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A JOURNAL OF WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

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From the Editor

Muriel Harris



Writing centers have a noteworthy history of providing space and services for a variety of populations and writerly needs—e.g., for students learning English as another language, for graduate students working on dissertations, and for students with physical disabilities and/or learning differences. Now, Nancy Effinger Wilson and Micah Wright offer their rationale and program for responding to another group that writing centers can serve, a program for veterans they have aptly named their Tutor Corps. Similarly, Caitlin Kelly and Karen Head add yet another program, one for postdoctoral fellows and faculty.

While these authors share new programs, Joyce Kinkead offers a strong argument for why we each need to be archivists of the records of our own writing center's history. Saving such records is important for studying institutional history, for documenting our own writing center's history, and for contributing to the Writing Center Research Project.

In her Tutors' Column essay, Qian Wang describes her nervousness about being an international tutor, but it's likely that her fears of inadequacy are felt by many other tutors. Her account of overcoming her anxiety and what she learned is not confined to international students but is a universal story many of us can relate to.

On p. 31, you'll find an invitation to respond briefly to any article you've read recently in *WLN*. We don't know when or if we'll have space to include all responses, but we hope to encourage back-and-forth conversations between authors and readers. For those of you looking forward to a summer vacation or at least a more leisurely summer semester, this issue of *WLN* offers many suggestions to use some of that time to think, plan, and write. Happy almost-summer and keep cool, and to our readers at far ends of the globe, happy winter and keep warm.



Writing Center Tutor Corps: A Veterans-Tutoring-Veterans Program

Nancy Effinger Wilson

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The first time I entered the writing center at my undergraduate institution, I might not have been recognizably nervous, but I was definitely dealing with some internal stress. This writing center was set up as a series of tables with the tutors' backs to the wall and the students' backs to the door. Lots of people were walking through this one point of entry and exit. After going on urban patrols in Iraq, where the threat of an enemy attack is a 360-degree consideration, my head was on a swivel. Because I was unable to participate, I felt disconnected from the civilian world as a whole. After leaving that writing center that day, I never returned there to receive tutoring.

We begin with this reflection by co-author Micah Wright, a veteran who spent four years in the United States Marine Corps, in order to underscore a disturbing difference between how writing centers wish to be perceived—inviting, safe, and worthwhile—and how some veterans may experience them. Not only might the space itself provoke hypervigilance, but our non-directive tutoring methods can also be perceived as a frustrating waste of time and aberrant to military culture. Even publicizing our efforts as helping veterans “transition” from the military to academia can be seen as insulting. That terminology may suggest that veterans must abandon their military identification and training, even though that training clearly has value. Moreover veterans’ identification as individuals who have served their country is also a source of pride and can co-exist with an identification as a student.

It was precisely this disconnect between what our writing center was doing and what we could/should be doing for our student veterans that led to the creation of a veterans-tutoring-veterans program that we named Writing Center Tutor Corps (WCTC). Our great hope is that in sharing our story, other writing/academic support centers will find new ways to help the student veterans on their campuses.

VETERANS IN THE ACADEMY

Over one million veterans have enrolled in higher education, "constituting approximately 5% of all U.S. postsecondary students" (McCaslin, et al. 191). Although the national average for completing a postsecondary degree is 59.1%, with first-time, full-time students at four-year public institutions averaging a 67.5% graduation rate (The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center), 51.7% of student veterans are successful (Cate).

Among the challenges that veterans face, an important few can be ameliorated by a veterans-tutoring-veterans writing center program. For example, because the military is so structured, the autonomy of the academy can feel overwhelming. Student veteran Alex notes, "In the military, you're always told where to go, where to be. You don't have to develop a schedule" (Bagby, et al. 225). However, since a veteran tutor has also participated in the military experience and successfully adjusted, he/she can help provide student veterans with tips for planning and prioritizing coursework. Setting up recurring appointments and deadlines adds structure, as well.

Another concern expressed by student veterans is feeling adrift on campus, wishing they could establish the community they had come to depend upon in the military (DiRamio, et al. 87). As student veteran Joseph explains, "When you're in the military, you have this built-in social structure, [a] support network that's there, everywhere you go, that's based off shared experiences, shared culture" (Hinton 264). Unfortunately, for some veterans, their civilian colleagues often fall short. As another student veteran observes, "Dealing with younger students is difficult because they have no real perspective on life and don't understand what real life is like" (Gregg, et al. 95). In fact, as McCaslin et al. note, if veterans avoid non-veterans, this may even mean a loss of academic support as veterans avoid "potential sources of assistance (e.g. professors, counseling center staff) [who] may be viewed with mistrust and assumed to be unable to understand the Veteran experience" (193). Student veterans need tutors who can bridge the military/academia gap.

Assuming that qualified veteran tutors are available, why wouldn't writing centers make this option available? Hiring a veteran to tutor in the writing center is a great start toward serving our student veterans because of the unique qualities veterans possess. But getting student veterans to seek tutoring help and ensuring that they feel safe and want to return can be complicated. The steps

we took to create our veterans-tutoring-veterans program is the focus of the remainder of this article.

WRITING CENTER TUTOR CORPS

We sheepishly admit that in the fall of 2012, despite the fact that there were 1,203 student veterans enrolled at Texas State at that time, the only accommodations our university writing center made were a few flags at the reception desk and a “Thank You for Your Service” banner on our website on Veterans Day. We had no student veterans on staff.

And then two chance meetings occurred. First, while passing through our university writing center, the provost casually mentioned to Nancy, the director at that time, that there might be some money for veterans’ initiatives, and she should consider sending him a proposal. Second, at an English Department get-together a few days later, Nancy happened to speak with co-author Micah Wright, a graduate student in the M.A. in Rhetoric/Composition program at that time. He shared with her the story with which we begin this article, also mentioning that even before his visit he was reluctant to seek help at his undergraduate university’s writing center because he didn’t believe the tutors knew what they were doing.

For Nancy, the value of having a veteran on the Writing Center staff suddenly seemed so obvious. She requested \$3,000 to hire a student veteran to work in the Writing Center for twenty hours a week. Not only would this person tutor student veterans, but he/she would also provide insider knowledge of how to get student veterans into the writing center and how to make sure they feel comfortable while they’re there. Worst case scenario, if there were not enough student veteran clients to keep this individual busy, the veteran could be placed on the regular schedule.

