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## Editor's Note

Ted Roggenbuck

Commonwealth University-Bloomsburg

As we wrap up the fall semester and prepare to head into 2024, we offer our second issue of volume 48 of *WLN*, now one of the suite of *WAC Clearinghouse* journals. We are grateful for the work of the writers and reviewers who helped us arrive at this issue.

In the first article, Jacob Herrmann frames creating a diversity statement as a form of coming out. He draws on the field of psychology to apply a four-phase model of coming out to the process of creating a diversity statement for a writing center in part because “choosing to self-identify as a writing center that positions diversity, equity, and inclusion as central values also creates a sense of vulnerability, especially for those centers whose ideologies do not conform to the surrounding institutional or community contexts.” This framework, Hermann suggests, allows writing centers to explore their own identity formation when they make their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion explicit and central to their mission and identity.



Amanda May, drawing from her study of writing centers' social media use at four universities, includes posting diversity initiatives as one of the uses of social media in her article, “Social Media and the Writing Center: Five Considerations.” For her project she interviewed both center directors and social media content creators to develop and offer five considerations: “purpose, time and labor, sustainability and expertise, broadcast approaches, and multimodal content.” She argues that writing center professionals can “benefit from thinking strategically” about each category independently as well as how they intersect.

In the issue's third article, Anastasiia Kryzhanivska, Fernanda Capraro, and Kimberly Spallinger describe their pilot and then full implementation of using writing center tutors as peer group facilitators for ESOL writing classes. Their pilot helped them recognize that “writing consultants must first understand that their role as a facilitator in class is different from the tutoring session and that they are not expected to provide feedback on students' writing.” Additionally, their pilot shows the benefits of using tutors who are trained to work with multilingual writers as well as having graduate tutors work with other graduate tutors.

In the Tutors' Column, Sean Tyler describes feeling comfortable working with writers from multiple disciplines because they typically bring familiar genres with recognizable conventions and goals. But for her, working with creative writers on their projects was more anxiety provoking. Her response was both to draw on her experience as a fine arts student and a teaching assistant for drawing courses and to delve into some of the literature related to creative writing pedagogy and tutoring. Drawing on these sources, Tyler explores how the workshop model can reduce anxiety for tutor and writer.

As our team adjusts to our new editorial surroundings in the *WAC Clearinghouse*, and as things become more familiar, we are also grateful to our new hosts and find ourselves admiring their work in building such a fine, open-access platform.

## From the Blog Editors of *Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders*

Hello, readers!

Thank you for supporting *WLN's* blog *Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders*. With your support in fall 2023, the blog facilitated discussions with over ten blog contributors ranging from directors to scholars and researchers of writing centers (WC) coming from as far as Uganda and Turkey! The discussions led to community-building and resources for new WC administrators and tutors. We cannot connect more writing centers around the globe without your faithful support. Please visit [wlnconnect.org](http://wlnconnect.org) to comment on contributors' blog posts, or please email us at [wlnblog.editors@gmail.com](mailto:wlnblog.editors@gmail.com) to propose your own blog article.

Anna Habib, Editor

Esther Namubiru, Associate Editor

Weijia Li, Production Editor

## Writing Centers ‘Coming Out’: Diversity Statements as Queer Performance

Jacob Herrmann  
Rice University

George Floyd’s murder by a white Minneapolis police officer on May 25, 2020, fueled a national outcry and sparked Black Lives Matter protests across the nation. In response, many composition programs and writing centers “came out” to address racial disparity. Located in Floyd’s hometown of Houston, Rice University grappled with both the national climate and its own problematic racial history as a whites-only institution until 1963.<sup>1</sup> The Program in Writing and Communication (PWC) at Rice released a statement that “condemns racism in all its overt and covert forms, including both the current and historical acts of racism, discrimination, and violence perpetuated in this country against the Black community and other peoples of color.”<sup>2</sup> As part of the PWC, the Center for Academic and Professional Communication (CAPC) now contended with how the center fit into the larger discussion of diversity at the university. In what ways are we supporting diverse initiatives? How are we representative of the university community at large?



JACOB HERRMANN

As a queer writing center administrator, I consciously facilitate conversations between consultants and staff on various social justice issues; however, it became apparent in such discussions that we needed a concrete diversity statement for our center. Diversity and inclusion initiatives were implicit rather than explicit. In general, many writing centers lack a visible diversity statement or bury it within a single line of a mission statement. As a discipline, we have become better at sharing personal identity-driven narratives, but backing them up with pedagogy-informed changes is more difficult. At my own center, we decided to craft a diversity statement to affirm our center’s commitment to providing an inclusive, welcoming space for all students. In the process of crafting such a statement, we discovered that diversity statements shaped the cultural identity of our center, informing our ideology, training, and hiring practices.

While “coming out” typically refers to the process of acknowledging and/or publicly disclosing one’s sexual or gender identity, I use this term to emphasize the anxiety of public disclosure that surrounds self-identification more generally. Psychologists Susan McCarn and Ruth Fassinger identify four major phases of the “coming out” process: (1) Awareness, (2) Exploration, (3) Deepening/Commitment, and (4) Internalization/Synthesis.<sup>3</sup> LGBTQ+ individuals begin to recognize how they differ from heterosexual norms (awareness). They explore same-sex feelings and seek out information about queer communities (exploration). Greater self-awareness and identification with

LGBTQ+ groups develop (deepening/commitment). Finally, the person integrates their LGBTQ+ identity with other identity factors (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, etc.) into a holistic sense of self (internalization/synthesis).

Diversity statements constitute a “coming out” because they require (and cause) vulnerability. For LGBTQ+ people, “coming out” is an emotional process, often coupled with anxiety, depression, and fear of rejection. Self-identifying opens oneself up to critique and potential harm. Similarly, choosing to self-identify as a writing center that positions diversity, equity, and inclusion as central values also creates a sense of vulnerability, especially for those centers whose ideologies do not conform to the surrounding institutional or community contexts. Faculty and administrative reactions should be considered during the diversity statement development process. Coordinating with university stakeholders before choosing to publicly share a diversity statement to a wide audience, such as on a university-sponsored website, can help to establish wider institutional support and mitigate potential harm.

