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## Editor's Note

Andrea Efthymiou  
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Our second issue of volume 49 marks a close to the fall semester, while also looking forward, presenting a range of administrative models and insights that could support various writing center contexts. As I prepare to write this, my first editor's note since joining the board in 2023, I'm struck by the range of assessment and staff development initiatives that authors offer to our field.

In "When a Measure Becomes a Target: The Dangers of Using Grades in Writing Center Assessment," Bruce Bowles complicates both quantitative and qualitative methods of assessment for how they center effectiveness as the ultimate goal. Bowles advocates for a mixed-method approach in writing center assessment that shifts from "proving effectiveness" to "*improving effectiveness*" (6, emphasis in original) through collaborative efforts with experienced tutoring staff.

The current issue also considers various approaches to staff education. In "Everything Counts': Impacts of Centering Social Justice in a Writing Center," Graham Stowe examines "how tutors see their evolving self-conceptions, mindsets, and actions as socially responsible citizens inside and outside the writing center" (11). To assess the impact of a tutor education course grounded in Paolo Friere's concept of radical love, Stowe interviewed ten tutors and considered the ways tutors named the impact of a social justice curriculum on their lives beyond the center. Stowe explores the less common occurrence of tutors who did not immediately see a connection between their social justice work in the writing center and in their lives beyond the institution, leading to an engaging discussion of the influence of inequity and trauma in tutors' lives.

Layli Miron further focuses on staff education in "Sustaining and Incentivizing Tutor Education through Self-Paced Modules." Miron describes leveraging a learning management system to develop self-paced modules for staff education that included videos, reading, reflection prompts for discussion boards, and ePortfolios. Their article offers a sustainable approach to professional development by focusing on the design of an intercultural communication training unit, one of five self-paced modules that newly hired consultants complete over a single semester during shift hours. Miron offers adaptable takeaways for writing center administrators.

In their Tutors' Column, titled "Rethinking Consultant Training for a Prison-Based Writing Center," Nathan Gilmore, Grady Hudson, and seventeen of their consultant colleagues in the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI) describe the history of The Rhetoric Center, CPI's writing center founded in 2018. The nineteen consultant co-authors note the range in ages and educational backgrounds of CPI's student body, highlighting that non-directive methods of student support often favored in writing centers outside of prisons do not serve CPI students well. Gilmore et al. provide content areas for



ANDREA EFTHYMIU

staff education that “will be useful to writing center staff at other [prison education programs]” (25) as well as to nontraditional students more broadly.

## Blog Editors’ Note

After seven good years with *Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders* (CWCAB) and five years in her role as Lead Editor, Anna Habib will be stepping down in Spring 2025 to focus on family and pursue other exciting scholarly projects. She’ll stay on as Consulting Editor with the blog, and Esther will be stepping into her role. We are confident the blog will thrive under Esther’s editorial leadership. Weijia will also be stepping down in Spring 2025 to work on a book project. Weijia’s work reviving and maintaining the blog website has been invaluable. We’re so grateful for her efforts and contributions.

Finally, a big thanks to everyone who has contributed to the Slow Agency podcast project as guests and audiences. The podcast is ending this season, but you can visit Spotify to listen to the conversations your colleagues have contributed over the years. Esther, Weijia, and Anna’s podcasting days aren’t over though! They are embarking on a new podcast project together. More soon! Anna, Weijia, and Esther are grateful for the support of readers, listeners, and the *WLN* community over the years. If you haven’t subscribed to the blog or *CWCAB* newsletter yet, you can do so at: <https://wlnconnect.org/subscribe-to-blog-newsletter/>

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# When a Measure Becomes a Target: The Dangers of Using Grades in Writing Center Assessment

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In the moment, it can sometimes be difficult to explain a visceral reaction to a comment from a colleague, especially when that colleague is an administrator. This happened to me a few years ago when the former Director of Institutional Research and Assessment and the then-Associate Provost at my institution expressed an interest in using student grades and/or GPAs in order to assess the effectiveness of the University Writing Center (UWC). My immediate instinct was to resist. Inventing an argument in the spur of the moment, I discussed the inherent statistical noise in such a process and how it would be nearly impossible to isolate the UWC's influence on students' grades. This was a fair enough argument in my estimation; however, I knew that there was something more behind my reluctance to embrace such an assessment. Unable to put my finger on it, I needed to better understand my intuitive, emotional reaction.



BRUCE BOWLES JR.

Over time, I came to realize that my greater concern was with the manner in which such an assessment could potentially incentivize problematic practices. For support of this notion, I turned to scholarship in the wider field of education assessment, drawing upon two useful concepts—assessment washback and consequential validity—both of which are connected to economist Charles Goodhart's famous maxim, referred to as Goodhart's Law: When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure. According to this maxim, if grades become the measure for the effectiveness of a writing center, they will inevitably become a target, incentivizing directive tutoring practices that are more quickly able to improve students' grades, many of which are antithetical to best practices in writing center pedagogy. Yet, to understand this argument, it is critical to understand the complicated relationship writing center scholarship has with quantitative assessments, in particular those that employ students' grades.

## QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT AND WRITING CENTERS: A MIX OF BOTH INTRIGUE AND SKEPTICISM

Although writing center assessment should, ideally, be tethered to research-based approaches that help to improve writing centers, unfortunately, as Miriam Gofine observes, justifying that writing centers are a worthwhile investment to higher-level administrators tends to be the primary driving force behind writing center assessment (40). Other scholars have called traditional measures—such as the number of tutorials, number of students supported, and student satisfaction surveys—into question. Along these lines, Neal Lerner believes that “justifying our existences based upon how many students we work with will never get us very far” (“Counting Beans” 60). Julie Bauer Morrison and Jean-Paul Nadeau have even shown that the scores from



student satisfaction surveys tend to decrease after students receive their grades, with the scores on student surveys falling from a 4.81 to a 3.74 average out of 5 in their study. (The scores did go back up, interestingly, when students were surveyed a year later.)

Furthermore, Isabelle Thompson argues, “Having to settle for satisfaction as an outcome equivalent to success in tutorials demonstrates the importance of developing measures of student learning to push forward both assessment planning and research in writing centers” (37). Thompson also believes that grades and SAT scores (as a baseline for where students began their college careers)—with a large enough sample—can be used to provide evidence of writing center effectiveness. Lori Salem has also demonstrated that students with lower SAT scores tend to use the writing center more often. In order to win arguments with administrators, James Bell advocates more summative, quantitative approaches, noting that “While formative evaluation remains necessary for program improvement, summative evaluation answers accountability questions from people who hold the purse strings” (9). He believes that the more qualitative approaches writing center professionals tend to favor are not effective when working with senior administrators since these approaches are oftentimes viewed as highly subjective. Overwhelmingly, there are a lot of fair critiques of qualitative assessment practices, and the drive for more quantitative assessment methods is a valid one. However, quantitative assessment practices are not always as straightforward as they appear.