With the requested grant from the provost, Writing Center Tutor Corps (WCTC) was launched in the fall of 2012, with Micah as the first WCTC Coordinator. In what follows, we describe the basic steps we took to create this veterans-tutoring-veterans program, as well as our rationales.

Step One: Connect with Other Veterans Service Providers

In crafting Writing Center Tutor Corps, we first checked with our university’s Veterans Advisory Council (VAC), a campus group of faculty, staff, and students that launched in 2008 in order to promote student veteran success at our university. In part we wanted to ensure that we would not be duplicating existing services, but

we were also seeking partners to help us publicize the program. VAC members have, in fact, become key players in the development of WCTC. Attending VAC “Pizza Days” and football game tailgating parties became key outreach efforts for Micah and Assistant Writing Center Director Caitlin McCrory. And because of the Master of Social Work (MSW) program’s focus on serving veterans, Micah began working closely with their faculty and students, even securing an MSW intern who was responsible for tutoring and mentoring student veterans.

Step Two: Design Special Programming

In addition to placing student veterans in the writing center as tutors, the Veterans Advisory Council recommended offering workshops specifically for veterans, such as “How to Write the Criminal Justice Paper” and “How to Shift from Military-ese to Academic Writing.” During our first semester, Micah initiated a monthly veteran-specific writing workshop entitled *Writing Boot Camp*, which included “The Basics of Writing,” “Professional Writing,” and “Resume Writing 101.” Doing so gave Micah access to a diverse military/veteran population at Texas State, but also provided veterans with more chances to reconnect with and help fellow veterans. Likewise, partnering with the Military Veteran Peer Network, WCTC hosted a writing retreat for the military/veteran community at Texas State and in the surrounding communities. The purpose of implementing the retreat was to pull veterans away from the academic or “civilian” world for a weekend, so they could connect and heal, if needed, with other veterans. By implementing workshops in a controlled and serene environment, we could help veterans by not only mentoring them, but also by helping them mentor the other veterans at the retreat. Eventually, this mentoring function warranted its own program, which now exists as Veterans Guiding Veterans, modeled after and co-located with Tutor Corps. The current WCTC Coordinator regularly attends a Friday fly-fishing event for student veterans.

Step Three: Tailor Promotional Materials

To attract student veterans’ attention, we needed to revise our existing promotional materials featuring students of traditional age tutoring other students of traditional age. In crafting new promotional materials, Micah followed Florence A. Hamrick and Corey B. Rumann’s recommendation that “higher education administrators should work to create symbols and messages within their campus cultures that indicate to Veterans and service members that they are respected, appreciated, and welcomed” (82). For example, Micah wanted to emphasize the comradery of the

military while clarifying that this was an academic service. “Writing Center Tutor Corps” fit the bill. Our promotional materials also expressly acknowledged a student veteran’s dual identity—a student *and* a veteran. Micah designed a WCTC logo and developed promotional flyers that drew parallels between the challenges the veteran faced in the military and academic challenges. One flyer, for example, featured the combination of the question “Are you losing sleep over writing a paper?” and a quotation from the head of U.S. Central Command General Mattis (who became the Secretary of Defense in the Trump administration): “I don’t lose any sleep at night over the potential for failure. I cannot even spell the word” (Roy).

Writing Center staff sported Writing Center Tutor Corps t-shirts, sending a message that the Writing Center was a veteran-friendly environment with staff fully committed to supporting our veterans’ academic success. We promoted the program whenever anyone presented on the writing center in order to reach as many student veterans as possible. Again and again, we sent the message that if the student veteran feared failing because of a paper, he or she would know that the Writing Center Tutor Corps existed to help him or her “complete the mission” of graduating.

Step Four: Assess Your Writing Center Space

In 2013, the Writing Center appointments took place in cubicles with the student sitting with his or her back to the door of the cubicle and facing a window that looks out to a busy commons. However, in “‘Front and Center’: Marine Student-Veterans, Collaboration, and the Writing Center,” Corrine E. Hinton notes that by “conducting sessions in a less visible location, consultants may reduce any anxiety or embarrassment student-Veterans may feel in asking for assistance” (273). One option was to locate WCTC at the Veterans’ Center that was to be located in our university student union, but the Veterans’ Center was going to be a site for social gathering, so it would be noisy and therefore distracting for any tutoring sessions held there.

We opted to house the WCTC in the Writing Center, but were able to designate an office specifically for the WCTC. It feels safe physically and psychologically because what is said cannot be overheard. Although the student veteran typically sits with his or her back to the door, the veteran tutor sits facing the door and is thus able to watch the student’s back. The veteran tutor is also able to, if requested, close the door, shutting off the world that makes the student nervous. Of course, not every writing center will be able to designate an office for veterans. If this is the case, writ-

ing centers should ask male and female veterans to assess their writing center space for possible triggers and then do whatever is possible to eliminate them.

Step Five: Tap Student Veterans' Strengths

With so much of the literature on student veterans focused on their shortcomings, it is important to consider their strengths. Although student veterans may be reluctant to seek help (McCaslin et al. 193), if they do come into the writing center, their tendency to believe in the importance of “competence, resilience, self-reliance” (193) can translate into a strong motivation to focus and learn. Student veterans are also accustomed to teamwork (Hinton 264), which is good news for writing centers, given our emphasis on collaboration. Indeed, Hamrick and Rumann found that student veterans’ strategies for succeeding in academia include “attempting to form a student group” and “strategically disclosing experiences within supportive environments” (452). It is also especially useful in a writing center to consider that many student veterans have considerable experience with writing, and those skills are transferable; that is, professors also appreciate clear, concise, and correct writing. Even a preference for professors to “be direct, concise, and specific in their communication, show models of acceptable work, or provide repeated feedback at all stages of an assignment” (Hinton 271) is indicative of an individual motivated to learn and not waste time.