Explicitly employing a diversity statement can also be seen as “coming out” in that it serves as a form of performative identity. Jonathan Alexander and Michelle Gibson write that queer pedagogy asks us “to acknowledge that identity is a performance and that, as such, it can change from day to day, hour to hour, or moment to moment” (7). These everyday performances, largely established through language and non-verbal communication, construct our sense of self in relation to the world around us. The identity of our centers is also fluid, adapting to institutional changes, population demographics, and even new forms of communication. I view forming diversity statements as an act of “coming out” in that they require an acknowledgement of this fluidity and a recognition of the role that individual identities play in communicative practices. As a form of authoritative speech, diversity statement discourse has the power to put into action those initiatives and goals that it names. Judith Butler states that performative acts include “statements that not only perform an action, but confer a binding power on the action performed” (17). Reclaiming “performance” in the sense that Butler uses it draws attention to the ability of discourse to enact change and its power to reshape the environment around us.

I offer McCarn and Fassinger’s “coming out” model, along with practical examples from my own center, as a framework for (re)imagining the diversity statement composition process as a form of queer, performative discourse. This framework provides unique insights into the identity formation that happens when writing centers choose to make diversity, equity, and inclusion explicit governing ideals central to their missions and identity. Viewing the diversity statement as an act of “coming out” can empower writing centers not only to explicitly commit to their stated values but also to actively shape those values into performative action.

## **PHASE 1: AWARENESS**

In the first phase of the “coming out” process, an awareness of “difference” from heterosexual norms begins to develop, and “nonconscious ideologies become conscious” (McCarn and Fassinger 522). This phase may also induce feelings of

“confusion and bewilderment” (524). During this phase, a greater consciousness of people with other sexual orientations also develops, and previously held assumptions are called into question. Within a writing center context, diversity statement development begins with an increased awareness of peoples who inhabit the center’s spaces—not just LGBTQ+ individuals but also those who differ in terms of race, disability, and other identity markers. Acknowledging such diversity can lead to recognizing the need for such a statement. There may also be a sense of fear or anxiety about how to approach issues of diversity or how to connect with diverse students on a meaningful level.

Often, writing centers are politicized queer spaces—spaces in-between the cracks of the university system, inhabiting the fringes both physically and ideologically. Invoking this sense of queerness, Harry Denny calls writing centers “liminal zones, transitory arenas always both privileged and illegitimate” (97), while Andrew Rihn and Jay Sloan discuss them as operating in “contested, interstitial territory between macro-level social structures and micro-level interpersonal communication” (8). In the center, identities collide, blend, and occasionally conflict with one another. During consultations, students draw from various facets of their identity (gender, sexuality, race, class, religion, etc.) each time they *perform* the work of a consultant.

Writing centers are defined by people, namely students, consultants, and administrators, who occupy their spaces. In composing diversity statements, we are asked to write, rewrite, and reimagine our center’s missions, goals, and initiatives. Given the incredibly difficult nature of defining and quantifying the important work of our centers, the act of self-identification is critical. As Stacy Waite asserts, in considering “all structures or guidelines as normative, we might miss the queer possibilities of structure itself” (87). The benefit of self-identifying within a familiar institutional genre, like diversity statements, is that it allows for opportunities to queer the system from within and communicate more effectively with students, faculty, higher administration officials, and the wider community.

## PHASE 2: EXPLORATION

The second phase involves actively examining the questions concerning identity proposed in the first phase. For a queer individual, this may mean “exploration of sexual feelings” and positioning oneself “in relation to a reference group along two dimensions: attitudes and membership” (McCarn and Fassinger 522, 524). Exploration, in other words, involves actively interrogating one’s own positionality. For writing centers, this means considering commitments, values, and attitudes. This means shifting your focus from how you view your own center (awareness) to how you want others to view it (exploration).

To understand how your writing center is positioned in relation to diverse peoples, you need input from queer voices. By referring to “queer voices,” I don’t mean only LGBTQ+ people, but all minorities that inhabit the academic margins. *Diversity initiatives require diverse perspectives*. Input from disenfranchised individuals, such as LGBTQ+ and BIPOC students, can provide important feedback on the climate of the center and make it a

more democratic, equitable process. Internal stakeholders, such as writing center directors and administrators, tutors, and other student staff, should also be included in the conversation. External stakeholders outside the center's immediate circle, such as WPAs, provosts, or other allied university members, may also have additional input or resources to help progress diversity initiatives.

To explore our own commitments and values at the CAPC, I facilitated an all-staff activity in which more than 25 consultants participated in the early stages of the diversity statement drafting process. In groups of four, we asked them to critically reflect on our current program climate (where we are now), the ethical responsibilities of the center (what we *should* be doing), and suggestions for improvement (where do we go from here). Using Google Docs, each group recorded notes on the key takeaways from their discussion. We used three guiding questions:

1. Do you consider the center a diverse, safe space? Does the center feel representative of the wider community? Why or why not?
2. What are the center's responsibilities regarding diversity and inclusion? Consider all facets of the center at both the consulting and the administrative level.
3. Is there anything else that the center should consider implementing to make it a more inclusive space?

Several overlapping themes emerged from these small group discussions. While most groups viewed the center as a racially and culturally diverse space relative to the university, several groups noted the need for more STEM-based majors among consultants to better represent the Rice student body. Many groups acknowledged academic writing as a potentially "exclusionary by its nature" and the "danger of gatekeeping particular writing habits," especially regarding English Language Learners. In relation to this, consultants also expressed the need for "training on narrative voice, emphasizing that not all writing should look the same—to hear and empower more voices in writing." Finally, consultants agreed that we needed a workshop on working with diverse students incorporated into our two-day consultant orientation.

### **PHASE 3: DEEPENING/COMMITMENT**

The third phase leads to deeper understanding about oneself and the "crystallization of some choices about sexuality" (McCarn and Fassinger 522). As a person deepens their commitment to the reference group, they are likely to experience "ideological and emotional transformation" (525). "Coming out" allows a sense of freedom in which we can compose, rework, and (re)assemble a version of ourselves into something new. In a way, this is like synthesizing unique voices in a diversity statement. In the act of writing a diversity statement, our ideological vision of our centers begins to take shape, drawing on others' ideas of what centers are and can be. We mold an image of ourselves in relation to others—a social contract between the center and the students we serve.

