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SANTA | THONUS, CARTER-TOD, AND BABCOCK  
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## From the Editor

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This issue opens with Tracy Santa's essay on the importance of listening and the ways tutors can make visible this seemingly invisible practice. Next, Terese Thonus, Sheila Carter-Tod, and Rebecca Babcock examine a sample of people who conducted quantitative research on writing center topics for their dissertations and the academic positions they filled afterwards. In an accompanying review of an earlier book by Rebecca Babcock, Kellye Manning, and Travis Rogers, *A Synthesis of Qualitative Studies of Writing Center Tutoring, 1983-2006*, Neal Lerner assesses the conclusions and possible use of their book.

Because the March/April issue of *WLN* crowded out our regular Tutors' Column, we're particularly pleased that we can include two essays by tutors in this issue. Amelia Hall introduces tutors to the possibilities of helping students incorporate rhetorically effective puns into their writing while Madison Sewell, aware of the arguments against required writing center visits, draws on her own experience to make a strong case for possible beneficial effects of mandatory appointments.

As we bring Volume 40 to a close, we are already looking ahead to bright prospects for good reading next year. We have several exciting special-topic issues in the works, and several of our writing center colleagues are writing CFPs for more special issues. Some of these special issues may have follow-up monographs filled with additional articles on the special-topic issues. We would love to add more new voices to the ranks of published writing center scholars. So I encourage you to contact us with ideas for essays, special issues, and our blog.

In the meantime, if you are looking forward to a few months off campus, we wish you a pleasant, stress-free vacation, free from worrying about budgets, reports, and those small stresses of daily life in a writing center.



## Listening in/to the Writing Center: Backchannel and Gaze

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*“Science doesn’t know what listening is and . . . what consciousness is. Listening is hearing plus attention. Attention is something that takes place in the brain, not the ear.... We interchange these terms—listening and hearing—but less is known about listening than about hearing” — Pauline Oliveros*

One challenge we face as reflective practitioners in writing center work is that a process central to our practice—listening—seems invisible. To Pauline Oliveros, a pioneering experimental music composer, listening is a mental process: it’s really hard to see. The perceived invisibility of listening is perhaps one reason that, as Anthony Edington pointed out in 2008, tutoring handbooks have largely overlooked listening as central to successful tutorials (9). But is listening really as invisible as we might imagine? Observations of sociologists and sociolinguists such as Erving Goffman and Adam Kendon, when applied to close readings of tutorial interactions, can yield valuable insight into how tutors can better communicate our engagement as active listeners in tutorials.

It is easy enough to acknowledge the importance of listening in tutorials: listening makes the collaboration inherent to a successful tutorial possible. Listening as a solely audible phenomenon would exclude members of the Deaf community; I hope to make the point here that listening behaviors in writing center work are visible as well as audible.<sup>1</sup> But—through audist lenses or not—our challenge remains this: how do tutors signal writers that we are not only hearing them, but also paying attention, as Oliveros would have it?

Gemma Corradi Fiumara, in *The Other Side of Language: A Philosophy of Listening*, uncovers and reframes listening, suggesting that listening is both central to and under-examined in the Western rhetorical tradition. For Fiumara, “there could be no

saying without hearing [...] no speech which is not somehow received" (1). Drawing on Heidegger, Fiumara characterizes listening as extending beyond the simple hearing or receiving of another's speech, that listening requires a gathering "which brings under shelter," that it is an accommodation which "is in turn governed by safekeeping" (Heidegger qtd. in Fiumara 4). This vision of an invested, empathetic listening is close to what we aspire to as tutors in writing center conversations. But how tutors go about communicating an invested listening in the midst of a tutorial has been difficult to articulate, at least in part because of the relative invisibility of listening as an active behavior, when compared with the more observable behaviors associated with reading, writing, and speech.

Julie Bokser, who espouses a "rhetoric of listening" as a guiding principle in writing center tutor training, posits, "I don't believe it is possible to teach someone to listen. But I do believe it's possible that, by foregrounding listening, students will become aware of how they listen" (47). Bokser offers examples of how apprentice and experienced tutors (and writing center directors) become sensitized to complications deriving from an engaged listening posture in the writing center, complications which include but are not limited to "navigat[ing] conflictual discourses" (48) and "resisting attempts to impose consensus" (53). Bokser's vision, deriving from both Fiumara and Krista Ratcliffe's seminal work on rhetorical listening, implicitly argues that listening functions as a type of first principle in writing center practice, establishing the grounds for invention, reflection, and inquiry, central to Kenneth Bruffee's perception of tutoring grounded in social interaction.

But Bruffee's vision, as powerful as it has been in framing the social and conversational nature of tutoring, privileges the expressive features of this conversation. As Bruffee states, "[n]ormal discourse is pointed, explanatory, and argumentative" (9). By emphasizing the role of the speaker and the speaker's pointed intentions in normal discourse, Bruffee's work exemplifies what Fiumara has described as "an assertive culture intoxicated by the effectiveness of its 'saying' and increasingly incapable of paying 'heed'" (8). Fiumara's observation suggests that our intoxication with expressive speech blurs our perception of listening as central to tutoring practice.

In this sense, the challenges of listening for listening are kin to the difficulties experienced when examining the invention pro-

cess, connected to listening in both its invisibility and centrality to writing center practice. Consider Karen Burke LeFevre's suggestion from nearly thirty years ago about the social nature of invention and how her assertions readily apply to listening acts.

Historically, invention has been neglected as a subject of inquiry because it has been thought of as a private and personal activity. How, after all, should we study an act that is thought to be hidden, mysterious, and inaccessible to research methodologies? (23)

This is the dilemma in studying listening—while listening is clearly central to tutoring practice, it's tough to identify. As Bokser suggests, we understand that listening *per se* may be difficult to teach, but we do have the capacity to help tutors reflect on how they listen. Though we can't see "hearing" taking place, except in rare instances, can we make listening more visible, more legible to all participants in tutorial interactions?

