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A JOURNAL OF WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

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Editor's Note

Ted Roggenbuck
Commonwealth University-Bloomsburg

I think many of us may have experienced so much change recently that we can start to become change averse. So it's wonderful when change represents something both unquestionably beneficial and enjoyable. Here at *WLN*, we're fortunate to have such an experience with the addition of two new *WLN* Co-editors, Andrea Efthymiou and Candis Bond. Although both names may already be familiar through their scholarship and conference activities, I'll briefly note that Andrea directs the writing center at Queens College of the CUNY system and is Treasurer for the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, and that Candis directed the Center for Writing Excellence at Augusta University and is the President of the

TED ROGGENBUCK

Southeastern Writing Center Association. As those who've met them can attest, both are fabulous to work with and will be immensely helpful to our contributors and the *WLN* team.

The articles included in the first issue of volume 49 of *WLN* continue the journal's tradition of presenting a wide array of writing center work. We start with an article from Michael Pemberton and Susanne Hall about a topic I'm surprised to have never really read about before: students' reuse of their own writing. In "Text Recycling in the Writing Center," Pemberton and Hall draw on their work on the Text Recycling Research Project to present a valuable discussion of situations where students may reuse work as well as strategies writing centers might use to help students "make ethical decisions about recycling their previously written texts" (4). In "Impact of a Chapter Editing Service on Doctoral Capstone Progress," Michelle Brown, Kelly Chermack, Madysen Sinclair, and Tobias Ball report on their empirical study of the editorial service their center offers to doctoral students to help them maintain timely progress toward completing their dissertations. Their results both confirm and confound what they expected. They discovered that students using their service "may be struggling during the proposal stage but seem to have a timelier progression to final study approval" (12). Lynne Christy Anderson and Megan Holly discuss their pairing of tutors-in-training with Gen 1.5 students and argue that this pairing "not only provided important strategies for supporting a diverse range of writers, but it gave tutors a glimpse into the lived experiences of non-traditional students at our private university" (16). Finally, in her Tutors' Column, Abigail Patchen provides a discussion of what tutors offer our students that GenAI tools cannot, arguing that "Tutors are trained to operate differently than large language models, and therefore, a student misses out on an incredible learning opportunity when they choose generative AI over the writing center" (20-21).

I'd like to end by inviting readers to consider guest editing a special issue of *WLN.* While issues like this one offer a sampling of the range of valuable work happening in our field, special issues can offer readers a focused look at a particular topic. So, if there is a topic you'd like to see get more attention in our literature, please reach out to see about partnering with us to create for our readers a special issue on that topic.

CANDIS BOND

ANDREA EFTHYMIOU

The Editors of *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship* are delighted and honored to announce that two new editors have joined our staff: Candis Bond and Andrea Efthymiou.

Beginning in 2016, Candis directed Augusta University's Writing Center, which under her effective leadership became its own department in 2022 as the Center for Writing Excellence.

Andrea began directing the Writing Center at Queens College of the City University of New York in 2023 after 16 years in writing center administration at Hofstra University and Yeshiva University. She's been hard at work growing writing center support for the amazing students at Queens College.

When you submit articles and Tutors' Columns to WLN, you'll enjoy interacting with them as they, like the other co-editors,, are committed to mentoring authors throughout the process.

Text Recycling in the Writing Center:
Some Ethical Guidelines for Tutors

Michael Pemberton
Georgia Southern University

Susanne Hall
California Institute of Technology

Helping tutors learn how to recognize and address plagiarism in conference sessions is a common topic in most tutor training manuals and courses, and while those outside writing centers might assume that responding to plagiarism is a simple and straightforward process, that is not always, or even usually, the case (Gruber; Brown et al.). Many student conduct codes reflect an unfortunate and inaccurate assumption that all forms of plagiarism are examples of academic dishonesty that deserve punishment, but writing center tutors frequently encounter examples of plagiarism that result not from an intent to cheat but from students' incomplete understanding of academic discourse and expected citation practices. In writing centers, we want to help writers understand the unique conventions of academic writing so that their ideas will be recognized as part of an ongoing conversation, and foremost among those conventions is explicitly acknowledging the original sources for language, ideas, or data that they themselves did not create. Thus, tutors receive training on how to help students understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it through the judicious use of direct quotes, paraphrases, and most importantly, appropriate attribution and citation (Bouman; Fitzgerald and Ianetta 99-107).

MICHAEL PEMBERTON

SUSANNE HALL

The lack of consensus among faculty and school administrators about how to define and respond to plagiarism in student writing has caused challenges for writing centers. Not only have centers had to grapple with occasional accusations that they *foster* plagiarism (Leahy and Fox; Clark and Healy; Shamoon and Burns), but research on "patchwriting"–borrowing language and phrasing from source texts when drafting–has further complicated centers' ability to determine what might be unethical reuse and is merely a byproduct of academic and/or disciplinary enculturation (Howard; Jamieson and Howard). Most writing center professionals operate with an awareness that working with sources and avoiding plagiarism is a complex, culturally-specific writing practice that many academics misunderstand and oversimplify.

In this article, we would like to argue that these same misunderstandings are embedded in attitudes toward another type of "plagiarism" that has rarely, if ever, been discussed in writing center research or tutoring guides–"self-plagiarism" or students' reuse of their own previous writing for a new paper, assignment, or context. What should a tutor do, for example, if a student reveals that they have taken a portion of a paper written for an earlier class and included it as part of a new paper for a different course? Some academic institutions, professional organizations, and faculty consider this just another type of academic dishonesty and refer to it

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as "self-plagiarism." Others, ourselves included, take a more nuanced view. We call this practice "text recycling" (TR) and have worked for several years as part of a large research group to better understand the practical, ethical, and legal issues involved when academic researchers reuse and/or repurpose their own writing. In this article, we will offer a brief overview of some of our research, discuss how it might be relevant to tutoring sessions, and offer a few practical strategies for helping students make ethical decisions about recycling their previously written texts in their papers.