In this third phase of the diversity statement drafting process, we built on the group discussions from phase two by having each student group collaboratively draft a concise (2-4 sentence) diversity statement. We then compiled all the statements into one



document, and then bolded and highlighted key words and phrases. Consultant statements emphasized diversity in racial and cultural background, as well as respecting diverse voices in all forms of communication. Every statement also focused on issues of hiring practices and ongoing professional development. Incorporating key concerns and language from consultants, along with input from full-time staff, we composed a cohesive diversity statement:

The CAPC is committed to providing an equitable learning environment and responding to the diverse communication needs of all Rice community members. The CAPC also values all backgrounds and voices in academic and professional communication; we respect all writers' linguistic backgrounds/preferences, as well as differences in culture, race, ethnicity, economic status, disability, religion, gender, sexuality, and academic discipline. To this end, our staff receive ongoing diversity and social justice training, and we also strive toward building a staff that is representative of the larger Rice population that we serve.

There is no "one-size-fits all" when it comes to diversity statements, but they do share a common set of rhetorical moves. The statement begins with a strong, clear statement committing to equity and diversity. Next, the statement lays out specific values; in this case, emphasizing backgrounds and voice in academic and professional communication, linguistic differences, and valuing all aspects of individual identity. Finally, the end of the statement highlights specific goals and initiatives: to offer ongoing diversity and social justice training and to engage in equitable hiring practices to create a diverse student staff. Of course, diversity statements will vary based on a center's individual context. They may include commitments/values, goals, initiatives, campus resources, internal support programs, or even relevant data on population demographics. Overall, a diversity statement should include a strong commitment to equity and diversity, highlight specific values and principles, and identify initiatives to reach your diversity goals.

Effective diversity statements are accessible to a wider audience. This means maintaining a professional, academic tone while also embracing queer voices and language that supports actionable change. Most diversity statements are relatively short (75-100 words) and can be easily read by students, faculty, and administrators. These statements should also be visible and publicly available. They can be displayed on a writing center website, the subheading of an annual report, departmental newsletters, job postings/descriptions, social media feeds and other marketing, or they can be physically posted in the center. In my own center, our diversity statement has been posted on our website, social media, and on a digital display in our physical space. Increasing visibility signals to students that their identities are valued and respected in these spaces.

#### **PHASE 4: INTERNALIZATION/SYNTHESIS**

The final phase, according to McCarn and Fassinger, involves self-acceptance and identification as a member of a minority group. Synthesis may be identified with a greater sense of security and feelings of fulfillment, as well as becoming "socially aware" of one's own oppression (525). In the context of composing a diversity statement, we

might view this internalization as a move from ideology to action. Queer performance doesn't stop with self-identification and visibility. All social justice work must be active, not passive. Frankie Condon calls for "Moving beyond an ethics of good intentions to an ethics of responsibility" (31). When properly implemented, diversity statements can serve as the bridge between articulating and acting on those writing center values. In her 2017 IWCA Keynote, Neisha-Anne Green gives the charge to "Stop being an ally; instead be an accomplice" (29). A difference exists between "safety-pin rhetoric," as Green so aptly calls it, and discourse that influences meaningful change (29). Performing the diversity statement requires re-examining who is welcome in our spaces and how we include minority voices in the decision-making processes of our centers.

At my own center, we are building on the foundation that we constructed with our diversity statement by developing diversity training in orientation for our consultants, creating new professional development training on identity-driven topics, and working on providing more transparency on diversity initiatives. At the larger writing program level, we are implementing a DEI pedagogy committee to enhance faculty training on equitable writing and communication practices and starting a list of DEI-oriented communication pedagogy resources that we can share across the university. The process is continually ongoing as institutional and cultural contexts change and evolve, but the need for implementing meaningful change is constant.

Using queer theory as a framework for conceptualizing how we can view diversity in our centers and for crafting diversity statements is only the first step. As bell hooks states, "To create a culturally diverse academy we must commit ourselves fully" (33). Committing ourselves fully means continually reassessing, reimagining, and reconstructing our center's values. Viewing diversity statements through the framework of "coming out" allows us to reflect on our values, embrace the liminal identities of our students and centers, and perform actionable change. Diversity statements are living documents. These statements should be periodically revisited and revised to incorporate feedback from assessments (both internal and external) and climate surveys. More than anything, these statements need to reflect actionable change for students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and for all other "queer" bodies left on the academic margins.

#### NOTES

1. In recognition of this problematic history, students and faculty formed The Task Force on Slavery, Segregation, and Racial Injustice in June 2019.
2. The full statement can be viewed on the Program in Writing and Communication (PWC) website: [pwc.rice.edu](http://pwc.rice.edu).
3. Several theoretical models for "coming out" exist. While the phases are similar between models, McCarn and Fassinger (1996) differentiate between personal development and group membership, which may or may not develop simultaneously.



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## Social Media and the Writing Center: Five Considerations

Amanda M. May

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Sporadic discussions of writing center social media use began with Rebecca Jackson and Jackie Grutsch McKinney's 2009 survey of writing center labor beyond tutoring sessions. Their findings, published in 2012, showed that 52 of the 141 writing centers they studied were using digital networking (8). Grutsch McKinney extended the conversation in her 2010 *WLN* column "Geek in the Center: Twitter" and her 2011 book chapter "Making Friends with Web 2.0: The Writing Center and Social Media Sites," which focuses on Facebook. More recently, Julia Bleakney, Michelle Hagar, and Maria Judnick explored blogs, another platform of social media, in their *Kairos* article "The Writing Center Blogs Project." Additionally, several blog posts by writing center practitioners have discussed writing center social media usage (Fandel; Jacobs; Marciniak; May; Shapiro).



AMANDA MAY

However, most of the existing research and discussions, published between 2010 and 2013, are dated and tend to focus on a single platform. In their 2021 article, Bleakney et al., for example, analyze 43 writing center blogs to identify exemplary features and create tips for establishing one. In contrast, conversation in informal venues—particularly writing center blog posts discussing social media—sometimes consider multiple platforms (Fandel; Jacobs; May) rather than single ones (Shapiro; Marciniak). These posts add valuable knowledge from those directly involved with producing social media content for writing centers.