Lerner’s odyssey with grade-based assessment is perhaps the most intriguing. In “Counting Beans and Making Beans Count” (published in 1997), Lerner investigated whether students coming to the writing center received higher grades than those students who did not. However, in a 2003 article, Lerner calls his own—along with Stephen Newmann’s—grade-based writing center assessments into question. He notes that these studies were operating off of three primary, yet faulty, assumptions concerning the measures being used: that students with low SAT scores are at a disadvantage in first-year composition courses, that final grades in first-year composition courses accurately reflect writing ability, and that students will receive the same grade in first-year composition regardless of instructor. Lerner goes on to demonstrate how all three assumptions are quite faulty and, as he professes, “about as statistically and logically sound as the flat tax” (“Searching for the ‘Proof’” 62). Beyond the tenuous statistical and logical soundness of such quantitative methods, which will vary predicated on assessment, another sinister force lurks. If grades become a major metric for assessing a writing center, problematic consequences are potentially on the horizon.

### **CONSEQUENTIAL VALIDITY, ASSESSMENT WASHBACK, AND INCENTIVIZING POOR PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES**

A specific component of validity theory needs to be considered in writing center assessment—consequential validity. Samuel Messick, a psychologist and assessment expert, contends that the validity of any assessment needs to consider several factors, one of the most important being the intended and unintended consequences of the use of the assessment and the results it produces. As Messick asserts, “To appraise how well a test does its job, we must inquire whether the potential and actual social consequences of test interpretation and use are not only supportive of the intended testing purposes, but at the same time are consistent with other social values” (8). When determining the validity of any assessment, it is crucial that we pay attention to these consequences, including—and especially—those that might not be intended.

Such consequences are what Michael Kane, an expert in educational measurement, refers to as unintended systemic effects. Kane observes how testing programs and assessments “can have



substantial, unintended effects on how institutions function (e.g., on what is included in school curricula),” further arguing that “such systemic effects have become major concerns, especially in education” (49). This is what is commonly referred to as assessment washback, a phenomenon in which tests can begin to dictate curriculum and influence what is taught as well as valued in an institution. Assessment washback can be as simple and seemingly innocent as teachers emphasizing certain content before an assessment to ensure their students perform well or as insidious as altering an entire curriculum to ensure a strong performance on an assessment. The former is potentially an example of positive washback; if the assessment is well-aligned with the curriculum and the construct it purports to measure, the teachers’ focus can improve teaching and learning. However, negative washback occurs when the assessment is not well-aligned with the curriculum. In these instances, the assessment starts to actually dictate the curriculum itself.

In the case of writing center assessment, the potential unintended consequences are quite obvious—both writing center directors and tutors may become overly focused on improving students’ grades on the texts they bring to writing centers. If grades and student GPAs become a prime point of emphasis in a writing center assessment, there is a chance they will influence writing center pedagogy, accompanied by more directive, less student-centered approaches to tutoring, especially if the administration of the institution is a more quantitatively-driven, outcome-focused group. Making sure the text will receive a better grade might become the priority over more effective—but time-consuming—pedagogical methods meant to improve students’ writing abilities and habits over the long-term.

This is where Goodhart’s Law comes into play. To reiterate, Goodhart’s Law states that when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure. What Goodhart’s Law calls attention to is a strong tendency to optimize for what is going to be measured, particularly when that measurement carries high import. An apt example of Goodhart’s Law in academia is the *U.S. News & World Report* college rankings. In 1983, *U.S. News & World Report* decided to begin evaluating colleges, ranking them on excellence. Without any definitive measures for educational excellence, the journalists at *U.S. News & World Report* chose proxies for excellence instead (O’Neil 52). These proxies included the SAT scores of incoming freshmen, student-teacher ratios, acceptance rates, retention rates, graduation rates, alumni donations, etc. (O’Neil 52-53). This algorithm has since had unintended—and rather devastating—consequences. Many colleges optimize solely for the proxies that affect their ratings while ignoring other practices that would better improve overall educational quality.

If writing centers use grades and/or GPAs in their assessment practices (a proxy for the effectiveness of tutorials—I would argue) they are not necessarily creating an explicit incentive program, but they may be incentivizing pedagogical approaches that will attempt to improve students’ grades during tutorials. This is much more likely in educational environments that become focused on hitting targets and tether funding and continued support to particular metrics. Ideally, writing center professionals would not succumb to such temptations, yet if the performance of a writing center on such an assessment were tethered to funding, tenure for the director, etc., the incentivization is apt to be strong. Despite the fact that improvement in grades can be beneficial for students to a certain extent, the tutoring practices that would be used to achieve them could undermine students’ long-term growth as writers in an effort to obtain short-term improvement in grades by employing more directive tutoring practices. And, as philosopher Ruth Grant claims, “An incentive that serves a legitimate purpose must be judged ethically illegitimate when it undermines a more important competing purpose” (63). Incentivizing such



behavior may undermine the instructional nature of writing centers and shift writing centers away from a more process-oriented approach.

### **SATISFYING THE DESIRE FOR MEANINGFUL DATA WITH A MORE QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

I am also leery of completely focusing on proving effectiveness as the primary goal of writing center assessments. Rather, it might be better to focus on improving effectiveness. Over the last few years, I drew upon the work of R. Mark Hall in order to enact an assessment of our tutoring practices in the UWC. The staff and I developed a list of 10 Valued Practices for our UWC. As Hall notes, the work that goes into generating such a list is rewarding in and of itself. The UWC staff had lively discussions as we took an initial list generated by a graduate student tutor and me (as part of a project for his independent study) and revised it, cutting certain values, adding new ones, and arguing over seemingly miniscule particularities that actually proved quite important when we got to the core of the issue. For instance, the emphasis on positive reinforcement in tutorials (i.e., Value #4: Identified, or had the student identify, at least three positive elements of the text and/or writing process that were useful for praise and encouragement) and student agency (i.e., Value #9: Ensured student was granted primary ownership for revisions made during the session) that came out of these conversations drove at core principles we discussed throughout tutor training and staff meetings; however, once they were codified as values, everyone was more aware of them and—in particular—whether they were actually being enacted. An equally lively conversation emerged three years later when we repeated the assessment as we revised the first list for the second cycle, connecting to Hall’s observation that “shared principles and propositions for observing might lead us to unearth—and, perhaps, critically examine—underlying values and assumptions guiding tutoring routines” (16). Our discussions definitely proved rather fruitful in this regard; the generation and revision of the 10 values actually served to define—and at times reinforce—what we truly valued in the UWC.