TUTOR CORPS, 2012-PRESENT

Two years into the WCTC program, Micah received the following email from Bob Kupcho, a graduate student in our university’s Master’s in Social Work program: “I have started to look at the data we collected in our 2013 Needs Assessment, and I wanted to let you know that the Writing Center got a positive response from several of the Veterans that took it. One Veteran even reported that it was the most helpful resource they have used on campus, which was another question.” In an appearance on *Education Talk Radio Two*, Alexis Hart also gave a nod to Micah and Tutor Corps, citing it as an example of an innovative program designed to encourage student veterans to seek out writing assistance. In response, Provost Gene Bourgeois wrote, “A chance walk through the center and a chance meeting with Nancy leads to support for an innovative and successful initiative! And people ask why I like being a provost!”

Which is not to say that all has been perfect. In a 2014 letter to the editor in our university newspaper, Alex Porter, an individual with no known connection to our university, blasted our writing cen-

ter for “fracturing the staff” by identifying on our website those who had participated in “Veteran sensitivity training.” He asked, “Why do I need someone with my same background and experience to help me edit a paper? What is this about? It’s insane.” (Porter also criticized on the same grounds the LGBTQ Allies.) A student veteran responded, “Mr. Porter is obviously not a Veteran because even a Veteran who did not choose to be tutored by another Veteran would understand why some might.” The tutors were also troubled; they resented someone projecting his own bias onto them and were frankly bewildered that someone would deny student veterans a service that all students could use. When asked about the letter, a veteran tutor shook his head and replied, “you can’t receive ‘preferential treatment’ if the entire academic system is set up without you in mind at all.” However, Porter’s letter did alert us to the need to clarify in our promotional materials that WCTC is not proprietary: WCTC tutors can, and often do, tutor civilian students requesting appointments, and veterans can, and often do, seek help from civilian writing center tutors.

A major, positive shift in WCTC occurred in 2014 when it expanded to include the university’s Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC). When asked why, WCTC Coordinator Brooke Holbrook answered, “because veterans need help in other classes, too.” Eight student veterans are now providing tutoring at SLAC in math, biology, chemistry, history, political science, art, communications, philosophy, Spanish, and German. In Fall 2016, they tutored 85 student veterans with a total of 405 visits. And the WCTC program itself continues to thrive; in this same timeframe, the Writing Center tutored 39 student veterans with a total of 90 visits.

We believe strongly that our program has improved student veterans’ lives, helping them to feel valued, supported, and successful, and we hope that our experiences will help other Writing Centers seeking to do the same. Our veterans deserve no less.



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Interested in Joining the WLN Editorial Staff?

Because of an ever-increasing work load and an interest in adding someone with new ideas and approaches to engage our readers, the WLN editorial staff is in need of another staff member to join us. We envision this person as being an Associate Editor with some development work as well.

Interested in applying? If so, send us your CV, a short statement about any editorial experience you've had, and another short statement about what skills and ideas you would bring to WLN. Also, please let us know if you regularly use email and if you are available to work all year long, including summers.

Please send your CV and the requested additional information to us: Lee Ann Glowzenski (laglowzenski@gmail.com) and Muriel Harris (harrism@purdue.edu). The position will remain open until filled.

The Writing Center Director as Archivist: The Documentation Imperative

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When I started thinking about the role of writing center directors as archivist, I realized that 2017 marks 40 years since I started in writing center work. I was fortunate to do my graduate work in Texas with fellow students Lil Brannon and Jeanette Harris. In fact, Jeanette was the inaugural director of the writing center, established in 1977, where I was a tutor. Frankly, at the time, I wasn't sure I wanted to tutor, as doing so meant I couldn't teach first-year writing courses. But what a thrilling experience it was to work one-to-one with students of all levels—first year through dissertation writers. We were right at that exciting cusp of a new writing center on our campus and the wonder of being tutors. It was a foundational experience that created a career path for me. I departed Texas to direct a writing center of my own in Kansas.

Although those were early days for writing centers, the work of Lou Kelly, Muriel Harris, Mary Croft, Joyce Steward, and others provided guidance. True, we relied often on lore, as Stephen North explained in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*. Though lore has been belittled in some circles, it acknowledges the wisdom, tradition, and experience that writing center folks bring to their work. In this essay, I argue that we need to make our work more visible through artifacts that document experiences and that can be housed in archives for future researchers and scholars. I am speaking here of institutional history and archives. We need to collect the stories of writing centers—the lore—as well as qualitative and quantitative research.

Overall, we've done a good job of documenting writing center histories. The Writing Centers Research Project (WCRP), launched at the University of Louisville, has moved to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.¹ Its mission is to conduct and support research on writing center theory and practice; to do so, it maintains a research repository of historical, empirical, and

scholarly materials related to Writing Center Studies. The archives contain physical materials, oral interviews, and the Peer Tutor Alumni Project. The WCRP is a wealth of material to be mined, and it welcomes further contributions.

The International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), founded in 1983 as the National Writing Centers Association (NWCA), has two published histories, both accessible at the IWCA website. I wrote one at NWCA's tenth anniversary celebration for its first stand-alone conference (Kinkead "The National Writing Center as Mooring"); a second account celebrates the 30th anniversary (Kinkead, Simpson, Harris, Farrell, Brown, and Harris, "The International Writing Centers Association at 30: Community, Advocacy, and Professionalism").

The National Archives on Composition and Rhetoric (NACR), assembled by Robert J. Connors prior to his untimely death in 2000, focuses on composition textbooks. But Connors also directed the University of New Hampshire writing center, now named in his honor.² Connors' interest in and dedication to archival work is legendary and may provide inspiration for individuals to undertake the important work of saving documents and artifacts that others will find as fascinating as he did. His landmark essay, "The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourses" is but one result.

These archives and histories are omnibus, recounting the work of writing centers writ large. But what about local archives? Shouldn't we be housing local histories in our institutional special collections? Students in my University of Utah research methods course visit the school's Special Collections and Archives to learn about its resources. During one such visit, when the librarian leading our tour pulled out documents that might be of interest to Writing Studies students, I was fascinated to find a late 1970s Faculty Senate report that investigated the University Writing Program. At that time, the director, a linguist, employed a sentence-level approach to writing; once students could write a passing essay, they could exit the course, no matter the time of the academic term. Imagine a writing class in which enrollment dwindles until a handful of students are left. And, imagine how those students felt about writing after that experience. When the department was asked to re-envision its approach to writing, to seek a new director, and to contract for a Writing Program Administration consultant-evaluator visit, John Bean and Harvey Wiener drafted the evaluation visit report—referred to as "The Bean and Wiener Report." I'd heard of but had never seen this

report and was intrigued by its recommendations, including one arguing for hiring a faculty member to direct the writing center. That hire turned out to be me. This Faculty Senate document was significant on a personal basis, but it also provided a roadmap for writing theory and pedagogy evolution at the university.