INVESTIGATING AND UNDERSTANDING TEXT RECYCLING

Over the last six years, funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, we joined with colleagues as co-PIs in the Text Recycling Research Project (TRRP) to investigate the practice of text recycling in professional academic research settings. We researched the different and distinct contexts in which TR takes place, how frequently recycling occurs in published research, where it typically appears in research articles, and what researchers and editors believe about the ethics of authors reusing and repurposing their own writing. Readers who wish to take a deep dive into our research findings can access our publications, white papers, and guideline/policy documents on the TRRP website, https://textrecycling.org, but a few key findings are useful to share here as we believe they provide an important context and useful ethical framework for thinking about how to address TR in educational settings and writing centers in particular.

For the purposes of our project, we define text recycling as "the reuse of textual material (prose, visuals, or equations) in a new document where (1) the material in the new document is identical to that of the source (or substantively equivalent in both form and content), (2) the material is not presented in the new document as a quotation (via quotation marks or block indentation), and (3) at least one author of the new document is also an author of the prior document" ("What Is Text Recycling"). In the project's initial phase, we surveyed academic journal editors and editorial board members across a wide range of disciplinary areas about their beliefs and attitudes toward text recycling. As might be expected, there were differences of opinion about the acceptability of TR (depending, for example, on factors such as how much text was involved, the rhetorical purpose of the recycled text, the nature of the original source), but a clear majority felt that TR could be useful and appropriate in some situations and with some limitations (Hall et al., "Attitudes").

We believe that the same basic principle applies to student writers in educational and classroom contexts: under some circumstances and in some situations, students' reuse of their own texts, in whole or in part, can be useful and consistent with best practices for writing and learning, and writing centers should incorporate this principle as part of their praxis for working with students in conferences.[1] Our document, "TRRP Model Policy and Guidelines for Text Recycling in the Classroom," includes a discussion of the implications of text recycling in classrooms, but for now, consider the following reasons (and there are likely others) why students might want to reuse some of their previously written texts in subsequent coursework:

- **Extending prior work**. A student is engaged in a project or a field or topic of study across courses. Their engagement is deepening over time. They wish to return to and extend writing on a prior topic to continue learning more about it. This includes many capstone assignments, such as theses and major projects, which represent the culmination of a student's learning and often draw on work from earlier courses.
- **Seeking credit**. A student may have previously failed to get credit for a piece of writing and wishes to reuse it in order to do so. For example, consider a student who withdrew

from a lab course after completing the first lab report and then takes that course in a subsequent term. The assignment for the first lab is the same as in the previous term.

- **Repeated Assignment.** Some common assignments appear in multiple courses and present an almost unavoidable need to recycle writing. A résumé or literacy narrative, for example, may call students to cover the same information in the same genre in a new course.
- **Efficiency**. The student has written something relevant in the past and wants to reuse some or all of it in order to finish a new assignment in an expedient manner.

These all seem like rational reasons to reuse one's own writing, so the key question becomes whether or not they are *ethical*, and why. Instructors (and, by extension, institutions) must answer that question; ideally, instructors would thoughtfully assess the uses and limits of allowing text recycling within their courses and offer students clear guidance about what is allowed. However, just as our TRRP research showed that journals did not offer authors adequate guidance for text recycling, we have observed that students often receive little guidance about this topic in courses. We think writing centers can help address this issue. Writing centers can be a key institutional support for writers who are navigating questions of whether and when to reuse their own work, and they can also be a resource for faculty who wish to consider these issues.

TUTOR STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING TEXT RECYCLING IN COURSEWORK

Helping a writer make choices about text recycling in the context of assigned coursework begins with understanding what policies govern this practice at your university/college, in the relevant school/division, and within the course itself. Tutor training should familiarize writing center staff with broader institutional policies on text recycling (often still called "self-plagiarism") in coursework. Not all such policies are clear or well-constructed, and writing center staff discussions of these policies may reveal questions that writers are likely to have about the policy. Institutional policies often refer to a prohibited practice of *resubmission of one's work from a prior course* in ways that might imply to some students that the policies are about submitting the same entire paper twice. Does a new paper that contains several sentences from an older paper but is otherwise a completely new and original work constitute a violation of your institution's policy? What about several paragraphs in a long paper? We have seen policies that are ambiguous on that point. We recommend inviting a colleague who works on supporting and enforcing the student academic misconduct policy to a staff meeting to interpret and discuss these policies. The conversation can both help ensure writing center staff members understand these policies and offer administrators feedback on the limits or weaknesses of the policy.

How might the topic of text recycling come up in a session with a student working on assigned writing for a course?[2] Some students might directly raise a question to a tutor about whether or not they are allowed to reuse prior writing, expecting the tutor to know the rules that govern this practice. For other students, it might never occur to them that reusing their own writing, which they produced through their own hard work and critical thinking, could be disallowed. For that reason, we recommend that tutors consider including a question like "Have you ever written a paper on this topic before?" into their regular repertoire of agenda-setting questions. The answer to this question could be relevant in several ways, but one of them would be that if the answer is yes, a follow-up question like, "How similar will this paper be to what you wrote in the past?" could help the tutor determine if further discussion about text recycling is relevant. To be clear, we're not encouraging interrogation of writers on this point; rather, we're suggesting questions of broad utility that might also surface a writing practice that students could be unaware is potentially problematic.

Writers may also need help seeing that writing decisions that seem practical and straightforward to them may be seen as unethical by their instructors or the institution. They may be confused by a practice that was accepted in one course being deemed unethical in another. Writing center tutors can help students understand that instructors can have fundamentally different philosophies about the goals of their courses that affect their stances on text recycling. Some instructors expect every student to generate original work throughout the course, regardless of their prior knowledge of the topic; in those cases, the instructor may impose a very strict policy against students reusing any work from previous courses. On the other hand, some instructors may be more focused on whether or not students achieve the desired learning outcomes for their course, and they might be more open to students reusing portions of earlier writing projects as a way of demonstrating competency. In both cases, however, tutors can help students think reflectively about why they believe it is reasonable to recycle their previous writing and then talk about how to broach that possibility with their instructor. This is similar to work we do with writers in many areas, where we can help them formulate questions, draft emails, and prepare for conversations with professors that students might otherwise lack the confidence or awareness to have. It is especially important that these conversations take place with regard to text recycling.