### **EXAMINING LISTENING**

For the past decade, a small portion of our "Theory and Practice of Peer Tutoring" course at Colorado College has been devoted to watching how we listen. On the final day of the first portion of our class, senior tutors videotape apprentice tutors tutoring each other on papers they are drafting for the course. In the second part of the class, we view segments of tutorials, generally just the first few minutes of the interaction. As we view these clips, aspiring tutors are asked to consider:

- Physical posturing: How are tutor and writer physically situated? Does this change as the tutorial proceeds? Do tutor and writer seem comfortable with each other?
- Discourse: Who is doing most of the talking here? Is the tutorial a dialogue?
- Relationship: Does interaction between the writer and tutor change as the tutorial proceeds?
- Ownership: Based on evidence above, who owns this paper? Who owns this tutorial?

While observing and critiquing videotaped tutorials is a common staff development practice in many writing centers, we have found that our focus has turned increasingly toward listening behaviors. We are drawn to examining what listening looks like, studying, discussing (inevitably laughing about...) how listening is *performed* or manifested in the tutorials of aspiring tutors. What we've collectively observed over years of reviewing clips of tutorial practice is that listening appears to be manifested in

at least two visible or audible ways: in backchanneling and in gaze direction.

## **BACKCHANNELING**

Roxanne Bertrand, et al. have described backchannels as short verbal utterances, e.g. *yeah*, *OK*, vocal interjections, e.g. *uh-huh*, or gestural signals, such as nodding or smiling. Magdalena Gilewicz and Terese Thonus say verbal backchannels serve a specific function in tutorial conversations. A verbal backchannel such as *yeah* can mean: “I support what you are saying and agree with you—and you still have the floor” (28). Gilewicz and Thonus assert “speakers generally deploy backchannels at sentence and clause boundaries as a supportive move to show agreement, attention, or empathy while accompanying the on-the-floor speaker” (32). Backchannels indicate not just hearing, but a listener’s active, audible attention. Yet, backchanneling can backfire—it can be a symptom of anxiety rather than understanding, or may function as an empty signal when a listener is not necessarily in sync or accord with a speaker. Backchannels can also indicate a struggle for control of the conversation or even signify displeasure (Gilewicz and Thonus 33). But backchanneling, based on my years of observing videotaped tutorial interaction among our novice tutors, is largely benign and affirmative, as evidenced in the following brief transcription at the early stage of one of our videotaped tutorials. Bracketed speech below indicates audible backchanneling or speech overlap; text enclosed in directional markers < > represents visible interaction between participants. Numbers in parentheses indicate a speaker’s pauses, in seconds.

W: Umm, sure. I do have, I have two copies (1) I have all seven, not seven, six pages—um, so I don’t know, we don’t really have the time

[OK] [So what would  
<Tutor maintains eye contact with writer,  
turned toward writer>

T: be most effective for these fifteen minutes?  
<Writer looks down to draft in hand, hand to face. Tutor follows gaze to writer’s draft>

W: Hhhh—Umm—there are a couple of paragraphs I (2) there are a couple of paragraphs I’m worried about—yeah. [OK]

In examining these videotape excerpts as a class, part of what we are seeing and hearing in this tutor’s backchanneling and response is simple (and crucial) politeness. As Susan Wolff Mur-

phy has observed, successful writing center practice rests on acts of politeness (67). However, backchanneling of this variety communicates something deeper: a fundamental openness and a posture of active listening.

## **GAZE**

In class sessions we frequently view videotaped tutorials with the sound off, slowing images down to track gaze, eye contact, and off-gaze glances. Adam Kendon's work on patterns of behavior in focused encounters offers insight into how gaze direction might be read in tutorials. Kendon draws from the work of Erving Goffman, suggesting "direction of gaze plays a crucial role in initiation and maintenance of social encounters" (52). According to Kendon,

whether or not a person is willing to have his eye "caught," whether or not, that is, he is willing to look back into the eyes of someone who is already looking at him, is one of the principal signals by which people indicate to each other their willingness to begin an encounter. (52)

Following from Kendon, establishing a mutual gaze—a nonverbal interaction between tutor and writer—is a central initiating act in tutorial interactions. Goffman asserts that

once a set of participants have avowedly opened themselves up to one another for an engagement, an eye-to-eye ecological huddle tends to be carefully maintained, maximizing the opportunity for participants to monitor one another's mutual perceiving. (95)

In class observations of apprentice tutorials, we often see postures reflecting Goffman's "ecological huddle." For Goffman this posture of "working consensus" creates a mutually held ethos between collaborating partners, accompanied by a "heightened sense of moral responsibility for one's acts . . . a 'we-rationale'" (98) shared by interacting participants in a mutual exchange. For Kendon, gaze direction on the part of both participants in a two-person conversation has both a "regulatory and expressive function" (81). In experimental studies, Kendon found that a listener's gaze upon a speaker is viewed by the speaker as a signal of undivided attention.

Kendon also found speakers much less likely to maintain steady eye-to-eye gaze with a listener while speaking, but a speaker's upraised gaze served two functions: 1) to ascertain "that he is being 'received'" and 2) to indicate that he is willing or interested in sharing the floor with the listener (77). For a speaker,



fielding a listener's gaze is to "receive an indication that one is being taken account of" (88). Gaze itself becomes a backchannel response, signaling a willingness to gather or receive (on the listener's part) and to share thoughts (on the speaker's part). Kendon suggests intermittent mutual gaze expresses continued commitment, that "to perceive two eyes focused upon one acts as a 'release' for specifically social action" (87). In close reading of the visual rhetoric of tutorials, we can aspire to identify postures of listening and openness in our practice.

## **CULTURAL FACTORS**

Backchanneling and gaze behavior in writing center interaction are grounded in cultural practices and related to politeness, deference, and gendered behavior. Duration and frequency of eye contact clearly carry different meanings and weight from culture to culture. One experimental study of eye gaze display conducted on Trinidadian, Canadian, and Japanese subjects showed a wide range of willingness to maintain eye contact when subjects were asked questions to which they knew the answer, but almost no differences in eye contact between nationalities when subjects were asked questions that required thought and reflection (McCarthy, et al. 721-722). As Terese Thonus has noted, when working with non-native speakers of English, tutors exhibited "fewer overlaps, less laughter and greater volubility, creating an uneven distribution of talk" resulting in a "tutorial [that] exhibits the transactional nature of a service encounter rather than a conversation" (237). Flexibility and cultural sensitivity to learning practices are undoubtedly crucial to successful tutorials, but accomplishing goals may mean paying more attention to non-verbal cues and behaviors inherent to the contact zone work of writing centers that see a rich diversity of writers.