Where do old writing center materials go? For part of my 30+-year career, I was a packrat, adding filing cabinet after filing cabinet to my office. Next to the official archives, I was the go-to person for institutional history in Writing Studies. When I left administration to return to my faculty position, I decided to let go of the weight. I loaded recycling bin after recycling bin on a daily basis for a month. In retrospect, I should have contacted our Special Collections librarians to gauge potential interest in these materials. Fortunately, I'd lodged in the archive at Louisville my work as NWCA's Executive Secretary for its first eight years. But I tossed materials that could have been helpful to archivists.

I've lived through several eras in Writing Studies history. As Langer and Applebee wrote in their overview of *Research in the Teaching of English* from 1984-2015, "every era is one of change" (333). The history of writing centers is also a social history. Every era is imbued by the values and practices of society at that moment/time. In the 1970s, the move to open higher education admissions and access meant students weren't always prepared for college work. That concern was captured on the December 8, 1975 *Newsweek* magazine cover, "Why Johnny Can't Write," which sounded an alarm about the writing skills of college students, even those enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley. Concern about writing skills is one reason writing centers grew in increasing numbers.

When I moved, in 1982, from the Kansas writing center I directed to a similar position at Utah State University, I found storage closets stuffed with tape players and instructional cassette tapes. The "auto-tutorial" was one way people were trying to meet the literacy demand. As writing center professionals, we were drawing then primarily on "skills center" approaches to writing instruction. The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) commissioned a study on Learning Skills Centers in the 1970s, concerned about just this kind of auto-tutorial method. Carol Laque and Phyllis Sherwood wrote one of the first volumes about writing centers, *A Laboratory Approach to Writing*. Jackie Goldsby, by way of the Bay Area Writing Project, offered a tutor's journal, and Ken Bruffee's *The Brooklyn Plan*, which focused on

one-to-one tutoring, anticipated the peer tutoring model by addressing the misperception that it might be viewed as “the blind leading the blind.” Another important collection was Muriel Harris’ *Tutoring Writing: A Sourcebook for Writing Labs*. That volume said, “we have arrived.”

Muriel Harris said in our IWCA 30th anniversary panel that the creation of writing centers “was like playing a violin while constructing it.” The field was instantly appealing, but still forming and expanding (Lerner). No courses in writing center practice and few, if any, books or journals existed, yet our centers were exciting and new intellectual homes. We were building them as we worked in them. Langer and Applebee in their 2016 *RTE* article noted as follows:

The late 1970s and early 1980s were a wonderful time in the field of English literacy research. The wealth of conceptual possibilities brought on by the cognitive and computer science revolutions, as well as the civil rights movement, and the knowledge and research methodologies gained from related work in linguistics, anthropology, psycholinguistics, psychology, and sociology, offered promising new ways to study issues of language, thought, teaching, and learning in situated contexts. Together with new research in our own field, they held much promise for substantive theoretical and pragmatic reform.” (333)

I certainly felt that excitement. In graduate school as a TA, I was still using modes of discourse as an organizing principle: the comparison and contrast essay; the process essay. But we were learning about process vs. product through researchers such as Janet Emig. Paradigm shifts were all around us. I was fortunate to be on the cusp of computer integration in my own writing program, which used UNIX, dumb terminals, and Writer’s Workbench, as well as partnered with a local high school that had computer/writing labs with PCs and WANDAH (Writer’s Aid and Author’s Helper, which evolved into HBJ Writer). Serendipitously, I found that e-mail might be used as a pedagogical tool (Kinlead, “Computer Conversations”). My individual history in writing centers parallels the larger social, cultural, and political changes. It’s but one reason why such discrete narratives and histories matter.

Sharing information among writing center administrators, staff, and tutors has always been important. The *Writing Lab Newsletter*—created after a vibrant CCCC meeting and initially cut, pasted, and scotch-taped on Muriel (“Mickey”) Harris’s kitchen table—offered

a lifeline. Notably, it was described as a kind of kaffeeklatsch, a coterie of friends coming together to share ideas (Connors, "Journals"). (See also Michael Pemberton's: *"The Writing Lab Newsletter as History"*; Kim Ballard and Rick Anderson's: *"The Writing Lab Newsletter: A History of Collaboration."*) A pivotal moment in the professionalization of writing centers occurred at Purdue University in 1983 when Harris hosted the Writing Centers Association (now known as East Central WCA) and Nancy McCracken introduced the idea of a national association. Some regional writing centers associations had already been meeting or started soon after (e.g., Rocky Mountain in 1983, South Central WCA in 1989), and regional peer tutoring meetings were forming, such as the one organized in 1994 as the Intermountain West.

Writing centers diversified, adding online writing labs (OWLs) for asynchronous tutoring, and establishing satellites in specific academic centers—pharmacy, business, engineering—and co-curricular sites, such as athletics. One-to-one tutoring in a "center" sometimes morphed into or added a decentered model of Writing Fellows, embedded in specific classes (Haring-Smith; Spigelman and Grobman).

The number of writing centers established in the last several decades is truly astonishing. Rarely is an institution without such service. The National Census on Writing reported from its 2014 survey of two- and four-year institutions that 97% and 99%, respectively, have writing centers. We find ourselves in a context of shifting identities. The rise of the writing major and minor has paralleled a shift to some stand-alone writing departments, divorced from traditional English departments. The National Census on Writing asked where writing majors are housed and reported that 79% of respondents said English, but 11% said a department of writing with 20% reporting other. Some writing centers are being folded into comprehensive learning centers. The administrative structures for writing are in flux.