Both times the UWC conducted the assessment, I worked with the veteran tutors (those with more than one year experience) to norm how we would evaluate tutorials based on the scoring sheet we generated. Throughout the year, we collaboratively observed 100 tutorials, often when the veteran tutors had downtime or as part of my own formal observations of the tutors. The data were completely anonymous; no tutor was held accountable for a poor performance. However, when the data were collected and analyzed, it did allow the UWC staff and me to see where we were performing admirably and where we might not be doing as well as expected. Three years later, when we repeated the assessment, we were able to track our growth across the 10 values. For instance, the UWC saw a remarkable improvement on Value #10, which focused on creating revision goals for the student for after the consultation (or before the next consultation). This was encouraging since I made this a major area of focus in tutor training and staff meetings after the performance during the initial assessment cycle was not as impressive as the UWC staff and I would have hoped.

I use this example not as a form of self-congratulation nor as a model I believe everyone should replicate. Far from it. (The model is not even mine.) This assessment was successful, though, since it tethered to the rhetoric of the institution itself. Continuous improvement is a major point of emphasis when discussing assessment at my institution. Rather than using assessment to demonstrate our effectiveness, we were able to demonstrate how effective we were at striving for continuous improvement. Additionally, we demonstrated the value of our qualitative approach to assessment. (To be fair, it also helped that the UWC excelled on traditional metrics—students visited us quite frequently and valued our services, which is evidenced through our surveys and stories the administration had heard themselves.)



## HOW RAD DO WE WANT TO BE?

Calls for, and the implementation of, RAD (replicable, aggregable, and data-driven) research and assessment strategies abound in academia and in writing center studies. Such approaches can be immensely beneficial and provide insight into institutional trends, educational practices, etc. Nevertheless, they can also come with a host of unintended consequences. In the end, assessment tells us as much about what we value in our programs as it does about the performance of our programs. When considering using grades and/or GPAs in writing center assessment, the concept of assessment washback and Goodhart's Law demonstrate that there is a significant risk of creating a target out of such a measurement, of making grades the valued priority over learning.

Although it is tempting to think writing center professionals can avoid such perils, incentivization is one of the most powerful forces on human behavior. In particular, as Grant argues, "we need to remember that incentives are a form of power as well as a form of trade" (41). They can exert a strong influence over people and control behavior, even if they are offering something in return. By giving in to demands, whether explicit or implicit, to tether writing center assessments to students' grades, writing center professionals leave themselves vulnerable in a variety of ways. The assessment can backfire, and grades might not correlate, or—even worse—negatively correlate, with writing center attendance. Grade improvement could become the sole or primary currency by which the writing center is evaluated. And, even if the results are positive, if a writing center is demonstrated to improve students' grades, the tendency will only further the demand for such results.

When designing writing center assessments, then, we need to carefully contemplate one question in particular: What are our assessment practices incentivizing? Consequential validity matters substantially when assessing a writing center; the wrong measurement can skew goals and priorities in unintended ways. The dangers these unintended systemic effects can create are often difficult to deal with once they manifest. For this reason, consequential validity needs to be of paramount concern when designing assessments for writing centers. And, ideally, considerations of consequential validity should occur in the planning stages as well as after the assessment has been enacted. Similar to medicine, prevention is often better—and less costly—than treatment.

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# “Everything Counts”: Impacts of Centering Social Justice in a Writing Center

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing centers have long contended that the experience of working as a peer tutor has substantial benefits for tutors themselves, beyond just improving their own writing abilities. Numerous studies have shown that serving as a writing tutor can lead to gains in communication and interpersonal skills, increased confidence, and invaluable hands-on experience for future education or career paths (Hughes et al.; Bell; DeFeo and Caparas). Since the turn of the century, writing center scholarship has also increasingly called for incorporating principles of social justice into our work, arguing that our centers should strive to create more inclusive, equitable, and empowering spaces for marginalized student populations (Condon; Driscoll; Faison and Treviño; Geller et al.; Greenfield; Greenfield and Rowan). However, there has been limited exploration into how implementing a social justice-oriented approach to tutor education and training may shape tutors’ development, not only as students but as socially aware citizens more broadly.



This study investigates the potential impacts of a radically-oriented, social justice-centered, tutor training curriculum on those tutors’ personal growth, self-awareness, and civic engagement within and beyond the context of the writing center. Drawing inspiration from critical pedagogy traditions and Freirean notions of love, dialogue, and critical thinking as central to humanizing education, I designed—and refined over the course of several years—a semester-long tutor preparation course that framed the work of tutoring writing as an opportunity to empower both tutors and student writers. The course developed organically, first by my introducing Paulo Freire’s work to the reading list, and then through my own continued interest in serving as a mentor to my tutors. Throughout this process, I began to consider how the course and training method contributes to the broader project of social transformation toward a more just world.

An extensive body of scholarship has highlighted the diverse benefits for tutors that stem from their experiences working in writing centers. Research has pointed to development of “leadership skills” (Bell 11), professional development and communication patterns (Hughes et al.), and self-efficacy and confidence in writing (Hixon-Bowles and Powell). Beyond these relatively tangible skills, studies have shown working as a tutor improves empathy, adaptability, and self-awareness (DeFeo and Caparas 154–56), and some writing centers have developed programs specifically for improving tutors’ mental health by teaching mindfulness practices (Driscoll and Wells).

Writing center scholarship has also continually called for incorporating principles of social justice, inclusion, and critical pedagogy into our programs and practices. Laura Greenfield has explicitly called for no less than revolutionary change in writing center pedagogy. She contends, rightly, that writing centers should strive to create welcoming, identity-affirming spaces that empower

historically marginalized student populations, advancing equity and dismantling unjust power structures (Greenfield 124–26). Others, too, have studied social justice extensively, with many advocating for anti-racist pedagogies and recognizing the uniqueness of all students who visit the writing center (Condon; Diab et al.; Eddy et al.; Geller et al.; Greenfield and Rowan). For instance, the field has focused on social justice with studies on gender and sexuality (Denny; Denny et al.; Mackiewicz and Babcock; Rihn and Sloan) and labor and contingent employment (Herb et al.). In some cases, writing center efforts towards inclusion overlap with institutional aims, as Dana Driscoll notes that writing centers’ educational aims overlap significantly with wider general education goals of nurturing “civically-minded” graduates who will contribute to society (171). I aim to immerse tutors within a social justice-oriented training curriculum, with the hope that it will have substantial impacts on their civic values, critical consciousness regarding systemic injustice, and sense of responsibility to work towards equity, shaping their personal ethics and engagement both within tutorial spaces and beyond.