In *Multilingual Writers and Writing Centers*, Ben Rafoth notes the importance of creating opportunities for tutors to reflect on tutorial interactions. Close observation of these interactions "can help tutors learn to balance their responses to the complex demands of working with multilingual writers" (Rafoth 65). A heightened awareness of how listening behaviors impact our practice recently resulted in the following excerpt from the observation log of one of our apprenticing tutors.

Probably the greatest thing that stood out to me about Peter's style of tutoring was how active and attentive he was. Whether it was through back-channeling, hand gestures, near continuous eye-contact, his confidence, or rephrasing

the tutee's paragraph as he understood it after she had finished reading, there was no instance where I felt that the tutorial flagged, was uncomfortable, or where Peter wasn't fully in the here-and-now present of the session. He also didn't take notes, which so far I have been loath to do. But after tutoring Charles and then seeing [Peter], I can honestly say that not taking notes made me feel like he was listening more, and absorbing, rather than filtering more, which I appreciated a ton.

## **TUTOR TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

Clearly, a more systematic study of listening behaviors and postures of active listening in writing center tutorials and further investigation of the deep body of work on language and gesture would greatly benefit understanding of our practice. But here are some tutor training and staff development activities that can help bring listening to the forefront.

1. Ask tutors how they know someone is listening to them.
2. Identify and catalog postures and sounds of active listening, e.g. backchanneling, eye contact, and gaze direction.
3. Videotape tutorials between volunteer members of the staff to view with participants, or in larger staff development sessions, focusing on postures and interaction signaling engagement and active listening.
4. Invite staff members to collaborate while observing tutorials, focusing particularly on signs of engagement and listening. Ask participants to debrief each other and report their observations and reflections to the larger staff.

Active listening seems central to establishing an ethos of cooperation and shared responsibility in writing center tutorials. As Lonni Collins Pratt and Daniel Homan state in *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love*,

[w]hen you listen you get past yourself. . . . In the listening stance, the focus shifts from the self to the other . . . we have to make a choice to be receptive, to stop speaking and take an open stance. (qtd. in Jacobs 576).

This receptivity—central to writing center work—extends to reconstructing the role of listening in broader academic and civic spheres. Shari Stenberg has recently suggested “there is no genuine dialogue without dwelling in another's ideas” (252). The writing center is a dwelling built for just such dialogue.

1. Listening, for students who are deaf and tutors who work with these students, is cued by visible backchanneling behaviors, e.g. head nods and steady eye contact. For more on how listening behaviors bear on the success of tutorials with deaf writers, see Katherine Schmidt, Marta Bunse, Kynzie Dalton, Nicole Perry, and Kayla Rau's "Lessening the Divide: Strategies for Promoting Effective Communication Between Hearing Consultants and Deaf Student-Writers" (*WLN* 33.5 ). For an in-depth study, see Rebecca Day Babcock's "Interpreted Writing Center Tutorials with College-Level Deaf Students" (*Linguistics and Education* 22.2 [2011]: 95-117.).

2. My thanks to recent members of Colorado College's "Theory and Practice of Peer Tutoring" classes, particularly to Elliot Mamet, Jin Mei McMahon, and Jessalin Nagamoto. Names referenced in excerpts drawn from student writing are pseudonyms.



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# After the Writing Center Dissertation

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Often academic books begin with an article or conference presentation. This article, however, began while Rebecca Babcock was amassing qualitative dissertations on writing center tutoring for a book, *A Synthesis of Qualitative Studies of Writing Center Tutoring, 1983-2006*, she and others were writing.<sup>1</sup> Sifting through the dissertations and the dissertation writers' names, Babcock wondered what had happened to those colleagues who had invested so much time in writing center scholarship. That is, what happened to them *after writing their dissertations*? Were they still in the writing center field? If not, how did the writing of their dissertations prepare them for what they do now? And what happened to the dissertations? With those questions in mind, we focused this study on a sample of writing center dissertators and their career trajectories. We don't explore other interesting and valid career paths and preparations, nor do we argue that writing center dissertators *should* or *must* hold writing center positions. Instead, we offer our study, the results of which indicate that the benefits of writing a dissertation focused on writing center theory and practice are often subtle and far-reaching, serving as broad preparation for a range of academic jobs.

The match between writing center dissertation writers and those who become Writing Center Professionals (WCPs) is not so much a matter of supply and demand as an example of the complexity of the broader field of writing studies.<sup>2</sup> In a 1995 survey of writing center directors, Dave Healy reported only 10 percent of his participants were trained in composition and rhetoric, 20 percent had education degrees, and nearly 70 percent held English literature degrees. Stuart Brown, Theresa Enos, David Reamer, and Jason Thompson's 1999 survey of



rhetoric and composition doctoral programs showed that these programs produced more writing center dissertations than placed graduates in writing center positions. Their 2008 follow-up survey reported similar results. These studies suggest that a WCP job post-writing center dissertation is not a foregone conclusion.

What do these findings say about prospective and current WCPs in terms of identity, research, and the construction of the field? Lori Salem and Michelle Eodice surveyed 75 attendees of the 2009 and 2010 IWCA Summer Institutes and found the majority of them were “consumers” rather than “producers” of writing center research. Of the cohort, 50 percent reported viewing their writing center positions as “temporary service gigs.” Only 25 percent assumed “writing center director” as their primary professional identity, and only 25 percent professed a long-term commitment to writing center work and to research—though not necessarily writing center research. More recently, Anne Ellen Geller and Harry Denny reinforced the notion of an arbitrary connection between the writing center dissertation and WCP employment through a qualitative study of fourteen WCPs, six of whom had earned PhDs in composition and rhetoric, to determine their “route into the profession.” Only eight described their trajectory as “intentional,” while six labeled theirs “accidental” (126).

Our study complements the above scholarship—further developing the picture of writing center dissertation writers and their current jobs. We ask: What positions do these dissertation writers currently hold? How many identify as WCPs? What do they see as their “ideal position”? What impact has writing their dissertations had on their careers, as researchers, administrators, teachers, and mentors? In sum, what happens *after* the writing center dissertation?