Now is a particularly interesting time in our histories, and I urge writing center directors to contribute documents to their local archives or the Writing Center Research Project¹ that will benefit future researchers. Archival research is on the rise as noted in recent articles such as "Gifts of the Archives" (Hayden; see also, Connors, Greer, Grobman, L'Eplattenier, Gaillet). Reviewing methods of historical research can be helpful in determining what to document and what to save. Archival sources can be documents, records and reports, objects, sound and audiovisual

materials, or other materials. Some of these texts may be in print while others may be electronic or digital. The provenance of materials should be clearly noted. In other words, think about the historians two or more decades into the future. What will they need to make sense of our artifacts?

A simple starting point is to ensure that the local writing center history is visible to those who work and study there. Photographs, framed histories, and plaques provide visual evidence to a center's users. Augment the visual artifacts with origin stories of the center. A local history can be very helpful to present and future directors and administrators. One way to structure such a history is to draw on the Self-Study Guidelines the Council of Writing Program Administration prepared for its consultant-evaluator program. It offers guiding questions about mission, philosophy, goals, staffing, and assessment.

In looking to the past to construct, or re-construct, a writing center history, consider research projects that tutors might undertake as part of research courses or independent studies. Writing Studies research courses are springing up in degree programs, so directors could submit a list of possible topics for archival or current study focused on the writing center. Students can produce data analysis, for instance, perhaps longitudinal, that can prove highly beneficial to the center. One student in my research methods course collected data on what majors used our center between 2013-2015; that data is serving as a baseline because in fall 2016, our center spawned a science satellite and an engineering one. What documents are already available that might be mined? What oral histories might be produced? If all goes well, such research project reports can be disseminated orally and/or in print. Lauren Fitzgerald and Melissa lanetta offer excellent advice in *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors* on how to conduct historical research. To see a stellar history of an early writing center director, visit the University of Wisconsin's blog post by Brad Hughes, "Our Writing Center's Founder: Professor Joyce Steward."

I believe we are in a time of what I term "the documentation imperative." Of the many people present at the formation of the organization that became IWCA, some are no longer with us. Is their work and the work of their writing centers documented at local and national levels? This is the right moment to make an all-out effort to document our histories. I hope that you have already or will consider taking up this challenge.

NOTES

1. The Writing Center Research Project is currently housed at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and maintained by Allison Holland, <adholland@ualr.edu>.

2. This video shows the story of the NACR: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5O2DPy-tbc&feature=youtu.be>.



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An Approach to Serving Faculty in the Writing Center

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Many students, faculty, and administrators continue to think of writing and communication centers primarily as resources for undergraduates; however, many centers serve other populations on campus. In so doing, these centers are presented with a different set of administrative and instructional challenges than those faced by an undergraduate-focused center. While serving a broad range of constituencies is not a new part of writing and communication center work everywhere, budgets and other constraints do limit what many centers can offer. However, ours are services that are important to everyone in a university; that is, not only undergraduates need or want help with their writing and communication. Where they are not already doing so, centers are increasingly being asked to serve graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, faculty, and staff. This is not only seen in the evolving programming of writing centers but also in the increase in positions advertised for writing consultants housed in other academic units, such as individual

departments, graduate schools, and centers for teaching and learning. This broadening of responsibilities and the opportunity to serve the needs of such new communities is certainly a testament to the important role that writing consultants play on college campuses; however, designing services for non-student populations in particular is very different from designing services for students. Over the past two years, the Communication Center at the Georgia Institute of Technology has begun to expand its services, beginning with postdoctoral fellows and then faculty, focusing on the unique challenges presented to consultants when working with those clients. This article provides reflections on the early development of these services and offers a model for moving forward with such a program.

The Georgia Tech Communication Center is relatively new, having

been established in 2011. Serving both undergraduate and graduate students from its start, the Center offers support for a full range of multimodal and multiliteracy projects. To complement the opening of the Institute's Office of Postdoctoral Services in 2014, we began offering services and workshop programming for postdoctoral fellows across the Georgia Tech campus. The new position of "Postdoctoral Services Coordinator" was created, and it was filled by a Professional Tutor. Professional Tutors, who have PhDs and serve as faculty members in the Writing and Communication Program and tutor in the Communication Center, make up the core of our staff. We also employ undergraduate peer tutors, but they do not work with postdoctoral fellows or faculty—at the request of our funding sponsor. The program was then expanded in Spring 2016 allowing us to serve faculty as well. Throughout this expansion of our services we have learned a great deal, identifying four primary challenges for writing centers in setting up a faculty consultation program: identifying the needs of faculty, negotiating differences in expertise, defining the scope of our services, and ensuring that tutors have the training and resources they need to be effective consultants for a diverse range of faculty.

THE CHALLENGES

Challenge #1: Needs

Initially, we modeled our postdoctoral consultations and workshops on our existing programming for graduate students. However, discussions during consultations with postdocs revealed a different set of needs. Though perhaps it should not have been surprising to us, postdocs were just as eager for help with professional writing as they were for assistance with scholarly materials. The most common written documents we encountered in our work with postdocs, for example, were job application materials like teaching and research statements. Postdocs were also eager for help in learning to talk about their research. In response, we developed new workshops, including one on interviewing skills for both academic and industry positions, which was one of our best attended workshops. We also adapted our graduate student workshop on the basics of CVs and resumes to focus on CV organization and design; our postdoctoral fellows already had CVs but they struggled to present their experiences as effectively as possible and had scant access to other help on campus.

The demand for support in crafting job application materials revealed a couple of notable things that have influenced the way we are expanding our services to include faculty. Firstly, we learned

that the differences between graduate students, postdocs, and faculty groups are as stark as the differences between undergraduate and graduate students. Graduate students, postdocs, and faculty represent a continuum of expertise: graduate students are in the process of gaining disciplinary and writing expertise; postdocs, having completed dissertations and published articles, have expertise in both areas but are still training (oftentimes in fields different from their dissertation fields); and, finally, faculty have the experience and expertise but often need confidence and further practice in communication-related competencies. These distinctions are easy to collapse but in order to best serve these clients, consultants must resist that temptation. Only in carefully parsing the needs and expertise of these groups are we able to create spaces for faculty to seek support “where no one criticizes the writer, where competent, confidential assistance is available, where all writing is equal, and where the writer is as important as the writing” (Mendez-Newman 3).

