

THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E W T T E R

Volume 38, Number 5-6

Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in one-to-one teaching of writing

Jan./Feb. 2014

— FROM THE EDITOR —

While preparing this issue of the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, I noted that two articles focus on reflecting on tutoring. We talk a lot about reflection, in the sense of thinking deeply and carefully about something, but may not be as aware of another meaning of “reflection”—that of throwing back or returning without absorbing, e.g., as a mirror reflects light. So reflection involves both inward absorption and outward returning back. Both directions are evident in the article by Alanna Bitzel and two of the tutors in her writing center, Candice Bailey and Bo Jacks. They introduce us to process recording, that is, writing records which reflect on one’s own tutoring but also reflect back so that other tutors can talk, share, and discuss. Similarly, Bonnie Devet invites tutors who have graduated to return and reflect on their writing center experiences, reflections that, in turn, inform current tutors working there. Reflection in both articles is a two-way process.

In addition, R. Mark Hall and Russell Carpenter offer reviews of Jackie Grutsch McKinney’s book on the grand narratives of writing centers, *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers*. Reviewing, a major service to the profession, requires both a close reading of a book and also the ability to draw on one’s own scholarly knowledge to set the book in context for others who read the review. In his review, R. Mark Hall, discussing Grutsch McKinney’s book, notes that writing centers now offer more than “seventy commonplace non-tutoring activities” (7). One of those activities, offering dissertation boot camps, is the subject of Elizabeth Powers’ Tutor’s Column essay as she reports on a model for others to consider. Much to reflect on in this issue.

◆ Muriel Harris, editor

INSIDE

Experimenting with Process Recordings

◆ Alanna Bitzel, Candice Bailey, and Bo Jacks ◆

Page 1



Reviews of Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers, by Jackie Grutsch McKinney

◆ Reviewed by R. Mark Hall ◆

Page 6

◆ Reviewed by Russell Carpenter ◆

Page 8



Untapped Resource: Former Tutors Training Current Writing Center Tutors

◆ Bonnie Devet ◆

Page 11



Tutor’s Column: “Dissercamp: Dissertation Boot Camp ‘Lite’”

◆ Elizabeth Powers ◆

Page 14



Calendar for Writing Center Associations

Page 16



EXPERIMENTING WITH PROCESS RECORDINGS

◆ Alanna Bitzel, Candice Bailey, and Bo Jacks, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX

In Spring 2012, we at the Writing Lab of The University of Texas at Austin’s (UT) Football Academics Center undertook an experiment: using process recordings as part of writing tutor development. The goal of this experiment was to learn more about what a “process recording” is and discover how it can be used. Process recordings are a meditative practice commonly used in social science disciplines, including social work and nursing.¹ Jake Gaskins, in “Using ‘Process Recordings’ to Train Tutors,”² makes a case for applying process recordings to the writing center context. As we have understood and interpreted Gaskins, process recordings are tied to and serve as a type of focused examination of writing sessions, taking the form of three-section documents consisting of Summary, Analysis, and Feelings. In Summary, tutors describe objectively what took place during a session. In Analysis, tutors discuss how they incorporated writing center practices into the session. Finally, in Feelings, tutors relate their subjective reactions to the session and interaction with the student. Importantly, tutors also share process recordings with other people, such as their directors or other tutors. Process recordings are therefore distinct from other reflective activities like journaling in that they serve reflective and reflexive purposes: reflection occurs when tutors focus their attention on a particular topic (a session); reflexivity emerges since pro-

continued on page 2

The *Writing Lab Newsletter*, published bi-monthly, from September to June, is a peer-reviewed publication of the International Writing Centers Association, an NCTE Assembly, and is a member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement. ISSN 1040-3779. All Rights and Title reserved unless permission is granted by the *Writing Lab Newsletter*. Material can not be reproduced in any form without express written permission. However, up to 50 copies of an article may be reproduced under fair use policy for educational, non-commercial use in classes or course packets. Proper acknowledgement of title, author, and original publication date in the *Writing Lab Newsletter* should be included.