We selected our sample of writing center-themed dissertations from *A Synthesis of Qualitative Studies of Writing Center Tutoring, 1983-2006*, the bibliography “Dissertations and Theses on Writing Centers,” and the *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* database (up to 2014), employing the search term “writing center.” Because we each wrote a qualitative dissertation and because our research was extending a book project on such research, we focused exclusively on qualitative dissertations. We also excluded dissertations that listed “writing center” in titles but used the term differently from how it’s used in our field,

ignored Master's theses<sup>3</sup> and elementary school writing centers dissertations, and encountered no secondary writing center dissertations. Of the 121 entries, we selected the 88 empirical dissertations in which writing centers were the *context* for data collection and results were discussed in terms of center work.

To create a rich data set, we found contact information for 80 of those authors, e-mailed each a questionnaire, and conducted follow-up telephone interviews. Forty (7 male, 33 female) of the 80 PhDs contacted responded to our survey. They had earned their doctorates between 1991-2014 with a median date of 2007, compared to a median of 2005 for the entire sample of 80. All but one respondent had directed a writing center or worked as a student tutor in the past, and the majority indicated they had selected writing center theory-practice dissertation topics based on mentor encouragement or because they had worked in writing centers as graduate students. At some level, all admitted the value of a writing center dissertation was *not* as a direct line to a WCP position but as a broader professionalization experience for teacher-researchers. Five work at the universities where they earned doctorates. Twenty-six are tenured or tenure-track professors (3 full, 18 associate, and 5 assistant) in English, education, writing and rhetoric, and communications; two work as instructors; one is a learning specialist; and one is a university assessment coordinator. Only twelve respondents described themselves as WCPs: ten writing center directors (WCDs) and two associate directors. Seven of the WCPs occupy staff positions; six occupy faculty positions, two of these being "hybrid" positions (to use Geller and Denny's term for non-tenure-able faculty with writing center administrative duties).

Ten of the twelve current WCPs earned doctorates after 2007, suggesting a trend for those who author writing center dissertations to be employed as WCPs. The majority of recent PhDs (our study focused specifically on 2007-2013) fully wanted—and expected—to become WCPs immediately or in the future, although whether they expected "WCP" to be their primary academic identity was unclear. One respondent wrote:

My current position provides me the opportunity to teach, and in the future, I will . . . coordinate the Writing Center [and] still be responsible for classroom teaching while in an administrative role.

One was glad she had recently switched from a faculty position into a non-faculty WCD position:

While the full-time faculty position was initially a nice opportunity to focus on my teaching and develop new materials, courses, etc., I missed administration . . . particularly . . . writing center work. [T]he writing center is the only institutional space where I am able to work with multilingual students, my preferred student population.

Another commented wistfully:

I want to involve myself in [a] writing center job although the university that I am working at now has no writing center. I look forward . . . to do[ing] some administrative job for the writing center when the university will establish [one].

When asked about their “ideal situation,” 23 respondents indicated contentment with their current positions, including 11 of the 12 WCPs. Five assistant or associate professors wanted to be WCDs. Four respondents desired more research time (including one faculty WCD), one wanted better pay, and another wanted a Research I university position mentoring graduate students. Six former WCDs noted they were “making the rounds” of departmental and university administrative responsibilities, including WPA, WAC coordinator, and first-year-experience learning community director.

When asked, “What aspects of your job did the dissertation prepare you for?” participants’ top answers were (1) research, (2) administration, (3) teaching or pedagogy, and (4) mentoring researchers. Several noted their dissertation had been preparation, as one respondent wrote, for “academia in general.” In terms of research, 28 respondents had submitted or were working on dissertation-based conference presentations and articles, with a mean of 2.6 per person. Twelve respondents, however, had not published or presented on their dissertation research; the majority of these held faculty, not WCP, positions. One tenure-track respondent explained the dissertation had prepared her in a general way for research:

The dissertation prepared me to tackle long-term projects with lots of data to manage and analyze . . . to set a research agenda and follow through—very necessary in terms of later tenure and promotion decisions.

Another respondent had discontinued writing center work and related research post-dissertation fearing it would be “the death” of her career. Several faculty respondents changed their research focus after the dissertation because they had moved away from writing center work and became directly involved

with writing program administration, ESL, or professional/technical writing. Some now held higher administrative positions with less time (and sometimes fewer expectations) for research. Community college faculty expressed difficulties finding time to continue research beyond the dissertation because of heavy teaching obligations. One such individual engaged in some self-recrimination:

I suppose I should do more writing. I haven't because teaching at the community college is notoriously demanding. Time seems a good excuse. But no one has time, and others seem to get it done.

Writing center dissertation writers who currently serve as WCPs often echoed this response. Three staff WCPs noted research is not in their job descriptions. One, however, indicated she had far more time to engage in research than she had ever had as a tenured faculty member.

Seventeen respondents explained how their writing center dissertations had contributed to their understanding of their administrator roles, although not all were WCPs. One writing center director wrote:

My dissertation not only prepared me for thinking about writing centers as a place for teaching, learning and research, but it also shaped my understanding of what a writing center is. It has helped me develop my vision for the potential of writing center work, which I am applying to my directorship. That vision, of course, will shift and change, but the dissertation gave me time and space to reflect deeply on how I envision my work.

Twelve respondents claimed their writing center dissertations had prepared them for teaching. One reported:

Preparing for and writing my dissertation was absolutely instrumental in preparing me to teach at the community college. My research on writing centers and the dialogue between consultant and writer inform the way I talk to students in my conferences, . . . to students in the writing center, and even how I write comments on my students' work.

Another explained how her preparation as a tutor and writing center researcher continued to inform her teaching:

Learning about the inner workings of the writing centers within my university system was eye-opening, and helped me to prepare my ELL students better on those occasions when they seek help from tutors. It also made me more



aware of how faculty involvement (not lip service about being involved) can create a partnership that better enables the writing center [to] fulfill its mission and purpose.

Five respondents attributed their mentoring skill to their dissertation experience. One faculty writing center director viewed her role as a *sponsor* of research:

Research for me nowadays is *undergraduate* research, initiating students into the process of asking good questions and then designing projects that will help them answer those questions.

Another respondent explained her dissertation has been crucial to mentoring graduate students:

. . . doing a qualitative study familiarized me with the challenges of that work (getting cooperation, transcription, field notes, etc.), and I have used that experience many times when advising students about research projects.