Secondly, our work with postdocs has exposed the way that resources available to non-student groups on our campus are highly fragmented and undefined. Many of our postdocs were cobbling together resources provided by their mentors, home departments, the faculty development office, and career center; however, few postdocs had ever thought of the Communication Center as a resource for them until they saw our advertisements in the weekly emails sent out by the Office of Postdoctoral Services. Even fewer faculty members have thought of the Communication Center as a resource available to them, and we suspect that the experience of postdocs extends to regular faculty members as well. As has been the case throughout the institutional history of writing centers, tutoring is still perceived as a service for *students*. Yet, as our experience shows, postdocs and faculty are underserved communities when it comes to writing and communication support, and writing and communication centers are well suited to meet those needs.

Challenge #2: Expertise

Another challenge we have faced has been related to expertise as professionals (professional tutors) meet professionals (postdoctoral fellows and faculty) in consultations and workshops. As has been noted in the literature on graduate students in the writing center, graduate students are a “different” population because of their expertise (Babcock and Thonus 106-10). That can be true of postdoctoral fellows and faculty as well because they perhaps, by dint of a dissertation and publications, be professional writ-

ers though they may not think of themselves in that way. While the most apparent challenge is that the writing consultant typically does not share the client's disciplinary expertise, an equally important challenge is in helping faculty clients draw upon the writing expertise they already possess but might not recognize. As Carrie Shively Leverenz argues about graduate students, the focus in writing consultations should be on providing "support for the knower and the process of knowing through the cultivation of relationships" (59). This is also true in the case of faculty clients. With consultants "actively engaged in the production of experts poised to share new knowledge with the world" (Leverenz 60), consultants can play a key role in building a culture of writing on their campuses that has an impact far beyond it. Even though all faculty are engaged in writing in some form, that work is too often invisible to students (and even to other faculty); in serving faculty in our writing and communication centers, we can help to make that work visible.

In supporting a community of writing across campus, we are fulfilling the larger mission of the writing center. Indeed, as Courtney L. Werner asks, "How, though, can a writing center uplift a campus culture of writing if it only focuses on student writers?" (79). Our center has, from its founding, been committed to the instantiation of what Severino and Knight call a "ripple effect" of awareness emerging from a "Center philosophy and practice" that moves us toward "the perfect outcome": "a university that is a Writing Center" (223-5, emphasis added). Serving faculty members allows us to move forward toward a larger goal of creating a "campus culture of writing" because a culture of writing includes writers of all kinds and abilities.

Challenge #3: Services

One way in which working with faculty writers is much like working with student writers is the common misconception that the writing center is an editing service. This is not to diminish the usefulness of copy editing; copy editing is just not the most valuable expertise writing consultants have to offer, even to their non-student clients. If a faculty member only wants copy editing, we do provide them with a list of qualified editors whom they can hire. However, our goal is to help these clients identify as writers: to help them to "make the move from researchers or teachers who have to write . . . toward writer-researchers and writer-teachers" (Banks and Flinchbaugh 234). It is important to keep in mind that just as with students, sometimes faculty are simply not aware of who we are and what we do. Opening up a dialogue about our

own expertise and what kind of services we provide should thus be a priority in consultations with faculty, just as it is with students.

Defining our services and the scope of those services for non-student clients is vital. To do that, we have to understand our own institutional structure and landscape. As *Working with Faculty Writers* (2013) demonstrates, there are many paths through which to serve faculty writers on campus; the array of types of writing support (writing groups, residencies, retreats) and academic homes of those resources (writing centers, teaching centers) can complicate our efforts to provide support and to cultivate a community of writers. This means that to best serve faculty clients, we should be willing and able to work alongside other units providing similar support to faculty. In so doing, when other units are also willing to work with us, writing centers can serve as change agents at the institutional level by bringing more visibility and increased value to the process of writing where currently the focus can be on the product of writing (Geller 2). Additionally, faculty who themselves benefit from writing center consultations will be more likely to promote our work both to their students and to administrators. Having faculty advocates can be particularly critical when writing centers face budget cuts or other unfavorable restructuring measures.

Challenge #4: Consultant Preparation

The final challenge we faced in establishing a faculty consultation program was ensuring that our Professional Tutors get the training they need to be effective in this new role. Where student writers benefit from generalized writing instruction, faculty writers need assistance akin to that of a reviewer for a journal. To provide that specialized assistance, we set out to design a consultation model that would allow maximum flexibility and that could be tailored to fit the needs of the individual faculty client. Because of the discipline-specific expertise of faculty and the complexity of their research and writing, providing writing assistance and support to these clients demands additional time and preparation by the consultant. Ideally then, consultants should be professional tutors with experience in academic writing and publication, and where this is not feasible, student tutors must be highly experienced and prepared to work with faculty who might view them as unqualified.

Sponsored by a pilot grant from the Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Faculty Development, the Communication

Center at Georgia Tech has been able to provide a specialized and dedicated consultant for faculty clients. Our Postdoctoral Services Coordinator dedicates 13 hours each week to meeting with post-doc and faculty clients and preparing for those consultation sessions. Their preparation might include reading drafts, becoming familiar with the faculty client's area of research, or reading articles from the journals to which the faculty client hopes to submit. While a writing consultant does not need to become an expert in the faculty client's field, some familiarity with publications in their field, and their own publication history, is necessary. For that reason, we have devised a series of surveys that potential faculty clients complete in order to provide essential pre-session information to the consultant.

OUR MODEL FOR ESTABLISHING A PROGRAM FOR FACULTY WRITING SUPPORT

Our experience working with non-student clients suggests that the ideal consultation model for faculty should be an ongoing relationship either over the course of a semester or an academic year. Consequently, it is vital for the prospective faculty client to understand fully what kind of support we are able to provide and be committed to attending regular sessions. It is likewise vital that the consultant have an opportunity to get to know what the faculty client wants to accomplish through their work together and to have the tools to support the client. As such, we have designed a screening process to employ with this particular community. The screening process is not designed to "weed out" potential faculty clients, but rather to help ensure that the consultant is well prepared to assess the needs of these clients and to develop personalized plans to help them meet their goals.