To bring practitioner knowledge into formal scholarship, I use interview data collected as part of a larger IRB-approved study to explore five considerations for writing center social media usage: purpose, time and labor, sustainability and expertise, broadcast approaches, and multimodal content. These considerations provide a way forward for writing centers to get—or stay—in these online spaces. As well, they reflect the robustness of social media's contemporary landscape by using more recent data and considering non-usage alongside usage of a single platform (Facebook) and multiple platforms (Facebook and Instagram; Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter<sup>1</sup>). Herein, I limit my consideration to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter because they were the three most common platforms used by participants in the larger project.<sup>2</sup>

All five interviews, conducted between October 2019 and January 2020, included administrators. The three interviews at writing centers using social media also included a social media content creator employed by the center.



**TABLE 1: INTERVIEW SITES**

<i>Site (Location and Type)</i>	<i>Public/Private Status and Population</i>	<i>Social Media Accounts</i>	<i>Interviewees</i>
<b>West Catholic University Writing Center</b>	Private, religiously affiliated, under 4,000 undergraduate students.	None	Brenna (director)
<b>Midwest Community College Writing Center</b>	Public, over 22,000 students, offers primarily 2-year degrees.	None	Gladys (director)
<b>Midwest University Writing Center</b>	Public, around 15,000 students, multiple writing center locations.	Facebook	Liam (director) and Glenn (content creator)
<b>Southeast University Writing Center</b>	Public, 30,000 total students, 7,000 graduate students.	Facebook and Instagram	Erin (assistant director) and Shana (content creator)
<b>Northeast Comprehensive University</b>	Public, Hispanic-Serving Institution, 8,000 total students, 2,000 graduate students.	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	David (director) and Laurie (content creator)

My selection of sites aimed to represent writing centers serving diverse institutional contexts in terms of location and type, public/private status, and population. These writing centers also used different numbers and combinations of platforms. Despite these differences, the considerations I mention in each of the following sections were common themes.

## PURPOSE

The three directors at writing centers using social media had varying but clear and evolving purposes, three of which were common. Two of the three writing centers used social media to share operational information, a common theme in the 25 writing center tweets Grutsch McKinney analyzed in 2010 (“Geek in the Center” 7). Two writing centers also cited community-building as a purpose, whether they used social media to participate in broader campus conversations, create community between consultants, or promote other campus services using mentions. Additionally, two centers used social media to create a clearer image of their writing center; Midwest University Writing Center used Facebook to shape expectations and create a writing center ethos, whereas Southeast University Writing Center used their Instagram and Facebook to build culture. These purposes were not static, either. Southeast University Writing Center formerly posted writing tips on Wednesdays but implemented an anti-racist pedagogy series of posts responding to campus initiatives. Midwest University Writing Center also had a future purpose inspired by Miami University of Ohio’s Howe Center: posting WAC content.

Purpose also mattered to the two writing centers who discontinued social media usage, either because it did not fulfill their purposes or these centers could fulfill purposes through other means. After four to seven years, West Catholic University Writing Center discontinued social media because, as the director Brenna notes, “we just weren’t getting that much engagement,” likely referring to the likes, shares, and comments on social media posts themselves. Likewise, Midwest Community College Writing Center

had abundant alternatives for promotion and outreach, including 1) an annual publication of tutors' written work; 2) a visit of each English class to the physical writing center space, and 3) a series of PowerPoint slides about writing displayed within the center.

### **TIME AND LABOR**

Even with a clear purpose, writing centers face obstacles for maintaining their social media presence. In their blog posts, Mike Shapiro and Mark Jacobs both mention that social media is an investment of time, and four of the five interviewees mentioned time and labor as constraints. Southeast University Writing Center and Northeast Comprehensive University Writing Center both cross-posted information on their multiple accounts using TweetDeck, also mentioned by Shapiro, which could help centers save time. Both centers in this study that discontinued social media cited issues of time and labor as reasons why, either due to small staff size or an abundance of appointments and plentiful forms of other work.

### **SUSTAINABILITY AND EXPERTISE**

Another issue with social media Grutsch McKinney raises in "Geek in the Center," and one that connects to time and labor, is sustainability. Her analysis of 25 writing center accounts revealed that just under half hadn't posted in four months (9), and in Bleakney et al.'s study of writing center blogs, about one-fifth were inactive. Alongside the aforementioned issues of labor and time, and considering the discontinuation of social media present in this study, this abundance of inactivity underscores issues of sustainability in writing center social media use.

The five writing centers in this study additionally highlighted a connection between sustainability and another factor: expertise. The three writing centers using social media were staffed by individuals who had an interest in—or practitioner's knowledge of—social media. Erin, the administrator at Southeast University Writing Center, noted she often checked a business's online presence before visiting, a practice she believed some writers may apply to the writing center. Similarly, the three writing centers using social media developed and implemented strategies to continue their center's social media presence after content creators leave the center. Often, writing center administrators and social media content creators within the center developed these strategies collaboratively, and three seem particularly useful to writing centers starting or maintaining social media accounts. First, Southeast University Writing Center planned handoffs of social media access to tutors interested in creating and posting content on behalf of the writing center. Second, Midwest University Writing Center established a team of graduate students to create social media content under the director's guidance, a strategy Shapiro mentions in his blog post. Third and finally, Southeast University Writing Center developed a thrice-weekly posting schedule that regularly featured tutors working in the space, connected to campus initiatives addressing racism, and provided motivating quotes.

The two writing centers that discontinued social media, on the other hand, did so in part because of sustainability issues related to time, labor, and expertise. West Catholic University Writing Center's tutor with video editing experience graduated, and no one else in the center possessed the expertise necessary to create video content. Similarly,



at Midwest Community College Writing Center, Gladys's own lack of social media expertise, both within and outside of her professional life, meant she was unsure how social media could benefit her writing center.

### **BROADCAST APPROACHES**

One of Grutsch McKinney's major concerns about social media from "Geek in the Center" is the practice of acting as information providers, which seems antithetical to the conversational approaches often championed in writing center work in its one-way broadcast approach. Dismayed by the prevalence of writing centers she perceived as information providers and troubled by her own writing center's tendency to act as such on Twitter, she calls the practice "un-writing center-like" (9) and closes with a question of how her own center could be more engaging in such spaces (9). While this concern is not unfounded—after all, collaboration and conversation are the cornerstones of writing center work—the interviewees from writing centers using social media in this study seemed less concerned. In many cases, the information they shared connected to their purposes. Both Northeast Comprehensive University Writing Center and Midwest University Writing Center provided operational information and promoted writing center services, a practice very much in line with the tweets Grutsch McKinney analyzed over a decade ago.