Interestingly, two respondents argued that their jobs prepared them for their dissertations. One wrote her dissertation over five years as she designed, implemented, and directed a community college writing center, which she still leads:

Three and a half years into my doctoral program, our local community college advertised for a Writing Center Coordinator . . . responsible for designing, implementing, and directing writing centers for their multi-campus institution. My friends and colleagues encouraged me to apply, while my graduate school professors, most of them with furrowed brow, all but discouraged me from applying. "You'll never finish the degree," they chanted. One even commented: "You could work anywhere. Why a community college? And why [pause] in the writing center? You could do so much more!"

Fortunately, my committee chair supported my decision and eventually helped the others to see that the community college writing center was . . . as valid a research site as any others they favored in the profession. . . . According to my chair, I was one of the few students in her experience privileged enough to write within the conversation rather than beneath it. Very few charged with creating writing centers are fortunate enough to be simultaneously steeped in the research and surrounded by a willing team of academic advisors.

What can we make of our survey results? From one vantage point, our study may reveal a waste of academic and research talent because so few writing center dissertation writers go on to WCP

positions, and even fewer continue to engage in writing center research. The lack of a coherent career path for writing center dissertation writers likely contributes to the present reality of administrators with little grounded research experience. Other contributing factors may be the consolidation of writing centers into learning commons and institutions determining director jobs as masters-level positions. Publication of dissertation findings, replication of studies in new writing center contexts, continuity between dissertation and post-dissertation inquiry and between research topic and academic context—all are lost in the motivated or incidental abandonment of WCP career options. And we wonder, like Geller and Denny's WCPs, whether PhDs responding to our survey were "accidental" writing center directors? That is, was their dissertation research context unrelated to their professional aspirations? From another vantage point, however, our findings suggest the changing range and role of writing centers, and the work and research done there prepares scholars for a range of post-dissertation research. In addition, the process of writing a writing center dissertation prepares scholars for a range of higher education positions, both academic and administrative. Our participants found their writing center dissertations good preparation for research and teaching in the classroom, writing center, and community. That some may not direct writing centers or do writing center research disturbed very few.

Geller and Denny focused on WCPs' institutional status, a secondary issue in our study, finding that "everyday realities of WCPs' positions can perpetuate WCPs' exclusion from conventional academic culture" (113). We concur with their plea for writing center-based research by WCPs:

[I]f advancing a field and oneself within it involves the consumption, production, and dissemination of knowledge, whether through conference proposals and presentations, or, more importantly, vetted publication, what might it mean to exempt oneself or for significant parts of a community of professionals not to participate in its own collective social construction of knowledge? . . . [W]hen WCPs don't publish, they perpetuate their own marginalization and invisibility by withdrawing, by intent or de facto, from any of the "larger" disciplinary domains to which they might align. (118)

Our study also corroborates Salem and Eodice's findings: Despite our participants' hopes to be involved in writing center

administration in their careers, the majority expect (and some are resigned to the fact) that their career trajectories and scholarly endeavors may lead them away from writing center work.

What is the solution to the possible mismatch between academic preparation, which often includes writing center tutoring and administrative experience, and PhDs' eventual job choices? We strongly second a challenge Geller and Denny pose:

We suggest that as institutions and departments consider future writing center positions, they think simultaneously about what position configuration will best support the growth and development of the institution's writing center and what position configuration will best support the growth of an individual writing center director's career trajectory, including the director's scholarly, teaching, and personal life. (112-113)

We believe that writing center scholars must shape this research agenda by encouraging and guiding writing center dissertation writers and by developing a coherent disciplinary identity for them from graduate school to profession by promoting and supporting their transition into WCP positions or other positions they choose. Whether writing center dissertation writers occupy faculty or staff positions, it is important that throughout their professional lives they continue to grow the field and themselves as participants in it. As one reviewer of this article noted, "Perhaps the point is that writing center directors, no matter what their status, should be able to continue to grow the field and themselves through conducting, and hopefully sharing, their research with colleagues."<sup>4</sup>

1. See Neal Lerner's review of this book in this issue.

2. Over the past twenty years, studies indicate 40% (Healy), 53% (Diamond), or 44% (Valles, Babcock and Jackson) of WCPs hold doctorate degrees.

3. An interesting follow-up study could examine career paths of those who write Master's theses about writing centers.

4. This article grew from a 2008 IWCA conference presentation with Katie Levin and Katie (Stahlnecker) Hupp. Thanks to Karen Rowan, Michael Pemberton, Cinthia Gannett, Carol Zeuses, anonymous reviewers, and all study participants.



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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/](http://www.wlnjournal.org/blog/) •

• **WLN Twitter:** [twitter.com/WLNjournal](https://twitter.com/WLNjournal) •

• **WLN Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/wlnjournal](https://www.facebook.com/wlnjournal) •

• **WcORD:** [wlnjournal.org/wcord.php](http://wlnjournal.org/wcord.php) •

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## **Review of *A Synthesis of Qualitative Studies of Writing Center Tutoring: 1983-2006* by Babcock, Manning, and Rogers**

Neal Lerner

Northeastern University  
Boston, Massachusetts

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Over thirty years ago, Stephen North published a statement that was a paradigmatic moment for the writing center world. No, it wasn't "Our job is to produce better writers, not better writing," which appeared in "The Idea of a Writing Center" and is likely the most cited axiom in writing center history. Instead, it was "in all the writing center literature to date, *there is not a single published study of what happens in writing center tutorials*" (28). This call to action appears in "Writing Center Research: Testing Our Assumptions," North's contribution to the 1984 collection *Writing Centers: Theory and Administration*.

Since that time, the number of published studies on writing centers has certainly grown, resulting in a body of work large enough for Sarah Liggett, Kerri Jordan, and Steven Price to issue a taxonomy of writing center research in 2011 and for Rebecca Babcock and Terese Thonus to publish a book-length account of "evidence-based practice" based on writing center research in 2012. More current efforts in this vein come from Dana Driscoll and Sherry Wynn Purdue; Jackie Grutsch McKinney; and Isabelle Thompson and Jo Mackiewicz, among others.