All the TRRP's materials on text recycling for researchers emphasize the importance of transparency between writers and readers. When a writing center tutor lacks the information required to offer a student writer specific guidance about whether and how much of their prior work can be recycled, they can instead emphasize the importance of transparency, encouraging the writer to talk to mentors and instructors for more specific guidance. Communication and transparency are key–not only to clarify what might be acceptable or not to a particular instructor (as this information is rarely included explicitly in course materials or syllabi) but also to protect the student from future disputes or misunderstandings.

Notes

[1] In our project, the TRRP distinguished between professional, publishing researchers and writers completing assigned coursework. Though there are certainly similarities between the two groups and contexts, there are also important differences that may require different policies and, in the case of writing centers, different approaches to intervention and tutoring. As we note in the "TRRP Model Policy and Guidelines for Text Recycling in the Classroom," "the primary aim of professional research writing is generating a written product that is valuable to *readers*, while the primary aim of classroom writing is a process of learning that is valuable to *the writer*" (1). This is not to say that professional research writing does not lead to learning or that classroom writing is not of any value to its readers. However, the goals that set the processes in motion are quite different, and the different aims of these writing processes affect the ethical and practical implications of the decision to recycle one's own prior writing.

We also recognize that the categories "researcher" and "student" are not mutually exclusive. The same person can be both a researcher and a student during a semester or quarter. While undergraduates most often write for course assignments, they sometimes also write as researchers seeking publication of their work. Graduate students, too, are typically expected to write for courses as well as for publication during their time in graduate school. We are distinguishing between writing situations, not people.

[2] We are aware that writing centers also support writers composing documents outside of the classroom. Centers that support research writing intended for publication may find utility in reviewing and sharing our other resources with writers, including the "TRRP Best Practices for Researchers" guide and "Understanding Text Recycling: A Guide for Researchers" (Hall et al., "Understanding"). Some writing centers also support application writing for jobs, fellowships, and academic programs. This is an area of writing the TRRP has not focused on, and we do not currently have any specialized resources to share in this area.

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Impact of a Chapter Editing Service on Doctoral Capstone Progress

Michelle Stallone Brown, Kelly R. Chermack,
Madysen Sinclair, Tobias Ball

Walden University

INTRODUCTION

Roughly 50% of students who begin doctoral programs do not complete their education. Barriers to doctoral program completion include personal or environmental factors, including imposter syndrome or writing anxiety (Cassuto). Researchers have found that doctoral candidates are often highly influenced by such factors (see Marshall et al. 7). Doctoral programs continue to look for ways to improve retention and positively impact doctoral completion rates (Arbelo-Marrero 279). Providing additional support to students in the various doctoral skills and readiness domains is important to our university. Our chapter editing service is one approach to address scholarly writing.

Working in a large, broad-access online university, we understand how distance learning has reshaped access to education for adult learners. Our university provides a diverse community of adult learners with the knowledge, skills, and credentials to reach their personal and career goals. At the doctoral level, which includes 27 doctoral programs with approximately 9,000 students enrolled (Ph.D. and professional doctoral programs), this means building and applying skills to ensure success in the capstone (e.g., dissertation, doctoral project study, etc.) stage. Specifically, with scaffolded co-curricular instructional support, we assist with skill-building and readiness earlier in the degree program, beginning in the first term. One of the doctoral competencies supported in these efforts includes scholarly writing. Our focus is on student progress and providing services to build capacity in students throughout their doctoral journeys. Specifically, skill building focuses on the standards for doctoral degree competency in scholarly writing, including cohesion and flow, doctoral-level voice and grammar, and APA 7 style.

BACKGROUND

Early review and feedback systems—from a variety of angles (e.g., the committee, writing support professionals)—have a positive impact on degree progress (Council of Graduate Schools). According to John Hattie and Helen Timperley's model, determining the appropriate level of feedback for students is necessary to learning. Services used to build capacity in the areas of writing and research are critical components to development, which can
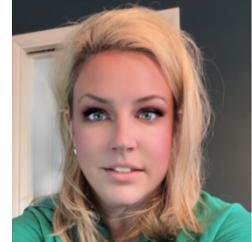
strengthen students' abilities (Lim et al. 202). Writing interventions have proven to be effective (Baltes and Brown 90; Pleasant and Trakas 6).

Our university's Chapter Edit (CE) service, provided by professional editors who are full-time staff, is one such student-focused but faculty-initiated service. This writing-focused service is for students whose capstone progress is impeded because of their writing, and that need must be demonstrated when a dissertation committee chair requests this service. Editors engage the student document for a 1-hour, asynchronous edit on a faculty-specified area of writing. The goal is to correct and model scholarly writing patterns so students can improve and continue to implement edits on their own. A CE could be requested at either the proposal (before proposal approval) or final study stage (after proposal approval). The university focuses on progress (which means consistent movement/fewer delays) over retention. Retention is business-centered, while progress (timely completion) is student-centered. Students are paying tuition, and supporting students so that they can finish in a timely manner is an initiative of which all areas of the university are cognizant.

We also found the 1-hour-edit to be sufficient. We initially piloted this program following a developmental process where the student engages with the editor multiple times, over multiple iterations. However, in this model we experienced too much attrition. In one hour, we provide an edit of 10-15 pages, which we have found to be sufficient to model and explain changes. As Stephen North mentioned, writing professionals need to reflect on and take into account what types of writing support are helping their students and how to support them best.

The CE process is as follows. Once a committee chair recognizes that the student's capstone progress is impeded because of their ability to communicate effectively in writing (not the content, method, etc.), and committee members have failed to move the student forward because of the writing (rejected), the chair (and only the chair) can request a CE. The chair then completes an online form and identifies the writing challenge that is preventing the student from moving forward in the capstone process. This form consists of several open-ended areas as well as a list of common writing challenges. Chairs can check up to three boxes/areas for support. We receive the request and assign an editor.