To these ends, I rely on Paulo Freire’s educational philosophy to ground the work of a tutor training course. His critical pedagogy promotes teaching practices centered on principles like problem-posing education, empathetic dialogue, praxis, and above all “a profound love for people and the world” (Freire 89) as methods to engage students and teachers as partners in co-creating knowledge aimed at social transformation. Students read portions of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as a foundational text, focusing on the relationship between love, dialogue, and critical thinking. The connection to writing center work is obvious, by emphasizing dialogue, which exists in a dialectical relationship with critical thinking. Tutors and students engage in dialogue that both “requires critical thinking” and is “capable of generating critical thinking,” setting up a recursive structure that creates and recreates new dialogue and sets up both tutors and students for more engaged critical thinking (92). Dialogue is the “encounter between [people], mediated by the world, in order to name the world” (88). The goal of dialogue, in other words, is to find meaning, and the creation of meaning is the creation of a new reality for students. At the center of these dialogues is love.

Love is *the* way into a Freirean dialogue. Freire writes that “[b]ecause love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is a commitment to others” (89). Meeting a student in the writing center requires that we teach tutors that it is not only good for them to love—to be courageously committed to—the writers they work with, it is critical to their work. This love will often manifest itself in empathy, in that tutors regularly use their own approaches to writing to help others find their way through the writing process, but it will also be a love that admires writers for who they are and for their work. Freire writes: “Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself” (89).

Teaching writing, then, especially in the case of a one-to-one situation where it is a literal dialogue between two people, requires an acceptance of love between people and the world. By focusing the course on social justice and Freirean philosophy, in addition to developing the practical skills required of tutoring, I aim to teach tutors the importance of critical consciousness and a recognition of the world’s injustices. Ideally, our work contributes to a sense of obligation towards fellow humans and a desire for equity in their writing center work and day-to-day lives outside the center.



## METHODS

Through semi-structured interviews, this study examines how tutors see their evolving self-conceptions, mindsets, and actions as socially responsible citizens inside and outside the writing center. After obtaining IRB approval, I conducted and recorded interviews. I interviewed ten of the eleven then-currently working tutors. Eight of the tutors were women and two were men. Two female tutors, one Arab American and one African American, identified as people of color born to immigrants. Four tutors were first-generation college students. There were four sophomores, three juniors, and three seniors, all in their late teens or early twenties. I asked two definitional questions, focused on how each tutor would define writing center work and social justice. I then asked each tutor to describe, if any, the relationship between social justice work and writing center work. Finally, I asked tutors to describe what benefits they saw or foresaw coming from their time working in the writing center. I coded transcripts using MAXQDA software based on categories related to tutors' descriptions and definitions: 1) their work in the center, 2) social justice, 3) the relationship between writing centers and social justice, and 4) the personal and professional impacts they attribute to their tutoring experience.

## RESULTS

Tutors agreed on the broad definitions. They defined writing center work as expected, emphasizing practices of conversing with students, listening to their concerns, and guiding them with discussion. Their definitions of social justice were similarly unsurprising, centering on notions of equity, equal treatment, and empowerment for members of marginalized communities through activism, advocacy, and reforming social structures and policies. The results also confirm earlier studies that show that tutors believe their work in the writing center will benefit them professionally (Hughes et al.).

Tutors' perceptions diverged somewhat when discussing connections between writing center work and the broader project of social justice. Six respondents used the words "equity" or "equality," and those who did not relied on similar language, referencing societal inequities related to class, gender, or race. Five respondents made direct reference to inequities in American public education, and seven discussed "differences" or "cultural differences." Two tutors focused on listening skills and allowing others to tell their stories. This growth in listening, in turn, created a greater sense of solidarity with others. As one noted, through dialogic engagement, "I find myself growing to become more accepting of those I probably would have just looked away from [before]." Three tutors explicitly connected their interpersonal growth to wider university values of forming students who care for the "whole person" (a stated aim in the school's mission). Two noted increased awareness of their own privilege and how this shapes their worldview. The answers were less consistent than in the questions defining the terms, however.

Despite varied perceptions of the concrete relationship between writing center tutoring and social justice activism, each participant attributed some personal growth and development to their tutoring experience, which aligned with the course's aims of nurturing more civically-engaged citizens. This growth was shown through an expanded open-mindedness toward diverse perspectives. As one tutor explained, "I try to get out of my own head and see the world through someone else's view. And I think that's what social justice is." Interviewees' references to concrete civic action were mostly vague or went unmentioned; only one tutor indicated substantial engagement in social justice causes outside of the writing center. For most tutors, social justice beyond the writing center as an active pursuit remained more abstract aspiration than realized practice.

The most compelling results came from two tutors who failed to see any relationship, with one stating outright “I never thought of [them as connected].” This lack of agreement suggests the curriculum did not necessarily convey a conception of writing centers as a space intertwined with social change. These two tutors ultimately had the most compelling responses in explaining their understanding of social justice and writing center work. While Ashley stated that they’d “never thought of it,” another tutor, Reza, said, point blank, “no, so far.”<sup>1</sup> I was unsurprised; I thought more tutors would struggle with the question. The day-to-day grind of a semester can make it difficult to connect with others in the way social justice work requires. What was surprising, though, was that after saying they saw no connection between social justice and writing centers, both tutors went on to show very clear lines between their tutoring and social justice. Reza is an immigrant, having been born in a refugee camp and moving to the United States as an infant. After saying she didn’t see a connection, she also stated, “We could be doing social justice work without even realizing it.” She demonstrated a very clear recognition of structural injustices and showed an interest in educational opportunities in the neighborhoods around the college, which have fewer resources than local private schools or suburban public schools.

Ashley’s interview followed a similar trajectory; after seeing no connection between writing center work and social justice, she made some direct connections between the two:

I think it’s made me more aware of, you know, the issues of the world, which are huge and kind of everywhere. And it’s made me more confident in the fact that my generation and people like-minded do have an effect and can have an effect on people even if it’s just, you know, helping someone with a paper and trying to encourage them and make them more confident in their writing. I feel like everything counts and it’s nice knowing that I do have an effect even if it’s not, you know, bringing down a corporation, which would be nice, but I haven’t gone there. Yet.

Like in the first case, here we see a tutor with a nuanced take on her place in the world, showing a recognition that her work in the writing center is not creating large-scale revolution, but that, as she states, everything counts.

## **DISCUSSION**

The difference between Ashley and Reza and the other tutors is likely due to personal circumstances. As Reza is a refugee and an immigrant, asking her about social justice in a writing center seems very small, I suspect. Ashley’s college career has been colored by a deep and significant trauma. The perspective of individual tutors will always affect the way they see the relationship between their work and social justice. All of our tutors are aware of the unfairness of life and the world’s sometimes cruel indifference, but some have first-hand knowledge and personal experience that could make helping a student develop a thesis statement feel insignificant. I would argue, though, that these two, because of their first-hand knowledge about life’s injustices, simultaneously see their writing center work as relatively small and as deeply meaningful. When a researcher in a quiet, safe office asks about the social justice impact of tutoring on the world, it is quite easy to see how these experiences might lead a tutor to immediately deny the connection but then later show how important social justice is to their work. Who could know better the importance of a safe space than a refugee? And who could know better that “everything counts” than someone who knows what it is, as a college student, to experience serious trauma?



