact: Louis Noakes: <Inoakes@swmich.edu>; Conference website: <www.swmich.edu/mwca>.

**October 23-24, 2015: Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association**, in Spokane, WA. Contact: Jared Anthony: <Jared.Anthony@sfcc.spokane.edu>; Conference website: <www.pnwca.org/2015-Conference-CFP>.

**October 28-29, 2015: Latin American Writing Centers Association**, in Bogota, Colombia. Conference website: <programadeescritura.uniandes.edu.co/index.php/congreso-latinoamericano-de-centros-y-programas-de-escritura>.

**November 5-8, 2015: National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing**, in Salt Lake City, UT. Contact: <ncptw2015@gmail.com>; Conference website: <ncptw2015.org>.

**February 18-20, 2016: Southeastern Writing Center Association**, in Columbus, GA. Contact: Eliot Rendleman: <rendleman\_eliot@columbusstate.edu>; Conference website: <www.iwca-swca.org>.

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

**April 2, 2016: Northern California Writing Centers Association**, in Santa Clara, CA. Contact: Denise Krane: <dkrane@scu.edu>.

**April 2-3, 2016: North East Writing Centers Association**, in Keene, NH. Contact: Erin Durkin: <durkine@centenarycollege.edu> and Richard Severe: <severer@centenarycollege.edu>.

**May 27, 2016: Canadian Writing Centers Association**, in Calgary, AB, Canada. Contact: Lucie Moussu: <moussu@ualberta.ca>.

# WLN

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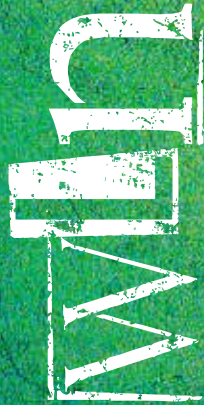
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