Our focus is meeting students where they are, skill-set-wise, and providing support. We have a diverse body of students with different levels of skill and knowledge regarding American Academic English and English grammar. In these instances, there is a clear objective (student progress milestone) that is not being met and the chair has identified the need for a writing intervention. Paul Barron and Luis Cicciarelli noted that figuring out how to present ideas is helpful for figuring out the ideas themselves. It was our hope that this CE service helps students not only improve their writing and meet a milestone, but that it benefits them in their development as writers and scholars as well by helping them clarify their ideas and arguments.

Our editors are experts in APA style (used throughout our university) and have a background or degrees in English, writing, rhetoric, or social science scholarship. In our 1-hour, asynchronous CE, editors focus on the identified writing challenge, modeling the changes recommended using track changes and inserting comments with instructions and links to resources. Our approach includes getting a sense of where the student's writing ability is currently, and then considering what changes would be required (i.e., per APA or English grammar) and what changes would be recommended (i.e., would improve readability) but may not be imperative. Helping the student to understand and make improvements, while at the same time not overwhelming students with too many changes, is our goal. The student can then use our comments and modeled edits to

continue making changes to the pages we did not get to in the 1-hour-CE, as we provide extensive discussion, explanation, and links to ensure that the changes we are making are clear.

CURRENT STUDY

The CE program has been running smoothly from our perspective, but we wanted to understand if the service was helping students progress in their degree process. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the CE service on (a) number of days from an approved prospectus until proposal approval and (b) number of days from proposal approval to final study approval among students who received the CE service and a similar group of those who did not. Time to completion is not a specific goal of the CE service, but it is something that all university offices strive for. Time to completion may be the best or most objective measure of the success of the CE service—not only whether a milestone is met, but that it is done in a shorter time.

RQ1: What is the difference in time to proposal approval between students who used a chapter edit service and those who did not?

RQ2: What is the difference in time to final study approval between students who used a chapter edit service and those who did not?

PARTICIPANTS AND ANALYSIS

For each research question (RQ1 and RQ2), we compared two groups of capstone students who received final capstone study approval between 7/2016 and 12/2020. The two groups consisted of a treatment group and a control group to compare the effect of using the CE service. The first group received the CE service between 7/2016 and 12/2019. The second group of students did not receive the CE service prior to or during this time. Because this was a 4-year-span, students could potentially be included in tests for both RQs. During analysis, a random sample was pulled from the NOCE (no Chapter Edit) group to assist with comparable group sizes. We accessed this data from university channels. We did not select for or separate out specific degree programs. This is discussed further in the limitations section. We created a dataset based on CE service data and completed capstone student data. The two numeric dependent variables included the number of days from prospectus approval to proposal approval and the number of days to final study approval. Data were imported into SPSS. The variable representing the CE service was recoded as a numeric variable (0 = NOCE and 1 = CE). To assist with comparable group sizes, a random sample of 900 students was pulled from the original data set resulting in a total sample size of $N = 1,776$, with NOCE = 900 and CE= 876.

RESULTS

To address RQ1, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the differences in CE participation and the number of days to proposal approval. The ANOVA F test is a General Linear Model (GLM) procedure that evaluates the differences in group averages (means) on some numeric dependent variable based on group membership, such as test or control (Green and Salkind). Research in educational settings does not often provide the conditions needed for random assignment; therefore, posttest-only group comparisons of cohorts are useful (Edmonds and Kennedy).

Due to missing values, the sample size for this analysis was $N = 1,355$. The mean number of days to proposal approval was higher for the CE group ($M = 495$) than the NOCE group ($M = 430$). The ANOVA was significant, $F(1, 1353) = 12.92$, $p < .001$. While the ANOVA F test is the measure of the significance of a difference, the effect size statistic (eta square) provides the magnitude of the difference (Green and Salkind). The effect size statistic for the GLM procedure is eta square. In

this case, the strength of the relationship between use of the CE service and time to proposal approval, as assessed by partial eta square, approached a small effect size, with the CE service accounting for less than 1% of the variance in the dependent variable.

For RQ2, one-way ANOVA was also conducted to evaluate the differences in CE service participation and the number of days to final approval. The sample size was N = 1,776. The mean number of days to final study approval was lower for the CE group (M = 367) than the NOCE group (M = 395). In this stage, we see that students who received a CE service saw fewer days to final study approval. The ANOVA was significant, $F(1, 1774)$ = 4.00, p = .045. The strength of the relationship between use of the CE service and time to final study approval, as assessed by partial Eta squared, was not strong. Overall, the differences were present and, in the direction, hypothesized for RQ2.

TESTS OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS[1]

Dependent Variable: Days between Prospectus Approval and Proposal Approval

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Chapter Edit Service	1402147.339	1	1402147.339	12.917	<.001	.009
Corrected Total	148268582.20 2	1354				

    a.   R Squared = .009 (Adjusted R Squared = .009)

TESTS OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS

Dependent Variable: Days between Proposal Approval and Final Study Approval

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Chapter Edit Service	338732.791	1	338732.791	4.006	.045	.002
Corrected Total	150332592.6 33	1775				

    a.   R Squared = .002 (Adjusted R Squared = .002)

LIMITATIONS

Our model comes with limitations. We did not control for degree program or committee chair; both could potentially be confounding variables. It may be that progress is quicker among degree programs where CEs are more commonly used. It could also be the case that more involved chairs

tend to request CEs more than those who take more of a hands-off approach to capstone mentorship. In future studies, we would like to explore these variables in more detail.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of both tests were statistically significant. RQ1 was focused on differences in time to proposal approval among CE and NOCE groups. We failed to reject the null hypothesis. There is a statistically significant difference in the number of days to proposal approval for these groups. The difference was small and not in the direction that we would have expected.

We did not emphasize directionality in RQ1 or RQ2. In wanting to understand the impacts of a CE, we saw a difference here that we did not expect. According to our results from testing RQ1, students who received a CE had significantly *more days* to proposal approval. We predicted that the CE group would see fewer days, if the CE writing intervention benefited students and reduced their time in the proposal approval stage. We saw the opposite. A CE is a writing intervention, and it is only enacted for students who are not making timely progress due to writing challenges. It may be that, often, the CE student has already been at the proposal writing stage for more days than a NOCE student, even before the CE is initiated. This is something that we could explore further in future studies. Further research should also take qualitative data into account. We advocate the use of a mixed-methods approach for a better understanding of the landscape of how CEs work for students. The addition of qualitative data here may help us understand these results in context.