The initial evidence provided by this study suggests that integrating social justice as a centerpiece of tutor training may, under certain circumstances, substantially shape tutors' personal growth and identity in ways that advance broader writing center missions of forming graduates ready for civic participation. While impacts varied, most tutors described gains in awareness, perspective-taking, and perceived responsibility to community that stem from a curriculum foregrounding diversity, equity, and radical empathy. Even in cases where tutors did not connect social justice to their roles, the reflective, dialogic practice of tutoring appeared to enhance their disposition towards open-mindedness and appreciation for difference, though most tutors did not trace specific civic actions to the Freirean training course. This underscores Greenfield's contention that many writing centers adopt the mantle of social justice without realizing the kinds of radical restructuring required for transformative praxis. Nonetheless, results suggest writing centers aiming to fulfill broad educational goals should consider social justice's capacity to enrich tutors' development as human beings, not just academics. As I argue here, Freirean love is one important way into helping students grow, and it starts with directors showing the same kind of love to their students, being deeply committed to them and their lives. There are, of course, lines and boundaries, but we cannot pretend that our students are not fully realized individuals when they enter our centers or classrooms for their writing center training, nor that they don't bring with them many tools and perspectives that will make them better tutors. As we commit ourselves to them fully, helping them find their paths to being the best tutors and people they can be, we exhibit the love we expect them to show the writers with whom they work. Ultimately, while translating this work into activism remains complicated, a writing center explicitly oriented towards justice shows extraordinary promise for nurturing more conscious, engaged citizens.

#### NOTE

1. Both of these names are pseudonyms.

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## Sustaining and Incentivizing Tutor Education through Self-Paced Modules

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Most writing centers staffed by peer tutors undergo regular turnover of employees as they graduate. While a consistent training program for new tutors can ensure that the entire staff knows the essentials of one-to-one writing pedagogy, no such program can cover everything. Often, tutors continue their learning through professional development (PD) meetings that focus on more advanced topics chosen by the center's leaders. To keep the entire staff engaged, including returning tutors, the PD curriculum must change from semester to semester. Yet, that means that some tutors will miss out on topics covered in a semester before their hiring. In contexts of high turnover, how can tutor educators sustain tutors' knowledge? This article offers one solution: online PD modules that reward completion with badges.



### TUTORING WRITING IS GETTING HARDER, AND TUTORS NEED MORE PREPARATION

As the nature of writing and students' needs evolve, tutors' jobs grow more challenging by the year. I recall my own tutor training in 2010 with nostalgia: times, and the demands on tutors, seemed simpler then. In fact, times really have changed. There are more graduate and professional students than ever before ("Condition of Education"), many of whom grew up with languages other than English, and they need tutors' help with complex genres such as scholarly articles, theses, and dissertations. Students, including tutors, increasingly have neurodivergent diagnoses ("Neurodiversity in Education"), as well as mental health challenges (Gallup and Lumina), affecting interpersonal dynamics. Compounding these complexities, online tutoring—videoconferencing and asynchronous—became a necessity because of the pandemic. Moreover, as composing platforms proliferate and chatbots get smarter, tutors need familiarity with multimodal and AI writing. Tutors need robust training to successfully respond to each of these common yet complicated needs. Yet, whether a writing center can afford an entire semester of training or a single day, it's impossible—and undesirable—to cover every pertinent issue at the outset. A truly comprehensive training would overwhelm new tutors with information that is best learned while they are actively tutoring and testing their praxis.

At my writing center, training currently extends over the three months of summer semester, delivered via a module in our learning management system (LMS). It introduces new peer consultants to the values and practices of our center, hones their perceptiveness through a series of exercises where they get feedback on their feedback, and supports interpersonal skills. This mostly asynchronous curriculum requires consultants to spend several hours per week reading and completing activities in which they apply the theories. Our center's funding model allows us to pay tutors for their time, but other incentives, including those I mention below, can be used in

centers that may not have the same kind of funds available. Because I want them to focus on developing their ability to coach writers, and because many of them hold summer jobs, I hesitate to add anything else to the nearly forty lessons. So, many pressing topics get only cursory attention. Although we hold weekly PD meetings for our consultants, since we feature different lessons each semester, it could be a year until a new consultant encounters a given topic.

To give all our consultants access to the same knowledge, regardless of their hire date, our directors and graduate assistants have thus far developed five self-paced modules covering ePortfolios, accessible document design, oral communication, conversational English, and intercultural communication. Each module is designed to take about ten hours for consultants to complete, ideally during their downtime on shift. The development, implementation, and implications of the module on intercultural communication—which took several years of gradual work—will be this article’s focus.

### **DEVELOPING THE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION MODULE**

Numerous scholars have called for writing centers to better prepare tutors to work with multilingual writers (i.e., L2, ESL, EAL, ELL, NNES), who have become a core constituency in U.S. higher education. Many writing center leaders have responded to these calls by developing workshops and trainings tailored to the multilingual students at their institutions (Lin and DeLuca; Kryzhanivska et al.; Cox; Draxler et al.; Rinaldi). To add to the tutor education resources on this salient subject, and to demonstrate the potential of self-paced PD in writing centers, I briefly explain my two-year process of creating a module devoted to multilingual writers.

While undertaking coursework in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), I piloted the first version of the module with a handful of consultants. Based on the TESOL scholarship, I knew that educators need to understand multilingual students’ backgrounds and aspirations. Synthesizing TESOL scholarship on this subject, I composed essays on multilingual learners’ prior educational experiences, the home languages common among our writing center’s clients, differing definitions of good writing around the world, and the tension between linguistic assimilation and empowerment. I also assigned chapters from the collection *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* (Bruce and Rafoth). While the pilot group said they enjoyed most of the lessons, they found the reading load too heavy, especially since they lacked sufficient opportunities to discuss their takeaways with each other. I used their feedback to revise the curriculum, downsizing it from ten to six lessons and integrating it into required PD meetings. Although the consultants found the leaner version more manageable, tying it to meetings revived the question of how to sustain learning: within a few months, many consultants would depart and be replaced, so only a subset of the staff would have engaged with this critical topic. Repeating the same meetings the next semester would bore the returning consultants. Therefore, the next semester, I sought to turn the updated lessons into a self-paced module (again), taking greater advantage of the multimodal and interactive capabilities of Canvas, our institution’s LMS.