*A Synthesis of Qualitative Studies of Writing Center Tutoring, 1983-2006*—written by Babcock and her colleagues Kellye Manning and Travis Rogers with the assistance of Courtney Goff and Amanda McCain—takes a different approach than these other studies, one that is not intended to present new research but instead to "synthesize" a range of research conducted in the qualitative tradition. *A Synthesis* relies on grounded-theory methodology or an approach to construct a theory of what happens when writers and tutors come together in writing center settings that is driven by the content and trends in the research studies the authors include, rather than using an external

framework or set of categories. More specifically, the authors collaboratively read and coded 58 qualitative studies of writing center tutoring, including dissertations, book chapters, journal articles, and one conference paper. The authors only included studies that focused on college students, directly reported their data, and had clear methodology and research questions (8), allowing for comparisons and categorization across the entire range of studies. Certainly, evidence that the field has taken up North's 1984 charge is provided by the fact 58 such studies were published between 1983 and 2006.

So what do Babcock and colleagues make of this body of work? Overall, their synthesis carries few surprises. In seven relatively brief chapters, we are told that the key features of tutorial interaction are the personal characteristics of tutor and writer, the external influences for both participants, the communication strategies that both tutor and writer use, the roles each participant plays, the emotion and temperament of tutor and writer, and the ways that desired outcomes for both participants shape sessions. These features will strike anyone familiar with writing center work as, well, familiar. That they come from primary research on writing centers is comforting in a way, telling us that our assumptions are perhaps not misaligned with reality. Additionally, seeing these features in total paints a broader picture of the writing tutorial than our assumptions sometimes offer, particularly when our practice might be driven by simple continua, for example, whether to be directive or non-directive or if we should focus on the writers or the writing.

One might conclude, then, that *A Synthesis* might be used similarly to Babcock and Thonus's *Researching the Writing Center*,<sup>1</sup> with sections that point to the key studies to consult for a range of issues. For instance, readers interested in studies of "laughter" in the writing center will find one paragraph and reference to six studies on the topic. That section—under the larger category of "Communication"—is typical for much of what appears in this book. It is driven by the authors' categorization of common themes or topics in their data set and is presented as a series of very brief findings from each study. Here's an example from that section:

Ritter (2002) noticed a tutor introducing herself and then laughing, and concluded this "may have been an attempt to establish solidarity or even tone down the institutional nature of the W[riting] C[enter] T[utorial]" (p. 228). Haas

(1986) noted participants in her study approached the conference in a playful way, enhancing their relationship. Boudreaux (1998) found that laughter could signal rapport, and it could also be used to diffuse awkwardness, such when asking for a favor or asking personal information. Tutors and tutees in McClure's (1990) study laughed when they were at ease or when they were especially pleased that they came up with a satisfactory solution to a problem. (48)

This pattern—identify the author and date (in APA citation format), offer usually one sentence to summarize that finding, move on to another author and finding—does make for a somewhat choppy reading experience. I found myself wanting to know more about those individual studies—their context, their methods, their nuance—so that I could make sense of these quick hits. But perhaps the intention here is just to give the reader a taste of these studies, to offer an invitation to find them and take them in as a whole. In that way, this book is well suited as a reference to the works it synthesizes, a kind of annotated bibliography of its sources, one that complements the Babcock and Thonus evidence-based analysis. Both of these fill an important need given that Murphy, Law, and Sherwood offered their annotated bibliography of writing center studies in 1996.

What I found most insightful is the book's final chapter. Once again, it is not necessarily filled with revelations as it attempts to build theory that governs writing center practice. The authors drawn on Lev Vygotsky, particularly his notion of "the zone of proximal development" or "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky 86) as a controlling idea, even to the point of offering "Vygotskiation" as an alternative to "collaboration" as a descriptor (117). Vygotsky's work has been a foundation of socio-cognitive approaches to understanding writing center work (and writing in general) for more than thirty years, going back at least to Kenneth Bruffee's 1984 article "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind'." However, what Babcock and colleagues offer in this chapter is guidance on where we go from here. Rather than only dichotomized approaches—teacher versus tutor, non-directive versus directive, writer versus writing—the authors offer "points of departure" (116) for readers to embrace the nuances of writing center work and resist simplistic notions of what might constitute "success"

or “satisfaction.” Writing centers are complex teaching sites, ones in which relatively novice undergraduate tutors may be working with fellow undergraduate writers who often lack the language and experience to create a productive agenda or navigate the rough terrain of teacher expectations, institutional contexts, and disciplinary discourse. Babcock, Manning, and Rogers assert that it is through research that we best understand these complexities, and, ultimately, ensure the success of writing centers as instructional sites. I am persuaded by that claim.”

1. This book was reviewed in *WLN*, 30.1-2 (2014): 10-13.



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## Tutors' Column: “Playfulness in Discipline: How Punning Witticism is Transforming Criticism in the Writing Center”

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As technology use in classrooms increases, writing center tutors are assisting students with a greater variety of assignments than ever before. In addition to the traditional term paper, tutors now help students construct arguments for blog posts, online discussion boards, and even the occasional Facebook comment. Brevity is the order of the day in these venues, as students must often communicate their ideas in as little as 150 words. This characteristic of online academic discourse reinforces a more general expectation of academic writing: namely, that one should express complex arguments as concisely and directly as the subject matter will allow. Many students find it difficult to write within these parameters and also maintain an authorial voice. In some cases, a thesis that turns on a well-wrought pun can be an effective rhetorical strategy, as puns convey complex ideas in exactly the economical fashion that academic discourse necessitates. Puns provide a useful tool when constructing scholarly arguments; they allow students to formulate ideas that are both lively and lasting, as puns tend to stick in readers' minds long after they have put an author's words out of sight.

Puns are typically thought to be antithetical to serious scholarly writing, but their potential usefulness, in combination with the evolving genres of academic discourse, brought me to this question: Is there room for a writer's words to be playful within a discipline, while still maintaining scholarly dignity? In what follows, I examine how tutors can help students determine what constitutes “good pun usage” and explain some specific methods peer tutors can use to assist students in constructing punning critiques. More broadly, teaching students how to strategically use puns renders them well equipped to convey their ideas in a world increasingly based on technological communication.