Regarding RQ2, we also observed a statistically significant relationship. CE students had *fewer days* to final study approval than NOCE students. The effect size is nil. While the F test indicated significant differences were present between the groups, the effect size, reflected in partial eta square, provides the magnitude of that difference. In this case the difference was small (c.f., Sullivan and Fein). We take these results in context. In the first stages of the capstone process, CE students took longer from prospectus approval to proposal approval—one of the determiners for a CE was rejection by committee members and not making timely progress. However, what we saw with these data was that CE students were able to not only get caught up but had fewer days from proposal approval to final study approval than NOCE students. We interpret this as the effect of the CE; a difference of about 30 days, but a significant difference considering the student group. Something occurred here where CE students were able to make quicker progress between proposal and final study approval than NOCE students. We suggest this is due to some amount of learning and ability that was strengthened through the CE process.

The potential impact here is encouraging regarding reducing time in the capstone stage. In a recent survey of doctoral students at our institution, students who used support services found them to be very helpful and felt that the services supported their progress (McCune). We are hoping that this study provides some context and echoes that finding. It may well be that a CE helps to prepare students to write their capstone and once proposal approval is achieved, they have strengthened abilities and greater capacity for writing. The CE approach supports previous findings that early review and feedback systems have a positive impact on progress.

The results tell an interesting story about student experiences with a CE. We see that these students may be struggling during the proposal stage but seem to have a timelier progression to final study approval. The impact of the CE may be that the intervention is helping students to prepare for the capstone writing process and, although they may struggle with writing early on (what triggers the CE request to begin with), they have a smoother time to completion. Students who receive a CE at the proposal stage take longer to proposal approval, but CE students move

quicker through the final study stage than NOCE students. We conclude that a CE does support progress by providing feedback to support students with their writing to narrow the progress gap between them and students who did not need the CE. We found fewer days to final capstone study approval between proposal approval and final study approval for CE students compared to NOCE students (367 days vs 395 days). What we have shown here is that providing specific feedback, directed at identified areas for improvement (between proposal approval and final study approval) can enhance progress, even for students who previously lagged behind.

NOTE

1. For full statistical tables, see: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZFiHrqivkmaR2m-EGRleWbmp6gmoee5_/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=108801564361128731849&rtpof=true&sd=tru e.

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Writing Beyond Expectations: A Collaboration Between Tutors-in-Training and First-Year Multilingual Writers

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QUESTIONS INFORMING OUR PROJECT

Would a required tutoring activity, in which multilingual freshmen in a first-year writing course meet with tutors-in-training to discuss early and late drafts of an assignment, benefit both writers and tutors? Would the diverse strengths and challenges of writers from different linguistic backgrounds prove too challenging for a tutor practicum? Would the Generation 1.5 (Gen. 1.5) writers, originally from the Dominican Republic, Greece, Bangladesh, China, and the United States (including Puerto Rico), learn to revise in meaningful ways and appreciate the value of what our writing center has to offer? Finally, would tutors gain insights into the way writers approach the composition process?

LYNNE CHRISTY ANDERSON

MEGAN HOLLY

These were the considerations when embarking on a collaboration between our classes. The Art of Tutoring Writing (taught by Lynne) is a three-credit English elective that prepares undergraduate upperclassmen to tutor in our writing center, while First-Year Writing Seminar (taught by Meg) is a core requirement and one of eight sections designated for multilingual students. This collaboration provided important insights into the way our writing center designs tutor training and underscored the importance of reaching out to students new to the university so that they may experience early on the power of collaborative work with peer tutors.
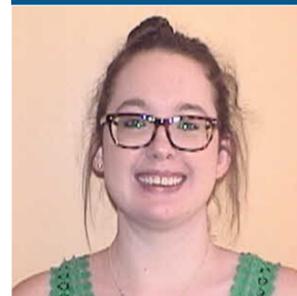
BACKGROUND

Our writing center, housed in the English Department at Boston College, was in its third pilot year in the fall of 2021 when we initiated this collaboration. Prior to this, the university had no center dedicated solely to writing support with trained peer tutors. Multilingual students, in particular, had few options for targeted linguistic support on campus. At our institution, approximately 9% of undergraduates are international, and half of these hail from home countries where English is not the official language. Post-pandemic, we experienced an increase in Gen. 1.5 students when the university adopted a test-optional admissions policy. Furthermore, first-year students, who typically visit the center in robust numbers, had completed two years of high school marked by disruption. Scholars have written about the "incoming skills gap" (Sommers and Saltz; Goldschmidt et al.)—what instructors expect their students to know before entering college and what they actually know—but, due to the sustained effect of the pandemic, this gap was more pronounced. During the previous academic year (2020-21), 40% of our center's 430 appointments

supported multilingual students. Therefore, it is important for our tutors to gain practical experience in addressing the goals of a wide range of writers.

A newly designated First-Year Writing Seminar for Gen. 1.5 students led us to consider the need for direct support outside of the classroom. Previously, Gen. 1.5 students, who self-select into multilingual sections during summer advising, would find themselves in classes populated by international students who were placed based on a required writing assessment. Designating Meg's section for Gen. 1.5 students arose from increased awareness that the needs of these groups differ: Gen. 1.5 students, who often develop English informally through social interactions, may exhibit strong oral production skills. These "ear learners" (Reid) may speak without an accent and be adept at navigating informal speech. However, unlike many international multilingual students, sometimes referred to as "eye learners" (Reid), the Gen. 1.5 students may not have studied English grammar and academic vocabulary formally, so that the two groups bring very different strengths and challenges to their writing. In addition to this newly designated section, we hoped to provide support outside the classroom through our writing center. Grant Eckstein argues that Gen. 1.5 writers "very much need the kind of specialized and individual support a writing center can provide, including agenda negotiation and practices of offering vocabulary or language assistance to meet very specific needs" (22).