When I think back to the clunky, now-defunct LMS I used as an undergraduate, I am impressed by the many functionalities of current systems, such as Canvas, Blackboard, Moodle, and Brightspace. Their most basic advantage is to reduce the administra-trivia of teaching: when used well, they streamline the organization of educational materials and the tracking of student work, leaving more energy to be invested in engaging with students and providing feedback. Many writing centers take advantage of their institution’s LMS to manage tutor education (Greer, Lytle, Shrewsbury, and Dvorak) or even to deliver asynchronous workshops to classes across the

curriculum (Towle). These pedagogues use videos and discussion forums to engage learners in the subject matter, whether that is writing center policies or annotated bibliographies.

Marrying asynchrony with interactivity: this was likewise my aim for the intercultural communication module. For guidance, I turned to the Modern Classrooms Project (MCP), which was recommended by my TESOL professors. MCP advocates for self-pacing, blended teaching, and mastery-based grading. In contrast to traditional classes that move in lockstep, in MCP classes, students move at their own pace through a unit after the teacher introduces it. Blended instruction refers to occasional whole-group lectures or discussions, frequent one-to-one instruction, and learning materials that students access independently. In those materials, video lessons recorded by the instructor play a starring role, allowing students to rewatch the lesson as many times as they need. Since the class is self-paced, the student should be appropriately stimulated: for some, completing the required assignments will provide sufficient challenge, while others will thrive by taking on ambitious, complex projects. Every student must demonstrate mastery of the unit before they can move on.

I adapted MCP's principles, designed for classroom contexts, to transform the materials into interactive videos. Within each video, I created comprehension quizzes to check consultants' recall and understanding of the information they had just learned. In some lessons, I incorporated multiple levels of activities for them to complete. For example, in the first lesson, they must compose a reflection on their language learning experiences; if they want to do more, they can create an infographic for educators. I used Zoom to record and caption the videos. Realizing that some learners prefer reading over watching, I also provided written versions of each lesson; the latter are publicly available on our program's website, <https://auburn.edu/academic/provost/university-writing/resources/>, which hosts hundreds of open educational resources (Brown, Smith, and Cicchino).

Aligning with the MCP philosophy of universal mastery, every consultant should be able to complete the module within their downtime on shift over a single semester, but the activities invite the most motivated learners to invest more time and energy. To encourage peer learning, consultants share their responses in discussion forums. Since, in some of the activities, consultants produce educational resources, I also encourage them to share their work on their ePortfolios, which they all create during their writing center employment, possibly benefiting a wider audience.

Getting the intercultural communication module to a stage of pedagogical soundness took several semesters of gradual studying, writing, and iterating—a fair amount of work, to be sure. Yet, such self-paced modules offer reusability and scalability that pay educational dividends, with the initial time investment paying off over years of students' learning. The modules may remain in use for as long as they are deemed relevant. Moreover, they can serve other audiences besides the peer consultants. Since our center belongs to a writing-across-the-curriculum program that supports faculty and staff as well as students, materials designed for one group often translate to others. I used a slightly revised form of the intercultural communication lessons to guide a faculty learning community through a series of discussions about teaching multilingual learners; we enjoyed rousing discussions on topics ranging from instructors' responsibility to help students master English at the sentence level to the risks of cultural essentialism.

### **MICRO-CREDENTIALING: BADGES FOR EPORTFOLIOS**

While the MCP focuses on contexts where students earn grades for their work, in a writing center, what does a tutor earn for partaking in extra PD? Our consultants are paid whenever they are on



shift, and we ask them to use their free time to pursue pertinent learning. But some extrinsic motivation—a micro-credential, for example—can complement tutors’ intrinsic motivation to improve their knowledge and skills. Awarding the peer consultants a badge they can include on their résumé and ePortfolio allows them to earn formal acknowledgment for their effort. Much like their analog forebears pinned to scouts’ vests, badges are micro-credentials people can use to demonstrate their learning. As precedent, a decade ago, Purdue’s Writing Lab awarded its consultants badges for undertaking special projects, such as facilitating workshops and staff meetings, presenting at conferences, and leading English conversation groups (Conard-Salvo and Bomkamp). In the first semester of badging, their tutors demonstrated interest in earning these micro-credentials, which some chose to feature on their LinkedIn profiles. Unfortunately, the in-house software used to develop these badges is now defunct.

In our center’s case, I went a low-tech route with the badges, which may protect them from inevitable changes in software platforms. Rather than creating them through a formal badging application, I envisioned them as eye-catching images that our consultants would feature on their ePortfolios to demonstrate their achievements to a site visitor. A consultant with graphic design skills, Jesse Beck, created badge templates. He made several options and polled his colleagues about their favorites. The winning design features our unit’s color scheme and a playful pencil that we personalize with the consultant’s name. A central icon conveys the module’s subject, with the intercultural communication badge featuring a symbolic talking globe.



Offering badges to encourage students to perform certain tasks belongs to the larger educational trend of gamification. Using aspects of gameplay like characters, quests, rewards, playfulness, and competition can motivate some students to engage more deeply in learning. For instance, Jamie Henthorn, a writing center director, turned her tutor training course into a role-playing game where tutors become characters and undertake quests. Such guided playfulness, Henthorn reflects, can encourage novice tutors to be curious and exploratory since they can experiment with imaginary identities and rousing missions. While my center’s badging program has fewer elements of play, it does attempt to motivate consultants with the prospect of a prize.

“Attempt” is the operative word! My hope that dozens of consultants would excitedly work through the modules did not become reality in the first year, when badges were offered for two

modules. Eight consultants (one-fifth of our staff) earned a badge in accessible document design; many of these consultants had an added incentive to finish that module, since we required it for anyone who wanted to author a resource for publication on our website. The intercultural communication module saw less uptake: six consultants started it, but only three finished it and earned the badge.

For the three stalwarts, they accomplished the following learning outcomes, as assessed through their written and multimodal products:

1. Critically reflecting on their own language learning experiences and intercultural interactions.
2. Comparing English's features with those of another language of their choice.
3. Analyzing the cultural beliefs that produce a seemingly normal writing center practice.
4. Developing a worksheet explaining a U.S. perspective on a writing convention or concept to an international/multilingual writer.
5. Making an argument about the writing center's role in linguistic assimilation, empowerment, and separatism.
6. Presenting principles of intercultural communication for a non-writing center audience.

For outcome #6, one consultant created a PowToon video explaining the U.S. definition of plagiarism, another designed a PowerPoint about an essay in *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors*, and another made a brief podcast reflecting on his takeaways. Along with the language transfer chart (outcome #2) and the worksheet (outcome #4), this final project would make a compelling addition to consultants' ePortfolios, providing evidence of their learning along with the badge itself.

While I was pleased with the learning of these consultants, I realized that, to achieve my longer-term vision of most consultants working through the self-paced modules, the badges provided insufficient impetus. The three consultants who finished it were already unusually proactive employees and likely would have finished the module even without the promise of a badge.