However, for these centers, providing information went beyond operational information. In addition to writing center services, Northeast Comprehensive University Writing Center also posted about other departments' services, which connected to their purpose of building community. They used Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to circulate changes in campus operations arising from inclement weather and events offered by other departments. To signal their community-building purpose, they used institutional, campus, and community hashtags.

Thus, while writing centers use social media to share information, the three considered in this study did so purposefully. While at first glance the practice of providing information may seem antithetical to writing center philosophies, the lack of concern among interviewees suggests that, for these centers, the approach fits the context of social media and provides ways to engage with their campuses at large. The digital context of social media differs from an onsite or online writing center session, so broadcast can be an effective approach.

### **MULTIMODAL CONTENT**

Notably, social media posts can include more than text. Several practitioner blog posts highlight or discuss visual content; Jennifer Fandel emphasizes the importance of visual content in her 2018 blog post, "Conversation Starter: Social Media and the Writing Center," and examples in Marciniak's, Shapiro's, and my blog posts all highlight how visual content can be used by writing centers. Marciniak focuses on memes, Shapiro's examples showcase photos, and I describe the challenges of creating images for my former center's accounts during the pandemic.

All three writing centers using social media included images in their content, albeit in different ways. Midwest University Writing Center used photographs of a whiteboard outside of the center and memes, combining the images Marciniak and Shapiro

described in their blog posts, as one way to portray the conversational, informal atmosphere their center offered. Southeast University Writing Center also mentioned photographs, but of campus buildings related to the issue of racism on campus. Southeast University Writing Center and Northeast Comprehensive University Writing Center also mentioned Canva, an online drag and drop graphic design program. Specifically, Southeast University Writing Center utilized still images because they were faster to produce and consume than video content, connecting back to the issue of time.

## CONCLUSION

The five social media considerations emerging from these interviews—purpose, labor and time, sustainability and expertise, broadcast approaches, and multimodal content—provide writing centers with some strategies to develop and maintain a social media presence. Writing centers can benefit from thinking strategically about these five considerations whether they are already online and looking to maintain or expand, are new to social media and ready to start, or have discontinued use and are considering trying again.

Although I discuss each consideration above separately, these five interviews also suggest clear connections between them. Some decisions to share information—and what mode to share it in—were driven by purpose as much as they were by attention to time. Some strategies that considered writing centers' limited time and labor, including social media teams composed of multiple tutors, weekly posting schedules, and online tools like TweetDeck and Canva, helped make social media presence more manageable for writing centers with limited resources. Static images, as Southeast University Writing Center's content creator pointed out, are fast to create and consume and are thus more sustainable.

While these interviews highlight concepts for writing centers to think about, they also have two limitations. The first is that despite my best efforts, I was unable to recruit any participants from liberal arts schools for interviews and thus opted to include a second research institution using different platforms and representing a different region.

Second, this data was collected in late 2019 and early 2020, before the COVID pandemic changed so many aspects of writing center work. Though I raise this question in my blog post for *Another Word*, it bears asking again: what new issues did the pandemic create for writing center social media presence? Additionally, how did it undermine sustainability and change the way writing centers approach platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter? These questions, while likely not the only ones worth considering, provide additional ways forward as social media, the writers and institutions we support, and the world itself continue to change.

## NOTES

1. Editors' Note: In the period between the article's acceptance and its publication, the Twitter platform was renamed to X.
2. See my "On Networking the Writing Center: Social Media Usage and Non-Usage," *Writing Center Journal*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2022.

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## Tutors on Location: Tutor-mediated Peer Reviews in ESOL Classes

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First-year composition (FYC) faculty often incorporate "tutors on location" (term used by Spigelman and Grobman) in their classes either as class-embedded tutors or writing fellows who, similar to teaching assistants, support students with course tasks and assignments both in class and during potential office hours. Such collaboration between instructors and writing center tutors has been shown to increase students' confidence and improve their writing skills (Cronon; Hall and Hughes; Haring-Smith; Regaignon and Bromley; Severino and Trachsel). Research also suggests that writing fellow intervention is especially beneficial for multilingual and L2 writers (Gallagher et al.). Thus, extended use of this practice would benefit many writing classes; however, it is currently not possible in all university settings.

As an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Specialist at our university writing center (Anastasiia Kryzhanivska) and faculty in the ESOL Program (Fernanda Capraro and Kimberly Spallinger), we describe an alternative option for on-location tutoring: a collaboration between the ESOL Program and writing consultants from the University Writing Center to provide tutor-facilitated peer review sessions for credit-bearing ESOL writing classes. This article discusses implications for tutor-mediated peer reviews and tutor training and shares our experiences facilitating peer reviews in graduate and undergraduate classes.

### OVERVIEW AND BENEFITS OF TUTOR-MEDIATED PEER REVIEW

A tutor-mediated peer review is an in-class peer review session that students conduct in small groups (3-4 students) under the supervision of writing center consultants. During these tutor-mediated peer review sessions, the tutors' function is not to be tutors but rather to be facilitators—sparking small group conversations about a student's writing, encouraging constructive feedback by asking questions, and modeling appropriate comments and questions.

Since peer facilitation works especially well for students new to peer review sessions (Min; Lam; Schunk and Zimmerman; Zimmerman and Kitsantas), it is ideal for



international students who may first encounter peer reviews in their U.S. classrooms. Writing consultants can help them become accustomed to this common university practice, and peer facilitation also provides an additional step in forming effective writing habits. Research shows that students who give feedback to their peers benefit more than those who only receive feedback from peers and instructors, and multilingual writers and feedback-givers also have a higher rate of improving their writing and English overall (Cho, Schunn, and Charney; Cho and Cho; Lundstrom and Baker; Nelson and Schunn; Nilson). Language improvement occurs because "learning to review others' writing improves one's own writing [because] students learn from these activities to critically self-evaluate their own writing" (Lundstrom and Baker 38). Moreover, "a positive experience with a tutor/facilitator in the classroom often encourages students to make an appointment with that tutor for a one-to-one conference, initiating a relationship with the writing center that can last far beyond the term" (Decker 30). Therefore, in addition to boosting students' confidence and improving their writing skills, tutors on location also help create a positive image of the writing center so that students are more interested in scheduling an appointment with a tutor outside of class.