TUTOR TRAINING

Ten undergraduate students were enrolled in the required tutor practicum in the fall of 2021. Their first assignment was to compose their own writer origin story. They would be employed as writing tutors, after all, and understanding their unique relationship to writing would be important. During class time, they discussed drafts in pairs to experience the vulnerability that many who enter a writing center may experience. Drawing on Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff, the tutors approached these conversations with a focus on meaning-making, and writers were encouraged to first locate the "center of gravity" (7) in their work to begin the session. Reflecting on these ideas in discussion, students noted the most effective questions that pushed writers to dig deeper while also remaining in control of the draft. Several drew on Jeff Brooks' suggestion to assign discreet writing tasks (4) to help their partners make connections, clarify meaning, and inject energy into their work. In addition to sharing drafts with one another, tutors read sample drafts submitted by multilingual writers who visited the center during previous semesters. They were asked to devise a plan for discussing these drafts and were encouraged to look beyond the lexical and grammatical concerns characteristic of second language (L2) writing and, instead, locate the logic behind the writer's work as a starting point for discussion.

FIRST-YEAR WRITING

Meanwhile, in the First-Year Writing Seminar, students began their first assignment, a personal narrative exploring their challenges operating between linguistic borders. Many wrote about obstacles faced while transitioning from their home language to English after arriving in the United States. They were required to complete several drafts, solicit feedback by meeting with an assigned tutor, revise, and meet with the same tutor again to edit. The first draft was purely generative—the "child's draft" (Lamott) in which words pour freely onto the paper without the author pausing to revise—and became the basis for their first conversation with tutors.

TUTORS AND WRITERS COLLABORATE

Tutors met with their assigned writers for the first time during week five of the semester. Jaclyn Wells argues that "tutor fit" (98) is an important consideration for a required tutoring activity: the

learning styles and interests of Meg's writers were matched with the particular strengths and personalities of Lynne's tutors. For example, a first-year student studying in the school of education was paired with a tutor who expressed interest in teaching after graduation, while a tutor who was completing a creative honors thesis was paired with a first-year writer whose narrative had creative elements. Meg presented the collaboration to her freshmen as "an opportunity to improve their writing and writing process" (Wells 106). Each tutor met with her student twice: the first 45-minute session focused on higher-order concerns and conversations centered around meaning-making and developing ideas. The second session, later in the semester, would focus on lower-order concerns and polishing prose for a final draft.

After the first session, Lynne's tutors were asked to explore moments of success as well as things they might do differently when reflecting in their weekly discussion post-assignment. Most described feeling "nervous" before the first meeting but believed they had productive conversations that led to writers devising a clear plan for revision. Several mentioned incorporating a free-writing task that allowed their tutees to uncover connections to strengthen the draft. A tutor who worked with a native Mandarin speaker described how she questioned the writer about a metaphor that did not seem to connect to the larger theme. She indicated the line that had confused her, "there was a lemon brewed in my heart, which was bitterness," and pushed the writer to use this as a starting point for a free-write to locate connections to her main point. This tutor explained that the task allowed the writer to do just this and that she, the tutor, was "amazed" by the deeper meaning this contributed to the draft. Another tutor whose student was at first resistant to engage in writing was eventually encouraged to do so when he admitted he had "no idea" how to end his paper. The meaning-making in these sessions unfolded as both conversations between tutor and writer and freewriting tasks that allowed the writer to uncover what they had been struggling to say.

This early draft served as "an act of communication" (Severino 59) allowing tutors a glimpse into the lived experiences of writers who shared moments of vulnerability in their narratives. Meg noted that her students were energized after this meeting and dug deeply into meaningful revision. Since this population had no previous experience with tutoring, Meg emphasized that suggestions were just that: suggestions. By leaving ownership in the writers' hands, tutors provided space for them to be creative and brave as they crafted a story to share with their developing community.

Tutors and writers met again two weeks later to discuss penultimate drafts. This time, the focus turned to strategies for self-editing. To prepare for this session, tutors considered language differences in L2 writing as a resource rather than a hindrance. This "translingual approach" (Horner) encourages "an attitude of deliberative inquiry" (304) when considering features that differ from Standard Written English. Rather than simply indicating errors, tutors were encouraged to ask questions about language use. In fact, the group, in one class discussion, decided to eliminate the word "error" from conversations they would have with their tutees. In her written reflection after this second meeting, one tutor drew on that week's assigned reading, "Mother Tongue," by Amy Tan, which explores the different varieties of English spoken in her Chinese-American family. This tutor noted "the many versions of language" students bring to their writing and the importance of recognizing the validity of each language within different contexts. Others drew on Paul Matsuda and Michelle Cox's "accommodationist stance" (45) where readers are encouraged to note accented features in writing but to encourage the writer to make editing decisions. This will allow the writer to "learn new discourse patterns without

completely losing the old so that the writer can maintain both his L1 and L2 linguistic and cultural identities" (45).

The first-year writers' responses to the sessions with their tutors were overwhelmingly positive in both classroom conversation and anonymous surveys. Writers described their tutors as "really encouraging" and underlined the value of having a "pair of fresh eyes" to help them "break down" ideas they were "struggling to put down on paper." One said he felt "astonished" because his tutor was "interested in helping [him] and listening to [his] ideas." Another found that he "surprisingly" learned more about *his own experiences* as he talked through them. These experiences led to more confident drafts. Students, at large, felt they had the *permission* to tell their story, and having the support of their tutors helped them make bolder revisions. The following is an excerpt from a student's first draft where he compares home life to college: "If I was home I would have reacted with violence but I can't because that is not me anymore coming here [...] has changed me in a way where I feel safe from violence back home and at peace due to me not worrying about making it home at the end of the day or looking over my shoulder."

 This is the revised version:

> Now that I am here, I feel at peace because I don't have to be aware of my surroundings or worry about making it home at night. In Rhode Island, I felt physically unsafe but mentally supported because I was in that environment for my whole life. But at [the university], I feel physically safe, but mentally out of place because this environment is nothing like home. However, I have a fresh start and I need to take advantage of that, I will not lose my opportunity for anyone.