Now, one may pause here to ask: why should students use puns in papers? What are the benefits? My answer is that student writers, while concerned with maintaining the integrity of their academic writing, nevertheless wish to construct arguments that are intellectually provocative—and a skillfully crafted pun gives them a means to do just that. A pun enables writers to condense their ideas into an easily explainable shorthand, useful for many types of discourse. Psychologist Paul E. McGhee's *Handbook of Humor Research* describes the well-wrought pun as one that offers "a simultaneous awareness of two meanings," while linguistics scholar Salvatore Attardo claims, in *Linguistic Theories of Humor*, that the best puns elicit a thought-provoking connection between the two concepts being punned upon (31; 150). From these definitions, we learn that a "good" pun allows a student writer to communicate a complicated, multifaceted argument in a memorable, comprehensive form. Packaging ideas in this pithy-yet-portable way allows writers to leave a lasting impression in the minds of their readers. Given their ability to convey complex arguments economically, puns are especially valuable rhetorical tools within online discourse, and are also useful in more traditional scholarly venues, such as papers—that is, when used with great discretion at appropriate times.

Evaluating a pun's appropriateness and ascertaining audience expectations go hand-in-hand, and tutors must tread cautiously when discussing pun use in academic writing. Puns, while highly useful, are also highly risky, as not all instructors will respond positively to their use. Moreover, an instructor's expectations may change depending on the assignment—that same thesis built upon a praise-worthy pun in a class blog post may be problematic when included in a formal term paper. For these reasons, I have found that pun-oriented sessions are not appropriate or helpful for novice writers who visit writing centers, as they typically lack the audience awareness to gauge whether or not their instructor will be receptive to humor. However, pun-oriented sessions can be highly beneficial for experienced student writers who have a more finely honed audience awareness and are seeking advanced rhetorical strategies with which to build their arguments. I have worked with several such students who, having carefully considered audience expectations, decided that their instructors would respond positively to a pun-based argument. In the following two case studies, I use my tutoring experience with two advanced writers to describe how pun-oriented sessions operate on a practical level.



Pun-based critiques can be a highly effective rhetorical strategy when used appropriately, and writing center tutors can help students adopt such a style. After a student and I have considered the instructor's expectations and decided that puns are a suitable tool for the assignment at hand, I then define for my students what "good pun usage" entails. To do so, I point students towards McGhee's aforementioned definition of a well-wrought pun as one which relates "a simultaneous awareness of two meanings" (31). I then guide students through the process of coming up with puns and evaluating their usefulness based on McGhee's definition. For example, I once worked with a student whose blog post related the emotional frustration one feels while reading *Moby Dick* to the theme of hunting for something unattainable. That helped the student structure her commentary around "wailing/whaling"—in both the reader's literal and Melville's literary contexts. The student used a single pun, "wailing," to build an argument based upon a "simultaneous awareness of two meanings." Given the class and nature of the assignment, this "wailing" argument is an example of a good pun, used appropriately.

Another example of a successful pun-oriented session occurred with a student writing a biology paper about the relationship between a pregnant woman's activities and their effects upon the child's health. Within the essay prompt, the professor asked students to "write something interesting" that "doesn't sound like a traditional lab report." On the basis of this prompt, the student decided that puns would provide the extra element of interest her professor wanted. When I help students such as this one, I tell them to think of common sayings related to the topic at hand. Together, the student and I came up with a list of common phrases pertaining to the themes of healthcare and social advancement. Once we had made a list, I guided the student through evaluating the quality of each saying, and showed her that phrases which invoked McGhee's "simultaneous awareness of two meanings"—in this case, words which dealt with her paper's two themes at once—would be the most useful for her argument. During this process, although my student discarded a cliché about "putting money where the mouth is," she did locate two phrases which enhanced her thesis. Ultimately, her essay transformed into an analysis relating how mothers' prenatal decisions give their children both a "leg up" in the world, and a way to "get ahead" in life. Her paper argued that pregnant

mothers who conscientiously adopted measures to enhance their unborn children's health stimulated the life-long success of their offspring, as children exposed to such measures developed physically (a "leg up") and intellectually (get "ahead") more rapidly than their peers.

These two case studies exemplify how puns can be useful in academic writing, whether in online venues or in traditional papers. In both examples, advanced student writers, having evaluated their instructors' expectations, decided to build arguments that turned on carefully constructed puns. From these students' experiences we see that, when used cautiously and saved for just the right audience and assignment, puns can be an insight-providing addition to a written argument. As of late, there are many concerns as to whether or not a university education truly prepares undergraduates for tasks they will face in the "real world." Given that humorous news coverage abounds and that platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs often necessitate students write short, snappy commentary if they wish to be heard, I believe that teaching punning to undergraduates can equip them to write and argue in the "real world" of online communication, a place which increasingly operates using comedic cultural currency. Teaching students how to formulate their ideas as memorable puns enables them to communicate effectively in a world that values sound bites that are provocative, pointed, and precise.

And now, to bring this discussion about the benefits of punning full circle: Is there a time and a place for playful prose within academic writing? In short, my answer is yes. Well-crafted witticisms can indeed contain well-built criticisms—and arguments formulated in this way have a portable potential to remain relevant and extend beyond university walls. The ways in which students, especially Millennials, communicate and construct critiques are changing. Writing center tutors, as negotiating comic agents, are perhaps able to "humor" these changes best of all.



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## Tutors' Column: “The First Step: Students’ Initial Encounters with the Writing Center”

Madison Sewell

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Conway, Arkansas

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Sitting in the writing center with my carefully crafted speech in hand, I dreaded my appointment. Three weeks earlier, my oral communications professor announced to the class that every single person would have to have their speech reviewed by the center if we wanted to make a grade above a zero—no exceptions. “This is so stupid,” I thought to myself, nervously tapping my foot. I had always been told that I was a good writer and had always made good grades; regardless, I had been forced to come to the place where people wouldn’t recognize that. In my mind, the writing center was remedial—the place where “the bad students” get sent by disappointed professors, the place where the less-than-qualified frantically seek help from all-knowing tutors. My thoughts were interrupted by a smiling tutor who asked if I was ready. Reluctantly, I stood and followed him to the speech lab, a separate room in the University of Central Arkansas writing center designed for oral communications students to practice their speeches in private with their tutors.

When I had finished delivering my speech, we collaborated to find ways to fix my weaknesses, and I left the session quite surprised. The quality of my speech vastly improved and so did my attitude. I saw the good that could come from having a peer review your work—no matter if you are a great writer or if you’re not so great. I knew at that moment that I wanted to be a part of the writing center and later applied for a position. Not only would I be aiding others on the path to self-discovery, but I, myself, would also benefit. I wanted to learn more about writing and become a better writer; through my session, I saw that one of the best ways to learn was through reading other people’s work and discussing ways to improve it. Seeing different styles of writing and hearing others’ opinions were essential to my

growth as a serious academic student. I wouldn't be tutoring and writing this article today if some professor hadn't forced me to go to the writing center. When handled well, mandatory visits *can* be a good thing.