To provide more motivation, I developed a new job progression opportunity. Before, the only promotion option, with a limited number of openings, was the role of Lead Consultant. The position's significant workload—mentoring coworkers, facilitating weekly small-group PD meetings, and assisting the directors—deters most consultants from applying. So, I created a new title as a midpoint between Peer Consultant and Lead Consultant: Senior Consultant, which comes with a small raise. To be eligible for promotion to either the Senior or Lead role, consultants now need to earn at least two badges, as well as participate in one of our optional committees or affinity groups. Though the results remain to be seen, the prospect of showing obvious job progression on a résumé might motivate more consultants to undertake the self-paced modules—ultimately benefiting the writers they serve.

## TAKEAWAYS FOR WRITING TUTOR DEVELOPMENT

The project laid out here offers two practical takeaways for the writing center field:

1. **Sustaining tutor education:** LMSs offer many advantages in building and organizing training and PD modules. While creating a high-quality asynchronous module requires a robust process of curriculum development, testing, and revision, that initial investment will yield years of consultant learning. In my case, entering the second year of implementing self-paced modules, I simply copied the existing modules over to the new course site. While someday, the modules will need to be revised to reflect the latest

scholarship, for now, the only day-to-day task is to monitor for submissions, provide feedback as needed, and personalize badges upon completion.

2. **Incentivizing elective PD:** My experience indicates that badges alone are insufficient motivation for most consultants to invest energy in optional PD. More substantial incentives are needed. The prospect of job progression should be within reach for most writing centers, since, in cases of budgetary constraints, a higher title need not come with a raise.

On a personal level, I found crafting the module to be the most meaningful project I completed at Auburn University's Miller Writing Center, due in part to its alignment with my longstanding interest in migration and linguistic diversity, and in part to how much time I spent on its many iterations. The time investment might seem alarming, but the project was hardly a daily labor. It gradually evolved over several years. Seniors, when asked to reflect on their college writing experiences, identify projects to which they devoted great time and effort as especially meaningful (Eodice, Geller, and Lerner)—logically, a semester-long project becomes more memorable and personal than a paper dashed off right before the deadline. Just like our students, we in administrative positions benefit from extended projects where, as I experienced with this module, our knowledge grows, our pedagogical creativity flourishes, and our values find practical expression.

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## Rethinking Consultant Training for a Prison-Based Writing Center

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The number of university-level education programs in prisons is growing. The Alliance for Higher Education in Prison publishes a directory ("2024 National Directory") that currently lists almost 500 prison education programs (PEPs). And recently expanded access to PELL grants for incarcerated students provides funding that will aid new program development. Providing writing support is key to these programs' success. To support student writers, prisoner-staffed writing centers are emerging in PEPs. As these centers develop, they should train writing consultants to serve the particular needs of the students who will use them.

Within our prison-based writing center, the single distinctive feature that best explains our students' unique needs is their age and time away from academia. Student ages range from 30s through 60s, averaging 46. Having been away from any academic setting for years, even decades, they are disconnected from knowledge of what their teachers expect in academic writing. And that situation informs our thoughts about adding to our training agenda.

In the fall of 2015, the first cohort of students enrolled at our prison-based, satellite campus, the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI). The curriculum was set up so students could earn a bachelor's degree in five years, after completing the same general education and major requirements as students on the main campus. However, CPI program administrators quickly discerned that these learners, long removed from academia or completely unfamiliar with it, would need extra help, particularly with written work. That realization eventually birthed a writing center.

We opened our writing center (The Rhetoric Center) in the summer of 2018. Our center is staffed solely by incarcerated consultants. All of us began working in our center while we were CPI students, but several have continued after we graduated (and are still housed in the same prison). During our center's first seven years, the staff has ranged from 12-20 consultants, currently at 19, and the number of enrolled students has been about 100. So we have approximately one consultant for every five or six students. Furthermore, upwards of 98% of students in the program use the center, most using it frequently. That level of student access to consultants, coupled with high levels of personal familiarity (we live with, and bunk with, the students we serve), makes us unusually well-qualified to be aware of students' academic needs.

Because our program offers students the same curriculum as students on the main campus, the CPI administrators and our center's faculty advisor believed that our consultant training should follow long-established traditions for college/university writing centers: reading classic publications on writing center theory and practice, discussing pedagogical purpose, holding



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practice sessions, etc. We train our consultants to tell students, “We don’t ‘fix’ your papers; we help you learn to become better writers,” and we focus on larger global issues such as research questions and organization, always making sure that students have primary agency in consulting sessions. Yet, both our clients and consultants found that this non-directive method sometimes left learners needing more.

Early in 2023, as part of ongoing staff training, we read an article on working with first-generation students in a writing center (Bond). It caught our attention both because at least two-thirds of our students are first generation and because one of Bond’s conclusions is that consulting sessions with first-generation students “use more directive approaches” (161). Since we had always taught and employed non-directive approaches, Bond’s article proved to be the catalyst for considering additions to our training agenda. Our main takeaway from Bond is that we need to train our consultants to meet the particular needs of our students.

Assessing the many unusual characteristics of our students—to better understand their needs—highlighted one key fact: They have been away from academics for a very long time. As a result, the freshmen and sophomores who are our primary clientele not only do not understand writing as a process but do not understand academic writing at all. It is common for students to tell us things like, “I don’t know what the prof means when she tells us that she expects X (e.g., claims, secondary research, proper citation style) in our papers.”

So our center’s consultants decided that we needed to better understand exactly what knowledge about profs’ expectations our students were missing. That decision began a process of several months of staff brainstorming to identify knowledge that we ourselves had to learn as students. We concluded that our students sometimes needed us to employ more “directive approaches” regarding these items of knowledge, and that our traditional training needed expanding.

The following list is the result of our brainstorming. Of course, we recognize that profs’ expectations vary a great deal among individuals. That variation may be due to disciplinary and pedagogical training or may be just personal preference or habit. But there are certain categories of expectations that seem to go beyond personal preference. While there is nothing in the following list that will surprise people working in writing centers, we offer it as a sketch of items we have found valuable in our new consultant training, and we hope that other PEPs will find it useful as such. As much as possible, we tried to organize this list to represent the order in which students’ assignments compelled them to learn various lessons about profs’ expectations for academic writing.

- Profs see academic writing as “**joining a conversation**,” a conversation among those who study in an academic specialty. When students join a specific conversation, they need to think and write like an academic in that field. They need to ask questions, conduct research, and make claims—whose nature and form may vary across disciplines—based on their research.
- Because there are so many differences among profs in different courses, students need to pay very close attention to **assignment prompts**. Prompts set the rules for assignments; they are contracts between a prof and students. If a prompt is unclear to students, they should consult the prof to clarify.
- Written assignments fall into a specific set of **academic genres**: research reports, lab reports, research papers and speeches, analytical essays, personal essays, reflection papers, argumentative speeches, critiques, annotated bibliographies, summaries,



presentations, etc. Profs understand the written and unwritten rules of each genre; our students usually do not.