The revision illustrates the work the student did to be more specific, vulnerable, and aware of audience after meeting with his tutor. In fact, though students were only asked to meet twice, this student found the experience so valuable that he developed a lasting friendship with his tutor.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE

Perhaps the most meaningful component of the collaboration was when tutors and writers came together one evening over a shared meal to celebrate the final drafts. These had been graded and were discussed as finished texts which everyone, tutors and writers, read ahead of time. Five minutes were devoted to each essay with three speakers responsible for contributing to the discussion: each essay was introduced by one of the writer's peers from class (assigned ahead of time). That student shared favorite moments from the work. Next, the writer's tutor did the same, while also pointing out their favorite revision moves. When it was the writer's turn to talk, they reflected on working with their tutor and noted what was most helpful for their revision process. This dialogue allowed students themselves to become "actively engaged in the conversation about writing" (Scudder et al. 19) and compelled writers and tutors to build metacognitive awareness as each considered the strategies employed during this collaboration: writers reflected on the process they would employ in future assignments while tutors considered their approach to writing center work and the process that would shape this. One tutor, in the reflection submitted after the collaboration had ended, wrote: "My most important takeaway [...] is that we can tutor students without taking away the essence of their writing and their voice." Another described the importance of validating the experiences students bring to their writing and establishing the conversation as a "safe and inclusive space free of judgment or overt criticism."

One of the goals of the collaboration was showing writers their voices have value by fostering a constructive, supportive audience of trained tutors. In the First-year Writing Seminar, seven out of twelve students completed course evaluations: six marked "strongly agree" and one, "agree," that collaborating with their tutors helped them develop as writers. Students described the "value" they felt in their interactions and found tutors to be "encouraging," "insightful," and "welcoming" as they worked to make their essays "even better than before." Students indicated that the strategies they learned allowed them to critically assess their own work and to learn something they could "apply in all of [their] writings" moving forward.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It would have been interesting to track the first-year writers' visits to our center after the required tutoring activity. In terms of their growth as writers, it is difficult to establish any definitive metric. This response to the collaboration, however, speaks to the spirit of the project:

> If I can compare this experience with something, I would compare it to a history book. Every one of us had a unique history of being a language learner. It all started with being clueless, then to adapting, learning, fighting, and finally ending [. . .] I did not expect to produce a final draft the way I did, but through the help of my tutor, my peers, and [my professors], I created a paper that was above my expectations.

The role of writing instructors and tutors mirrors the tour guide archetype: by engaging with student writing, we accompany them as they navigate the unfamiliar terrain of the academy. It is important to "[show] them they have much to give and much to gain" through this process (Sommers and Saltz 147). Collaborative work is an important way to ensure first-year students recognize there is space to share their voices with the larger community during a period of intense transition.

In course evaluations for The Art of Tutoring Writing, one student wrote of the transformative nature of the collaboration, describing it as "the single-most meaningful experience throughout my entire [...college] career [...] Being a tutor has enabled me to make a difference in the lives of students [...] by reassuring them of their place here...." Another said, "The lessons devoted to how to tutor [multilingual students] were incredibly helpful and made it less overwhelming to approach papers [with] a lot going on." Still another said the course "prompted really important discussions [...] about privilege and different student experiences."

Responses suggest that pairing tutors-in-training with Gen. 1.5 writers not only provided important strategies for supporting a diverse range of writers, but it gave tutors a glimpse into the lived experiences of some students at our private university and perhaps, an enlarged understanding of what it means to make meaningful connections in our increasingly globalized world.

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Tutors' Column: The People Make the Place: Reminding Tutors of Their Value in a World of Artificial Intelligence

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As ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence (AI) tools proliferate, it is natural for many writing tutors to think they may soon be out of a job. Generative AI can produce coherent paragraphs, write strong thesis statements, and brainstorm ideas in a matter of seconds. Most tutors would need an entire session with a writer to produce even one of these results. While that may sound discouraging, I argue that the time spent collaborating to create something during a session makes the accomplishment much more worthwhile. A student may have saved 30 minutes by using an AI tool but missed out on an opportunity to converse with a peer and receive personalized feedback. The value of a writing center is not solely quantified by the writing it produces but by the experiences it provides and the development it fosters (Salazar 76; Tiruchittampalam et al. 1). Tutors are responsible for facilitating that experience (Nathan 11). Therefore, what makes writing centers great are the people who work in them.

Competing with AI is an entirely new landscape for tutors. The first step to support students as they navigate this new reality is to understand the instinct to turn to tools like ChatGPT. When most students are asked about their reason for coming to the writing center, they will say something along the lines of "'My teacher said that I need better transitions,'" "'English isn't my first language, and I need help with grammar,'" or "'I need an 'A'—how can I get an A on this paper?'" (Rafoth 155). AI can easily generate better transitions, correct grammar, and write a decent paper. These services play directly into students' initial motivations for coming to the writing center.

However, what brings students into the writing center is often different from what they end up focusing on (Rafoth 154-55). When students get to the writing center, the tutor helps them see beyond the assignment right in front of them. This allows the tutor to give students the support they did not know they needed to ask for. Take the example of a student who came to a session wanting better transitions in their paper. A tutor would likely ask some follow-up questions before responding to this request related to what the writer knows about the function of transitions or what they want the reader to experience when reading their transition. From this information, the tutor will be able to determine what, if any, gaps there are in the student's knowledge. Armed with this supplemental information, the tutor can approach the session through a personalized lens and leave the student with an even greater understanding of transitions.

Generative AI does not have this same ability to pivot. It can only answer the question a student asks. If a student asks it to help them with their transitions, it will pump out plenty of options. The student may be satisfied with the result, but it may not be what they need. Tutors are trained

to operate differently than large language models, and therefore, a student misses out on an incredible learning opportunity when they choose generative AI over the writing center.

This key difference in our ability as tutors compared to AI is useful in reminding ourselves what the role of a tutor is: to support the long-term development of a writer. As writing centers look for ways to implement ChatGPT and other resources in their work, we must question whether that will further the pursuit of this goal. Writers need to craft their arguments, think through ideas, and synthesize knowledge. These processes are applicable well beyond the assignment at hand (Pfrenger et al. 26). AI does not engage in that kind of work when it answers a prompt. Instead, it mimics patterns in the text it has been exposed to and evaluates options of words that are most likely to come next (Collins). Each word is scored based on the words already in the sentence and the original prompt. It selects the word with the highest score and repeats this process until the response is complete. It does the assignment and nothing more.