An all too common writing center policy stigmatizes required sessions and dictates that writing centers are most effective when students come in of their own accord so that they are actively engaged with their sessions. But what about the students like me? Would I have ever gone to the writing center and eventually become a tutor had my professor had not required it? Probably not. There has even been evidence since the 1980s that required visits can be a good thing; for example, Irene Clark notes that many students are unlikely to visit the center without teacher requirements (33). However, steering clear from mandatory sessions is the norm for most of the contemporary writing center community for numerous valid reasons. Students who are indifferent about their papers and especially those with little knowledge about the center could see the requirement as a sort of "detention" (North 79). This view creates feelings of resentment causing writers to shut down. This resistance can lead to unproductive, one-sided collaboration and can cause the students to end up leaving with the same misconceptions they had held before. Barbara Bell and Robert Stutts also note that the tutors leave these sessions feeling frustrated and downcast (6).

Nonetheless, the benefits of mandatory sessions could outweigh the cons. Requiring students to go to the writing center might help their papers and writing abilities and educate them about writing centers: what they are, how they work, and who they can help. Prior to my own appointment, I had a slew of misconceptions about the center, and I know that many others still hold the same misconceptions. Sitting through a session, collaborating on, and improving their own work would teach students more about the center than any handout or tutor-turned-representative-speaker in a classroom could. It could turn many skeptics into believers, hesitant strangers into comfortable regulars, and ill-informed rumors into positive testimonies.

For as many horror stories as can be gleaned from mandatory sessions, just as many can be positive. The kind smile of a tutor can break down students' feelings of resentment. The committed synergic workings between both the tutor and the writer can allow writers to leave with a better sense of how others perceive their writing, a clearer direction to take with their present

piece, and techniques to keep in mind for future writing endeavors. In Stutts' research on requiring students to go to the writing center (as reported in an article written with Barbara Bell), he found that when students were asked at the end of the semester about their opinion of the center, many said they would go back on their own for other writing assignments (7). More recently, Barbara Gordan found that after their first initial mandatory visit at the writing center, students felt the center had helped them to improve their skills and make better grades (156-157). Gordan also recommends that centers avoid discouraging mandatory sessions (158). Cynthia Cochran also notes that a number of students who attended required sessions are, as she describes them, "frequent flyers" to the center. An appreciation for writing centers can clearly derive from these introductory required encounters.

On the other hand, students may fall into the resentful category if they are made to go to the writing center without understanding how it can help them. If students are initially unwilling or reluctant to participate in the sessions, a good way to get them to open up is to ask questions about what they have written. Having them explain their work in their own words can help them be more receptive and willing to partake in a collaborative writing experience. Another way to help those who are apprehensive about the center is to incorporate warranted praise into the session; hearing praise was one of the most surprising aspects of my first encounter. Most students may fear that their paper is going to be criticized. A tutor's genuine interest in the student's work can be another vital component of turning skeptics into believers. When students see that the tutor is involved with their topic, they are likely to feel pride in what they have done and be more inclined to contribute to the session.

Nevertheless, even if the students are on board, another obstacle stands in the way of this method of writing center education—the instructors. In order for students to be introduced to the idea of visiting the center, their instructors have to avoid any misconceptions of their own. They have to truly understand and support writing center philosophy or run the risk of perpetuating negative myths about the writing center. Instead of solely mentioning the center as a bolded side note on grading rubrics, instructors should explain how the center works and the benefits that can be drawn from peer review. Taking the students to an orientation at the center or having a tutor from the center

come in and talk about sessions can also break down the misconceptions. If my professor would have done these things for me, instead of throwing me in the dark, I would have felt less apprehensive about the center.

As we all know, educating the university population is a challenge that writing centers everywhere face. With enthusiastic, well-meaning professors requiring their students to schedule a tutoring session, the fog of delusion surrounding the writing center may finally be lifted. Like a baby bird being pushed from the nest in order to learn how to fly, some students need that first nudge to make leaps and bounds in understanding the center and improving their writing. Sometimes students will never truly learn the good that can come from writing center sessions until they experience a tutorial first-hand. Once students actually work side-by-side with a peer, many will realize the beauty of the writing center and become avid supporters, much like I did. All it can take is that first step, that first nudge, into the unknown to discover something wonderful.



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# Announcements

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## INTERNATIONAL WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION

Oct. 14-16, 2016

Denver, CO

*“Writing Center Frontiers”*

Keynote: Paula Gillespie

For further information, please contact John Nordlof, the conference chair: <jnordlof@eastern.edu>; <610-341-1453>. For conference information and registration, see the conference website: <writingcenters.org/2016/01/call-for-program-proposals-for-iwca-denver-2016-writing-center-frontiers>.

## NEBRASKA WRITING CENTER CONSORTIUM

Sept. 25, 2016

Hastings, NE

Hosted by Central Community College, Hastings

*“Exploring New Frontiers in Writing Centers”*

The NWCC meeting is a prime opportunity to practice and refine presentations for upcoming national and regional writing center conferences. Direct any questions about registration, proposals, or the meeting to Danielle Helzer <daniellehelzer@cccneb.edu>. The conference website is <nebwritingcenters.org/>.

Proposals are due by July 1; send proposals via email (as Word or pdf. files) to <daniellehelzer@cccneb.edu> with the subject line “2016 NWCC Proposal.” Include names and contact information for all panel members.

### 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 resources you have or know about.

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

## Conference Calendar

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**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>.

**Sept. 24, 2016:** Nebraska Writing Center Consortium, in Hastings, NE

**Contact:** Danielle Helzer:<daniellehelzer@cccneb.edu>; conference website: <nebwritingcenters.org/>.

**October 14-16, 2016:** International Writing Centers Association, in Denver, CO

**Contact:** John Nordloff: <jnordlof@eastern.edu>; conference website: <writingcenters.org/2016/01/call-for-program-proposals-for-iwca-denver-2016-writing-center-frontiers>.

**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: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship***

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