The screening process we devised has two steps. The first step involves a brief survey that should take the prospective client no more than ten minutes to complete. The survey collects basic contact information; information about academic roles, units, and affiliations; and information about the client's motivation for seeking out a writing consultant. If the prospective faculty client's goals and needs match the services we provide, then a second survey is sent to the client and an initial consultation is scheduled. If the client's goals and needs are not well suited to the process-oriented consultation model that we offer, then we can still provide a useful service by referring the faculty member to other programs or resources.

The second survey is a bit more detailed and should take a faculty member ten to fifteen minutes to complete. It includes prompts

and questions such as the following:

- Tell us a bit about your field(s) and how you describe your professional/academic work in relation to them.
- What do you hope to accomplish through working with a writing/communications consultant?
- What challenges do you face in your writing?
How do you think a writing/communications consultant could help you overcome those?
- Do you have a publication or two that our consultant could read in order to better get to know your work and writing?
- What publication venues (journals, edited series, etc.) are you looking to submit to?
- What journal(s) should our consultant look at to get a better idea of the expectations and norms for publishing in your field?

These questions allow the consultant and faculty client to set goals and develop a plan for moving forward over the course of the semester or year. With consultant and client both experts in their respective fields, the surveys help to cultivate a collaborative relationship between them. While our consultation model allows for maximum flexibility for faculty to seek help when (and for how long) they need it, there are drawbacks to that model, which the surveys are meant to ameliorate. First, unlike the “workshop,” “retreat,” and “boot camp” models that are most commonly provided by faculty development offices, our model does not automatically provide a rigid structure to the sessions and does not dictate deadlines. Second, our model does not automatically provide a community of writers supporting one another. As a result, the consultant and client must work together to create an individualized approach to providing appropriate structure and support.

CONCLUSION

As institutions of higher education seek to provide more professional support to faculty, writing and communication centers have an opportunity to expand their services to include these non-student communities. In turn, those centers are not only able to provide much needed services but also to raise their profile on campus. Working with non-student populations underscores that writing centers are sites of support and collaboration rather than sites of remediation and retention. Faculty programs also provide opportunities for student writers to see their professors as writers who sometimes need to seek out expert help as well. So, although our model has its challenges, its strength is in the way that it applies many of the same principles to all of our client communi-

ties—a model that universally speaks to our similarities as writers rather than to our differences. No matter the form of support, by providing services to non-student communities, writing and communication centers have the opportunity to create communities of writers on campus that include the entire range of writers from beginning to expert. When faculty writers get the support and expert guidance they need, the entire university community benefits.



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Tutors' Column: "Will You Trust Me"

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On a Friday morning at Virginia Tech's Writing Center, I am sitting at a table near the front, anxiously waiting for my client. Although most tutors are probably anxious for their first tutoring session and plagued with feelings of self-doubt, I have even more anxiety than most. I imagine the worst—my client will take one look at me and demand a tutor who can help him more than I can. Because, like the client who has been assigned to me, I am Chinese.

I spent my entire life in China until two years ago when I came to the United States for college. I have always loved writing in English as a second language. In high school, I was the president of the English writing club. After visiting the Virginia Tech Writing Center a few times, I thought about becoming a writing tutor. However, as a foreign student who is pursuing an engineering degree, I was worried that I would not be good enough at writing. When I discovered how much I loved my First Year Writing courses and how well I did in them, I gained the confidence to apply to the writing center tutor training course. Even after I was accepted into the course I still felt unsure, so I met up with the instructor, and she encouraged me to stay in the course. She explained that we would work together to find suitable clients for me. One of the assignments of the class is to meet weekly with a writing partner who is a first-year international student and assist them with writing, in addition to holding open hours in the Writing Center. I was assigned to two Chinese writing partners and no "open hours," for my tutoring experience.

I had plenty of assumptions about my writing partners. I was aware that we all came from China. Besides the fact that Chinese people tend not to value opinions of their peers as much as elders', I was also worried that my partners would not be happy with having a Chinese writing tutor. Naturally, Chinese students may trust Americans for their linguistic intuition, instead of any other

person whose first language is not English. To an ESL student, any American person who has been speaking English for their entire life is a living dictionary. In other words, I was extremely uncertain if my writing partners would trust me.

In the beginning of the semester, my experiences with my two writing partners were very different. My first meeting was with a student named Zan. He did not bring any written pieces to work on, so we talked in English to get to know each other. He was very approachable. After meeting with him for a few times, I found out that he would rather engage in small talk than work on his writing. I didn't worry about it. I figured that he just didn't have any writing to do yet, and we enjoyed talking in English during our weekly meetings.

My other writing partner, Xiruan, could not have been more different. From the beginning, it was obvious that Xiruan seldom trusted me. During our meetings, especially when I brought up some possible suggestions to improve his writing, he would murmur phrases like, "Are you sure?" or bluntly tell me, "I don't think you are right." Furthermore, he even canceled a couple meetings in a row. This confirmed my suspicions that Xiruan did not think that I could really help him. But my most revealing session about this issue ended up being with Zan, not Xiruan.

Finally, a few weeks into the semester, Zan brought a paper, in which he argued that in the future laptops will not be replaced by tablets. As he was reading his paper to me, I realized that I could not understand how he was distinguishing between laptops and tablets in some sections. After he explained to me what he was trying to say, I realized that although I knew his points were not clear, I could not suggest any English words to help him define his perspective. My lack of knowledge in this field, but most of all my anxiety about being Chinese, was paralyzing me. I sat, mute.

My heart felt discouraged, but also somewhat delighted. I felt affirmed in my role as a tutor because I was able to spot the problems in his writing, but I was regretful that I could not offer suggestions to help him fix them. I wanted to simply skip the issue and pretend it was not there, but I could not. My job was to help Zan with his writing, instead of ignoring the imperfections because of my limited knowledge of English. Besides, Zan was waiting for me to give him an answer.

I took a deep breath and finally told Zan that I truly did not have any suggestions for him. He looked very surprised and confused, as if I should know everything. Although he seemed polite and

told me it was fine, I saw the slight disappointment in his eyes. I started to explain that although I was his tutor, I was not teaching him, but learning with him. I then suggested we look up information needed for his paper on the internet, so that we could try to fix the problem. He then looked very excited to work on the paper. We continued along during the session, trying to sort out what needed to be revised. It felt like a joint effort, and our sessions continued this way during the semester.

