

Editor's Note

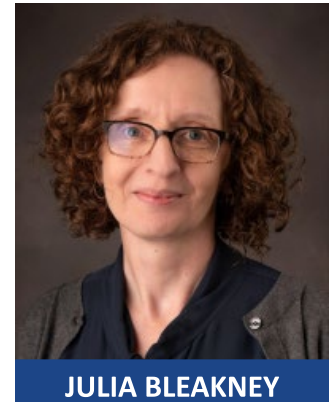
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This issue of *WLN* brings together articles that explore, in different ways, the human exchange that is at the heart of writing center work: Catie Wisniewski and Elizabeth Buskerus Blackmon by examining writing center introductions that bring writers and tutors together; Maggie M. Herb by discussing how peer and professional tutors respect each other; Bonnie Devet, Mollie Bowman, and Alex Tate-Moffo by proposing ways to humanize online tutoring sessions; and Dani Lester by reminding us of the human work that GenAI cannot do. We are excited to bring you an issue filled with reminders of the human value of our work.

Catie Wisniewski and Elizabeth Busekrus Blackmon, in “Awareness, Active Learning, and Student and Faculty Engagement: The Extended Orientation Model in the Writing Center,” discuss their model of “extended orientations” to their community college writing center. Unlike more typical writing center orientations, in which a tutor or a staff member introduces the writing center to students in a presentation format, Wisniewski and Blackmon’s writing center offers an extended orientation: a 10-15 minute presentation-style introduction followed by a 30-minute interactive element, during which time students divide into small groups, with a tutor, to work on some aspect of a writing assignment. Student survey responses showed that extended orientations helped students learn specific writing techniques. The article ends with some recommendations for how to adapt their model of extended orientations for your own writing centers.

Maggie M. Herb discusses the results of her study in which she set out to understand how peer and professional tutors work together in a writing center with a mixed staffing model. As she reports in “Building Knowledge Across Institutional Roles: When Peer and Professional Tutors Work Side-by-Side,” Herb’s interview-based study found that: peer and professional tutors have mutual respect for each other’s work, both peers and professional tutors felt they learned from each other, and a mixed-staff model is beneficial for student writers. This mutually-respectful relationship was enhanced by peer and professional tutors working together in an open writing center space.

In “The Psychological Disadvantages of Drop-in Online Consultations,” Bonnie Devet, Mollie Bowman, and Alex Tate-Moffo examine the impact on consultants of moving to online appointments during Covid. The authors explore what they term the “psychological factors” that consultants faced in online, synchronous sessions, particularly isolation and fatigue. Describing small adjustments to how online sessions were held—for example, sitting further back from the screen so that writers could see the hands and gestures of consultants, helping to minimize the intensity of consultant and writer staring directly into each other’s faces—the authors propose strategies to ensure both consultants and writers feel supported.



Finally, in our Tutors' Column, Dani Lester deftly explores the nuances of generative AI applications such as ChatGPT in "GenAI in the Writing Center." Lester examines how GenAI may problematically diminish authorial ownership, which in turn has the potential to dismantle diversity in voice and language and reinforce a standard form of written English. On a more positive note, however, Lester considers how tutors can always bring writers back to what they know and think, thereby potentially mitigating these dangers of homogeneity in writing.