- Profs distinguish between “**formal**” and “**informal**” writing. Formal writing follows specific rules—which are foreign and taxing to our students—that direct formatting (e.g., using or not using headings), stylistics (e.g., first-person or third-person pronouns), citation styles (e.g., MLA, APA, CBE, Chicago), etc. Informal writing, on the other hand, resembles casual conversation. Our students regularly write letters, so they default to informal writing, but some profs penalize for this.
- Expectations of elements such as what the structure is, and how an assignment’s main point is articulated are defined by **disciplinary cultures**. Profs have specialized vocabulary—their own disciplinary jargon. Scientific reports, for example, following an “IMRAD” structure (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion), look and sound very different from literacy narratives, a common assignment in our first-year writing course.
- Especially challenging are the sets of knowledge and practice that profs expect students to **transfer in** from earlier classes and **transfer out** to later classes. For instance, because our students take a speech class in their first semester, profs of later classes may expect that the students know how to build a PowerPoint presentation. This is especially hard for our students, who cannot access the Internet or cloud storage or save any digital data—laptops are scrubbed every term. This leaves them with only recollections and physical notes.
- **Research** grounds all academic writing, but there are many subtopics involved in academic research.
  - Profs talk about “**primary**” and “**secondary**” research. Primary research refers to original research, the original findings and ideas of an author/researcher. Secondary research is the study and use of primary research to develop and support one’s own research. Most student research is secondary.
  - Research appearing in “**peer-reviewed**” publications carries credibility that non-peer reviewed writing (e.g., feature reports published in a monthly magazine) does not.
  - Each prof has an idea, which they may or may not concretely explain, of the **balance they want between published source content and a student’s own ideas and claims**. For example, in an analytical essay about St. Augustine, a prof may expect students to use only content created by Augustine, with no personal ideas included.
  - Student research compels students to understand academic ethics—and **plagiarism**.

These are the main content areas in which we train untraditionally to accommodate our untraditional students. Our center’s faculty advisor (a retired writing center director from Calvin’s main campus who leads us in appointing and training consultants) communicates our concerns to CPI administrators and faculty, leading profs to clarify expectations for students. We are now working on ways, mostly developing sets of examples and analogies, to efficiently teach this content to students. We do not want to risk losing our emphasis on non-directive methods as we explain expectations for academic writing.

We hope that this report on our practices will be useful to writing center staff at other PEPs—and more generally to those who work with varieties of untraditional students. At the end of the day, we emphatically believe that our center helps students, but only in as much as the staff shapes consultant-training to meet the challenges of the untraditional prisoner-student, who sometimes needs untraditional solutions.

\*EDITORS' NOTE: The editors would like to acknowledge Dr. Dean Ward for facilitating communication between our editorial team and the consultant-co-authors of this Tutors' Column.

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## CONFERENCE CALENDAR

**February 15, 2025: Writing Centers of Japan, Hiroshima, Japan**

Website: [https://www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/en/wrc/2025WCAJ\\_Sympo](https://www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/en/wrc/2025WCAJ_Sympo)

**February 20-22, 2025: Southeastern Writing Center Association, Florence, Alabama**

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

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

**March 13-15, 2025: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Ypsilanti, MI**

Website: <https://ecwca.wildapricot.org/page-18175>

**March 13-15, 2025: Midwest Writing Centers Association, Brooklyn, MN**

Contact: [cynthia.johanek@nhcc.edu](mailto:cynthia.johanek@nhcc.edu)

Website: <https://mwca.wildapricot.org/2025-Conference>

**March 21-22, 2025: Secondary School Writing Centers Association, Provo, Utah**

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

Website: <https://sswca.org/2025-conference-views-from-the-trail/>

**June 16-18, 2025: Canadian Writing Centers Association, Virtual**

Contact: Christin Wright-Taylor: [chtaylor@wlu.ca](mailto:chtaylor@wlu.ca)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Writing Centers Association of Japan, February 15, 2025**

Hiroshima University, Hiroshima, Japan

Theme: "What Is a Writing Center?"

Plenary Speakers: Tom Gally and Paul Wai-Ling Lai

Please find the CFP [on the proposal submission page](#). [Click here](#) to register for the symposium.

Conference website: [https://www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/en/wrc/2025WCAJ\\_Sympo](https://www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/en/wrc/2025WCAJ_Sympo)

**Southeastern Writing Centers Association Conference, February 20-22, 2025**

University of North Alabama and Athens State University

Theme: "Leading from the Center"

Keynote: William Macauley

For questions, contact Kat Richards ([karichards@una.edu](mailto:karichards@una.edu)) and Kem Roper ([kem.ropер@athens.edu](mailto:kem.ropер@athens.edu)).

Conference website: <https://southeasternwritingcenter.wildapricot.org/conference>



**East Central Writing Centers Association, March 13-15, 2025**

Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI

Theme: "Connections and Conversations: Building and Sustaining Community in Writing Centers"

Conference website: <https://ecwca.wildapricot.org/page-18175>

**Midwest Writing Centers Association Conference, March 13-15, 2025**

North Hennepin Community College

Theme: "Promise and Practice: Tutoring Writing in Turbulent Times"

Conference Chair: Cindy Johaneck: [cynthia.johaneck@nhcc.edu](mailto:cynthia.johaneck@nhcc.edu)

Conference website: <https://mwca.wildapricot.org/2025-Conference>

**IWCA Collaborative @CCCC, April 9, 2025**

University of Maryland, Baltimore

Conference chairs: Isabell May ([imay@umaryland.edu](mailto:imay@umaryland.edu)) and

James Wright ([james.wright@umaryland.edu](mailto:james.wright@umaryland.edu))

Conference theme: "Writing Centers as Harbors or Ports: Spaces of Remix, Conflict, Collaboration, Resistance, and Play." Proposals will be accepted now through January 24, 2025.

The full CFP is available here: <https://writingcenters.org/events/2025-iwca-collaborative/>

**Canadian Writing Centers Association, June 16-18, 2025 (Virtual)**

Theme: "Precarity, Pluckiness and & Please Help!": Negotiating Uncertainty in Writing Centre Work"

To submit a proposal, please complete the form linked at the bottom of the CFP: <https://cwcaaccr.com/2025-cwca-accr-conference-call-for-proposals/>. For more information, contact [chtaylor@wlu.ca](mailto:chtaylor@wlu.ca). Proposals must be received by February 14, 2025.



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