### **TUTOR-MEDIATED PEER REVIEWS IN GRADUATE ESOL CLASSES**

As a pilot, we began our partnership in spring 2019 in a field-specific writing course designed for upper-intermediate-level ESOL students. The course develops rhetorical skills and integrates grammar and vocabulary support to assist students in graduate-level academic writing; the first cohort included students from several different disciplines and language backgrounds. Our main goal of initiating the tutor-mediated peer reviews was to build students' confidence in writing. However, we also hoped the sessions would assist students in developing an ability to provide constructive feedback to others, an essential skill for their graduate study and future professional contexts. Finally, it served as a gateway for students to build relationships with the writing center tutors.

During the second half of the semester, students wrote a comprehensive research proposal (8-10 pages) and participated in four peer reviews of different sections: introduction, literature review, proposal (methodology), and a complete draft. To set up the peer reviews, the instructor first met with the ESOL Specialist to discuss goals, share the assignment sheets, and revise the peer review forms to include open-ended questions that could spark discussion. Because the ESOL Specialist could not attend the peer review sessions, the instructor introduced the peer facilitators in class, set up peer groups, and answered questions as they arose. The instructor also observed and evaluated the interactions among peer groups and debriefed with the ESOL Specialist after the session concluded.

Throughout the peer review sessions, there were many benefits for the students. First, the students appeared more engaged than when they did previous peer reviews independently. By the end of the semester, the sessions were lively and contained sustained discussions. Additionally, students expressed interest in utilizing the Writing Center outside of class after obtaining a sense of what it was like to work with a tutor, which translated to an increase in Writing Center sessions. Most importantly, the

feedback that students gave and received was significantly improved due to having a facilitator ask questions and prompt more in-depth feedback. Finally, the process served as excellent professional development in providing constructive feedback to peers.

A few challenges became evident in the pilot based on the instructor's observations and debriefing with the ESOL Specialist. Many of the tutors were undergraduate students who initially felt insecure about providing feedback to graduate writers. Additionally, not all tutors could attend each session, so group continuity was not always possible. For the groups that did have consistency, the sessions were more effective. Another challenge for the tutors was the balance between the facilitator-student talk. Since some had not had much experience working with multilingual language learners, the instructor observed that they initially tried to fill the silence too quickly after asking questions, sometimes limiting student participation. Finally, recognizing the difference between peer review and writing center practices was also challenging for a few tutors. For example, in a regular writing center session, tutors are trained to work on areas of students' choice; however, for the peer reviews, the tutors were asked to focus specifically on areas that the instructor had chosen. After piloting our partnership, we concluded that it would have been helpful if the tutors had received more preparation before peer review facilitation. Additionally, more involvement with the ESOL Specialist in the classroom would have been beneficial.

### **TUTOR-MEDIATED PEER REVIEWS IN UNDERGRADUATE ESOL CLASSES**

After piloting our partnership with the Writing Center, we continued this collaboration in an undergraduate writing course for international undergraduate students who need additional support before taking the FYC courses the following semester. Our main goal was to introduce the Writing Center and tutors to the undergraduate students whom we observed were reluctant to utilize Writing Center services.

Our planning began early in fall 2019 when the instructor met with the ESOL Specialist and Writing Consultants to plan the tutor-mediated peer review sessions. Following this meeting, the ESOL Specialist visited the classroom to introduce the Writing Center. She discussed the benefits of peer reviews with the students and distributed enticing writing center gifts. After that, the ESOL Specialist conducted several training sessions for tutors, which focused on facilitating a conversation between students and tutors about the students' writing in a course assignment.

Building off the previous experience in the graduate course, we held a tutor-mediated peer review session in the classroom. The peer reviews were conducted in small groups of 2-3 students with one tutor each. The group members read the draft and completed a worksheet adapted from the assigned course textbook (Adams). To achieve our goal of facilitating a conversation between the students and tutors, the ESOL Specialist trained the tutors to ask the students questions instead of filling the silence with their suggestions, and the instructor prepared a worksheet that structured their conversation on the students' draft of the report and questionnaire assignment. Specifically, the peer review worksheet instructed the tutors and students to read the report and check the items the writer had included, such as the topic, number of people surveyed, summary of results, and analysis of patterns. Next, the peer reviewers checked the target



vocabulary from the course textbook that the writer had used in the report. Finally, any general comments about the writer's report were also welcomed in the worksheet. The peer review emphasized rhetorical concerns; however, there were a few lower-order questions related to grammar and vocabulary.

During the peer review session, the instructor gave instructions and observed the students and tutors in action. Their engaging and animated conversations about the writer's drafts made it a rewarding classroom experience for everyone. This successful partnership was achieved because the tutors asked questions encouraging dialogue with the students about their observations of the writers' drafts. When the class ended, the students expressed enjoyment in having the tutors do peer reviews with them.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR TUTOR TRAINING**

Our experience showed that tutors who have training in working with multilingual and international students in a writing center context are better equipped for peer review facilitation in ESOL classes. Before our pilot experience, a small group of tutors already participated in weekly training sessions with the ESOL Specialist to develop strategies for working with multilingual writers. However, these tutors were not the only ones invited to participate in peer facilitation roles in ESOL classes. Thus, after our pilot experience, the ESOL Specialist conducted group tutor training sessions during weekly Writing Center meetings in short bursts. In addition, individual hour-long training sessions were offered to tutors who had schedule conflicts during weekly meetings. From our experience, we concluded that peer reviews in our undergraduate classes were more effective due to the training tutors received before coming to the classroom.