After this session, I finally gained the confidence to tell Xiruan the same thing I had told Zan-- that I was learning with him. Then, I shared my interest of discovering and learning with him regarding his writing. Xiruan's attitude started changing gradually. He became more and more engaged during our sessions, often asking about specific parts of his writing where he was unsure. Instead of constantly canceling meetings with me, he would ask to meet me more than once in a week. Every time he was not sure about one of my suggestions or concerns, we would look for a reliable answer on the internet together.

At the end of the semester, I was finally brave enough to ask my clients how they felt about working with me. Zan told me that he enjoyed working with both American and Chinese tutors, but because I am Chinese, I made him feel more comfortable. He said, "Even though we didn't talk in Chinese very much, I knew I could talk in Chinese ... Sometimes when you communicate with Americans, you say a lot, but they don't get it. They misunderstand and can't help you." When I talked to Xiruan, what he said was similar to Zan's comments: "I think you are great. I think you didn't realize that you can offer a lot to me. It was much easier to explain things to you than to native speakers. I admit that I did not think you have enough English knowledge at first, but you were so genuine and willing to learn."

What my clients said helped me see my role as a writing center tutor from a different perspective. Several times at the beginning of the semester, I was worried because I am not an American tutor. The truth is, when it comes to English, I will never be a "living dictionary." No matter how hard I try to sound like a native speaker, I will always carry an accent, just like Zan and Xiruan do. No matter how long I write and read in English, I will always have other things to learn. But if I focus on trying to be an "American tutor," the special traits I have will fade away. I would not be able to relate to my clients as closely and honestly.

The author Julia Cameron once quoted Sigmund Freud, "Out of

your vulnerabilities will come your strength” (57). Although it is understandable for foreign students not to trust a peer tutor from their country, my clients made me realize I had a perspective which allowed me to relate to them as an English language learner. This trust could only develop when I allowed myself to show my weakness. There are many ways for tutors to build trust with their clients. Most of all, tutors need to show interest, be open, carry a humble attitude, and always continue to feed themselves with knowledge. There is no need to feel less qualified when you are being honest. Whether you are an American tutor or international one, knowing the worth of oneself is essential, and being humble and truthful is the key to earning the client’s trust.



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Announcements

National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPTW)

Oct. 15-17, 2017

Hempstead, NY

Hofstra University

"Reaching Out: Revising Writing Center Spaces and Identities"

Keynote: Lauren Fitzgerald and Melissa Iannetta

Our invitation to focus on "reaching out" considers the various ways writing centers connect with stakeholders on our campuses, in cyberspace, and through research. For additional information, contact: <ncptw2017@hofstra.edu>; conference website: <www.hofstra.edu/ncptw2017>.

Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association

Oct. 13-14, 2017

Tacoma, WA

University of Washington, Tacoma, and Green River Community College

"Resist/Persist: Teaching and Tutoring College Writers for Justice, Safety, and Progress"

This is a joint conference for TYCA-PNW and the PNWCA. Information about proposals and the conference are on the website: <www.pnwca.org/2017-CFP>. For further information, contact the conference chair, Jake Frye: <jfrye@greenriver.edu>. The deadline for the CFP is July 1, 2017.

Southeastern Writing Centers Association

Feb. 22-24, 2018

Richmond, VA

Virginia Commonwealth University

"Writing Centers in Transition"

Keynote: Jackie Grutsch McKinney

CFP deadline is Oct. 13, 2017. For further information, contact Brian McTague: <bjmctague@vcu.edu>. The conference website, <www.iwca-swca.org>, will be updated with conference information soon.

An Invitation to Add Your Voice to *WLN* Conversations

We recognize that articles in *WLN* should be two-way conversations between authors and readers. And so, we want to provide space (when we can) in *WLN* issues to hear from you as readers responding to articles you've read in *WLN*. Because page space is always a problem with any journal trying to stay brief enough to actually allow you to read all articles, please keep your comments brief too. It's difficult to predict when we will have space to include your responses, but we'll do our best.

Please send your comments through the submission page on the *WLN* website: <wlnjournal.org>.

WLN Blog Posts to Watch for

Amy Hansen, our staff writer for the *WLN* blog, "Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders" recently invited writing center staff to send in some of their creative writing. In May and June, she will be posting some of the submissions on the blog: <www.wlnjournal.org/blog/>.

GET INVOLVED WITH *WLN*

Interested in serving as a reviewer? Contact Kim Ballard <kim.ballard@wmich.edu> and Lee Ann Glowzinski <laglowzinski@gmail.com>.

Interested in contributing news, announcements, or accounts of work in your writing center to the Blog (photos welcomed)? Contact Josh Ambrose <jambrose@mcdaniel.edu>.

Interested in guest editing a special issue on a topic of your choice? Contact Muriel Harris <harrism@purdue.edu>.

Interested in writing an article or Tutors' Column to submit to *WLN*? Check the guidelines on the *WLN* website: <wlnjournal.org/submit.php>.

Conference Calendar

May 24-26, 2017: Latin American Network of Writing Centers and Programs, in Santiago, Chile.

Contact: <discursoacademico@uc.cl>.

May 25-27, 2017: Canadian Writing Centres Association, in Toronto, Canada

Contact: Heather Fitzgerald: <hfitzgerald@ecuad.ca>; conference website: <cwcaaccr.com/2017-conference>.

June 9-11, 2017: Writing Centers Association of China, in Suzhou, China

Contact: Jessie Cannady: <Jessie.Cannady@xjtlu.edu.cn>; conference website: <www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/events/2017/07/writing-centers-association-of-china-symposium-2017>.

October 13-14, 2017: Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association, in Tacoma, WA

Contact: Jake Fryer: <jfrye@greenriver.edu>; conference website: <www.pnwca.org/2017-CFP>.

October 15-17, 2017: National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, in Hempstead, NY

Contact: <ncptw2017@hofstra.edu>; conference website: <www.hofstra.edu/ncptw2017>.

February 22-24, 2018: Southeastern Writing Centers Association, in Richmond, VA

Contact: Brian McTague: <bjmctague@vcu.edu>; conference website: <www.iwca-swca.org>.



WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship

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