While tutors, of course, want to support the student with the assignment at hand, the overarching goal is to provide scaffolding (Fitzgerald and Ianetta 15). Scaffolding is a support system of tools, resources, and tips that eventually allow the student to work through adversity on their own. For example, say a student comes to the writing center with a great outline, but they are struggling to put anything on the page. One solution would be for the tutor to guide them in a freewriting exercise. The next time the student feels stuck, they will have freewriting in their repertoire and be able to make further progress on their own. That is one example of the many skills tutors impart that stay with the student long after the session is over. This helps students find success in future assignments and promote continued growth as a writer.

While well-trained tutors can give students better feedback, this is not to say generative AI cannot play any role in student learning (Steiss et al. 7). One population of students who stand to benefit from these new tools is students whose first language is not English, known as L2 learners. Even before the emergence of generative AI, it was noted that some commonly used approaches in the writing center, like non-directive suggestions, can be very frustrating for L2 students (Fitzgerald and Ianetta 10). AI offers an opportunity to meet the needs of L2 students more effectively by closing access and learning gaps (Warschauer et al. 2). For example, receiving writing feedback through ChatGPT has been shown to increase language acquisition (Athanassopoulos et al. 822). Still, these tools have a time and a place. Tutors can play a key role in promoting language diversity while students use AI tools to learn. All students have valuable perspectives to share, and L2 students should not be pushed to share only in standard academic English, which is currently ChatGPT's default (Goodlad and Baker; Savini). Especially within the writing center, it is important to encourage students to remember their own voice.

A final thing to remember is that, as tutors, we can do everything AI can do, but AI cannot do everything we can. Working with tutors humanizes the writing process, and one of the most effective forms of support we can provide is a good conversation. When students are on their own, they can get stuck thinking about their work in a limited way (Rafoth 147). They are so attached to their writing that they cannot see it from any other perspective. Simply verbalizing ideas to another person can make clear what was previously overwhelming by interrupting the writer's rhythm (North 443). This can spark potential new directions that would be out of reach if the writer was working in solitude. The conversation that happens in the writing center is so productive because tutors have been trained in writing pedagogy. They know the right questions to ask a writer that will spur progress.

Working with a tutor can also increase a writer's confidence (Handford 148). Many students may think needing help means they are a poor writer and that it shows weakness, which means they

may be feeling insecure when they come to the writing center. However, their writing is rarely as bad as they think (Rafoth 150). Regardless, tutors are always able to give some form of positive feedback. This feedback comes from someone the student likely views as an accomplished writer. Validation from someone they respect can make a huge difference in reassuring them that they are on the right track and have created something worth reading (Nathan 7).

Writers can also gain confidence when the tutor helps them overcome an obstacle. They might come in because they are really stuck on something: a topic sentence, a thesis, or even just an idea for their paper. If they work through that initial struggle collaboratively, they will be much more confident in their abilities going forward. It shows them that while writing can be difficult at times, it is rewarding to keep at it and create something. This also allows the student to maintain ownership over their writing. If a student turns to ChatGPT, the line between their voice and ideas becomes blurred with AI (Baron). This can make the feelings of accomplishment so revered in the writing center much harder to come by.

As AI and programs like ChatGPT continue to develop, the dynamics between writers and tutors will evolve. It is crucial for those of us who work in writing centers to remember our value. Our job is not to help students put words on a page but to help them create something that is entirely theirs; something to take pride in. There are few opportunities like this for such personalized learning in a collaborative setting. The time we devote to individuals allows us to impart empathy, kindness, and confidence. These are the intangible qualities all tutors have that AI cannot compete with.

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CONFERENCE CALENDAR

October 18-20, 2024: National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, Tacoma, Washington
Conference information: ncptw2024@gmail.com
Website: https://www.thencptw.org/tacoma2024/

October 21-27, 2024: International Writing Centers Association, virtual
Website: https://writingcenters.org/events/2022-iwca-annual-conference

February 20-22, 2025: Southeastern Writing Center Association, Florence, Alabama
Conference information: swca.conference@gmail.com
Website: https://southeasternwritingcenter.wildapricot.org/conference

March 21-22, 2025: Secondary School Writing Centers Association, Provo, Utah
Conference information: conference@sswca.org
Website: https://sswca.org/2025-conference-views-from-the-trail/
Proposals due: October 24, 2024

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Secondary School Writing Centers Association, March 21-22, 2025
Brigham Young University, Provo, UT
Conference partners: SSWCA and Central Utah Writing Project.
"Views from the Trail"

For questions about the conference, contact conference@sswca.org. Proposals for in-person and virtual sessions are due on Monday, October 21, 2024.

CALL FOR PRODUCTION EDITOR
CONNECTING WRITING CENTERS ACROSS BORDERS

We, the editorial team at the blog *Connecting Writing Center Across Borders*, seek applications for a production editor. Created in 2015, the blog is part of *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, an open-access, peer-review scholarly journal, published on the WAC Clearinghouse and supported by Colorado State University.

The production editor is responsible for handling the technical and design aspect of the blog work. This is a volunteer unpaid position, with opportunities to network and collaborate with colleagues in writing and writing center studies. The expected workload is about five hours per week on average.

The position was created in 2020 in light of a need to refresh the blog's design as well as having someone dedicated to publishing and curating WLN's Covid-19 submissions. Our inaugural Production Editor, Dr. Weijia Li, joined in July 2020 when she was a graduate student. During her time, Weijia has established the groundwork of the blog's current design. We hope the new person will carry on Weijia's excellent work and continue creating a good user experience for our readers across the globe.

The production editor is responsible for handling the technical and design aspect of the blog work. This is a volunteer unpaid position, with opportunities to network and collaborate with colleagues in writing and writing center studies. The expected workload is about five hours per week on average. **Applications are due by October 27th**. Please check out the full call for details and how to apply.

WLN

WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship

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