To prepare for effective peer review facilitation, writing consultants must first understand that their role as a facilitator in class is different from the tutoring session and that they are not expected to provide feedback on students' writing. Instead, their task is to ensure students give feedback to one another in small groups. Because "the shift in tutors' roles from individual authority in one-to-one sessions to shared authority in the classroom-based program directly affects their sense of professional identity" (Martins and Wolf 173) and can affect their performance, it is vital that tutors discuss their concerns about the facilitative role with the trainer. In this new role, tutors are not doing what they would be doing in a one-to-one conference in the writing center—they are showing students how to provide meaningful feedback by asking questions that encourage active participation among peers.

When tutors understand the underlying principles and differences between a tutoring session and a peer review facilitation, they should also be equipped with strategies they can employ during an in-class visit. The first strategy is extended wait time after asking a question. This recommendation is corroborated by previous studies recommending that tutors "allow learners to 'struggle' some of the time" (Walsh 207), a strategy that allows learners to gather their thoughts.

The second strategy is related to shaping learner contributions, which involves taking a student's response and doing something with it rather than simply accepting it. Tutors must understand that it is essential to choose their words carefully when interacting

with student writers during peer reviews; their discourse strategies can significantly impact how interactions with learners unfold. For example, peer review facilitators can recast, paraphrase, summarize, scaffold, or extend students' statements (Walsh 168). This practice allows tutors to repackaging students' ideas and encourages metacognition.

Along with shaping learners' contributions, the processes of negotiating meaning, seeking clarification, and checking comprehension and confirmation are important for tutoring sessions and tutor-mediated peer reviews: "Engaging students in dialogue about their writing can allow them more opportunity, not only to clarify and defend their meanings, but also to build a greater sense of ownership over their texts" (Tardy 74). To assist in creating this dialogue, writing consultants are encouraged to ask open-ended questions. In a training manual developed by the ESOL Specialist for the peer review facilitators, the following sample questions were shared:

- It seems that what you are saying here is \_\_\_\_\_. Is that correct? Is that what you want to say? What does the rest of the group think?
- Perhaps, there's a better way to express that. What does everyone else think? Do you have suggestions?
- What is the relationship between \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_? What does the group think?
- What's your reason for putting \_\_\_\_ before \_\_\_\_? What does the rest of the group think?

When peer review facilitation is set up in-person, writing consultants should also be instructed on nonverbal communication. Specifically, cultural differences in proximity and expectations for eye contact could vary in different cultures. Although employing these strategies during the peer review sessions is effective, it is important to acknowledge that one-to-one appointments at the writing center are often more productive in terms of actual completed work (i.e., the number of pages reviewed and edits made). Therefore, writing consultants should encourage students to see them at the Writing Center to continue the revision process.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The pilot in-class facilitation of peer reviews received positive feedback from faculty, tutors, and students, and with improved training, it can be even more effective. If you decide to implement a similar program in your university, we want to emphasize the importance of tutor training because we observed a striking difference in peer reviews facilitated by tutors with and without training in peer review facilitation. Tutors also need to understand that the primary goal of the tutor-mediated peer review is not to provide feedback to students as they do during the one-to-one sessions at the writing center but rather to facilitate a discussion among students about their writing. The proficiency of students also needs to be considered. For example, undergraduate tutors are generally more hesitant to work with graduate students, even in the context of a writing center, and this is consistent for peer reviews, too. Therefore, we suggest that graduate tutors facilitate peer reviews in graduate courses. Preparing students for the tutors' class visit is also essential. Finally, improving the communication between the ESOL Specialist and faculty, the ESOL Specialist and tutors, and faculty and students is crucial.

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## Announcements

### **Southeastern Writing Center Association, February 22-24, 2024**

Emory University, Atlanta, GA

#### **“Writing Center Movements”**

**For questions:** [swca.conference@gmail.com](mailto:swca.conference@gmail.com); **conference website:**  
<https://southeasternwritingcenter.wildapricot.org/conference>

### **Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, March 22-23, 2024**

George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

#### **“People Power: Community and Care in the Contemporary Writing Center”**

**Deadline for Call for Proposals:** December 22, 2023; **conference website:**  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vRYt7Kp1opy\\_iRWSeB1\\_-HVvvn09M2ttQCZtzB5t\\_w-2yJbPCzraHs7usgtTSUAPh\\_l0l3LOYNuljW5/pub](https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vRYt7Kp1opy_iRWSeB1_-HVvvn09M2ttQCZtzB5t_w-2yJbPCzraHs7usgtTSUAPh_l0l3LOYNuljW5/pub)

### **European Writing Centers Association, June 11-14, 2024**

University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland

#### **“The Future of Writing Centers”**

**Deadline for Call for Papers:** January 29, 2024; **conference website:**  
<https://europeanwritingcenters.eu/conference>

### **East Central Writing Centers Association, February 29-March 2, 2024**

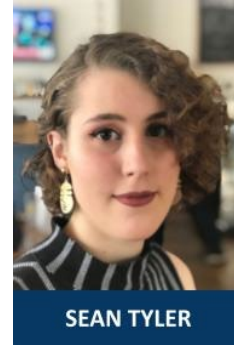
Wright State University and Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio

**Conference website:** <https://ecwca.wildapricot.org/conference>

## An Artist's Guide to Tutoring Creative Writing

Sean Tyler  
University of Iowa

All tutors have a subject that prompts anxiety when they see it on their schedule; for me, this is creative writing. As a Fine Arts graduate student, I often read papers outside of my discipline, but they are usually research papers, studies, or journal submissions with conventions and goals in common. Creative writing varies widely in style, genre, and form. There are conventions in each genre, but creatives famously flaunt rules and norms, meaning that tutors' advice designed to improve thesis statements and academic clarity could stifle creativity. When I began to work with creative writers, I was worried I would give confusing or incorrect feedback.



Complicating this was my fear that I would lose credibility if I admitted I wasn't familiar with a particular form. I started to feel more competent when I began pulling from my experiences as a drawing course teaching assistant, instructor of record, and veteran of creative workshop courses. I supplemented these experiences with my research on creative writing tutoring strategies and theories of workshop pedagogy. In an artistic workshop course, students and instructors may review a sculpture, painting, and drawing in one class period; good workshops are designed for flexibility and allow experts and a generalist audience to participate equally. The purpose of an artists' workshop is to help the creator clarify their intention and more fully realize their goals. To achieve this open and supportive environment in tutoring sessions, I take cues from workshop courses by discarding the need to be an expert, responding as a reader and not a critic, taking time to understand a writer's form and goals, and accepting ambiguity in their work.

I have found that using a modified artist's workshop model, with the tutor acting as a reader and member of a workshop, allows tutors and students to work as peers in a creative activity and reduces student anxiety as they experience the tutor as a fellow creative or reader and not an expert ready to pass judgment. I make this claim as a result of my work with Adelaide (name changed) who used our sessions to edit her short stories or work on writing prompts to generate prose. Adelaide's primary goal for our sessions was to hone her creative writing skills rather than complete assignments. Adelaide often worked in the horror genre, which caused me concern since I am not a frequent consumer of horror media. During my research on tutoring strategies, I found that scholars suggest tutors should be open about their level of genre familiarity. For example, drawing from the work of Melissa Iannetta and Lauren Fitzgerald, Nicole Finocchio recommends that tutors should be open about their familiarity with a form

and give the writer a chance to explain the form and elements they are using or prioritizing (153). Discussing the form and genre could include the writer's explanation for the reasoning for the number of lines or stanzas in a poem or describing science fiction or fantasy elements. After I began to meet with Adelaide, I worked to ensure our conversations about genre were open and productive, and as a result, my fear of losing credibility dissolved.

In an artist's workshop, creatives learn how an audience perceives their techniques, giving them a measure of what their work currently accomplishes and allowing them to make informed creative choices. Tutors can also respond as lay readers and provide this same kind of descriptive feedback. Finocchio suggests tutors respond as a lay audience member, giving first impressions and asking clarifying questions (19). Responding as a lay reader involves focusing on the experience of the story and not on strict adherence to technical requirements or grammatical conventions. I used this approach with Adelaide when she brought a short horror story based on a local urban legend. After she introduced her project, I asked Adelaide to explain the urban legend to me so I could act like a local reader and understand the story on a deeper level. After we read the work together, I shared my first responses to the story, focusing on the memorable imagery and ways the story paralleled the urban legend. Rosalie Morales Kerns emphasizes description as an element of an egalitarian workshop, endorsing a form where reviewers act as peers and give descriptive comments, rather than advice or criticism (804). Morales Kern's focus on an egalitarian workshop is especially apt for tutors acting in a peer reviewer capacity. In addition to receiving help from the tutor, having a second party read their work—or even just hearing their work read aloud—gives writers the chance to visualize their work from a new point of view. Finding a way to see one's work through fresh eyes is invaluable for any creative practice. For my drawing students, I suggest propping their drawing pads up and moving back five feet; even this short distance causes a radical change in perspective. Students need to learn to create distance from their work to make intentional and thoughtful creative decisions.

Asking questions about form and genre allows tutors to get an understanding of the discipline and calibrate their approach, and it gives the writer a chance to clarify their goals and determine elements of a form they prioritize. This clarification can begin when the writer introduces their work, or it can happen after the tutor reads the work so they can give an uninfluenced first impression. Once the session begins and the tutor has read the work, tutors can compare that intention to their initial reader reaction and discuss how the work currently functions. To help writers understand how their work is perceived and evaluate if it achieves their goals, Morales Kerns suggests that reviewers describe the effects the work has on the reader, and then after that dialogue, the conversation can move towards suggestions for improvement (if requested) or potential alternative techniques (803). After I shared my first response with Adelaide, we spent time discussing horror stories as a whole and the elements of a successful horror story Adelaide wanted to capture; we determined that Adelaide wanted her story to have an eerie tone and a shocking ending. This focus on identifying and pursuing student's creative goals applies to any creative field and helps me avoid giving prescriptive advice and shaping my student's work according to my own tastes. My success in using these techniques has transferred to all my writing and drawing students. I now find myself asking questions like, "How do you want your readers/viewers to feel?"



Tutors should also keep in mind that creative projects have some distinct differences from much academic writing; one of the most significant is the ability to leave room for reader interpretation. Jennifer E. Hime and Karen J. Mowrer's writing guide discusses the complexity of creative writing and provides questions for writers to consider to make their work more memorable and mature. When I began working with some of their guidelines, I found that one of Adelaide's pieces contained a strong start and good imagery, but the first draft of the ending felt unsatisfying. It ended with a paragraph of description and removed the mystery from her horror story. Talking about the lasting effect of the story prompted a nuanced conversation about how great stories often have ambiguous endings. Academic writing traditionally needs a clear thesis that is followed exactly; creative writing is often the most effective when it leaves room for the reader's interpretation and examination. Additionally, literary analysis thrives on multiple interpretations of the same work.

For early drafts of creative work, having a reader the author can trust for honest reactions provides a safe space for experimentation before the work heads out into the realm of professors and group workshops. Students often need permission to see themselves as artists or writers, especially students who are new to the major or not pursuing an arts degree. At the end of the semester, Adelaide's reviews of my tutoring were positive, but perhaps the best feedback was: "I'm a lot more willing to write and fail in my writing." As an art teacher, I took this review as a gold star. I have found that the most important thing I can do for my tutoring students and drawing students is to take their work seriously, analyze it with the same sincerity I would a professional's, and validate them as creatives.

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## CONFERENCE CALENDAR

**February 22-24: Southeastern Writing Center Association, Atlanta, GA**

Contact: [swca.conference@gmail.com](mailto:swca.conference@gmail.com)

Website: <https://southeasternwritingcenter.wildapricot.org/conference>

**February 29-March 4, 2024: East Central Writing Centers Association, Dayton, OH**

Website: <https://ecwca.wildapricot.org/conference>

**March 15-16, 2024: Secondary School Writing Centers Association, Boston, MA and virtual**

Contact: [conference@sswca.org](mailto:conference@sswca.org)

Website: <https://sswca.org/conference/>

**March 22-23, 2024: Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, Fairfax, VA**

Website: <https://mawca.org/2024-Conference>

**April 11-12, 2024: Online Writing Centers Association, virtual**

Contact: Erika Maikish and Spencer Harris: [owca-conference@onlinewritingcenters.org](mailto:owca-conference@onlinewritingcenters.org)

Website: <https://www.onlinewritingcenters.org/conference-info/>

**June 11-14, 2024: European Writing Centers Association, Limerick, Ireland**

Website: <https://europeanwritingcenters.eu/conference>



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