Editor:

Muriel Harris
(harrism@purdue.edu)

Associate Editor:

Janet Auten
(jauten@american.edu)

Development Editor:

Alan Benson
(bensonat@uwec.edu)

Associate Development Editor:

Lee Ann Glowzenski
(glowzenskil@duq.edu)

Book Review Editor:

Kim Ballard
(kim.ballard@wmich.edu)

Managed and Produced by

TWENTY SIX DESIGN LLC
1835 E. Hallandale Beach Blvd #178
Hallandale Beach, FL 33009
(866) 556-1743
<www.writinglabnewsletter.org>
support@writinglabnewsletter.org

Subscriptions: The newsletter has no billing procedures but can issue invoices through the website. Yearly payments of \$25 (U.S. \$30 in Canada) by credit card are accepted through the website or sent by check, made payable to the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, to the address above. Prepayment is requested for all subscriptions. For international *WLN* subscriptions, please contact support@writinglabnewsletter.org. For IWCA membership and *WCJ* and *WLN* subscriptions, see <writingcenters.org>.

Manuscripts: Before sending in submissions, please consult the guidelines and suggestions for prospective authors on the *WLN* website. Recommended length for articles is 2500-3000 words, 1500 words for reviews and Tutors' Column essays, in MLA format (including Works Cited). Please send files through the *WLN* website.

cess recordings are written responses to a tutor's engagement with another (a student), which tutors then use to engage and communicate with others (writing center staff).

In this article, we share three accounts of using process recordings in the spring and summer as well as our conclusion that process recordings can be effective in certain academic centers. The Football Academics Center is a learning commons space that serves the small and well-defined audience of 125 members of UT's football team. Our student population enjoys certain affordances. For example, some receive athletic scholarships, and all have access to tutoring support during assigned study hall. They are also distinctly challenged with major time constraints affecting their ability to negotiate the extensive academic work required of a UT undergraduate and the physical demands of their sport.³ In the first account, Alanna, who oversees the Writing Lab, discusses reasons for incorporating process recordings into staff training and her goal of promoting conversations among and with tutoring staff. Next, Candice, a Writing Lab tutor, describes how anticipating the writing of a process recording has led to purposeful changes in her work. After we briefly discuss significant changes in the Writing Lab impacting our experiment, Bo, another Writing Lab tutor, offers his experience of completing and contemplating process recordings, discussing modifications to his tutoring approach. Following the accounts, we discuss what we learned from working together on this project, how this experiment has shaped our thoughts regarding the future of process recordings in our Writing Lab, and when and how process recordings may be useful for other writing centers.

LAUNCHING THE EXPERIMENT (ALANNA'S ACCOUNT)

I wanted to find a way for the tutors to examine our practices in working with student-athletes. Part of my motivation was also to discover more about each tutor's unique tutoring styles, strengths, and challenges. Additionally, as a proponent of Reflective Practitioner Theory,⁴ which holds that learning and development in our profession occurs through reflection on our actions and experiences, I wanted to foster a spirit of reflection among the tutors to assist in their professionalization and enhance our writing sessions. I set out to implement "an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of [our work] and a change in the situation."⁵ To that end, I considered implementing process recordings with the tutors. In his piece, Gaskins describes his use of process recordings with "tutors-in-training" (14). Our tutors are not "in training" in the sense that they are not novices. Bo had previously served as a writing consultant at UT's Undergraduate Writing Center; Candice had worked at another athletics program prior to coming to UT and was working concurrently at the Learning Lab at the Austin Community College-Pinnacle campus. Yet, I believed that process recordings would offer our experienced tutors a way to share their expertise, delve further into their practices, and help us think collectively about how we can establish successful long-term tutoring relationships and ongoing sessions with student-athletes at our Center.

Beyond presenting the concept and the Gaskins article to the tutors at the beginning of Spring 2012, I offered little in the way of specific instructions regarding content and format, other than that process recordings should have the three sections Gaskins identifies and be approximately one page in length, a modification from the three to four pages Gaskins describes. I did not provide tutors with prompts; instead, I wanted to allow their sessions to guide their thoughts and writing choices. Tutors wrote process recordings at the center during "down time" (i.e., when not in writing sessions), and it generally took them less than an hour to complete each process recording, in keeping with what Gaskins noted for his tutors. Due to scheduling issues, we were unable to meet as a group, so I met with each tutor individually to discuss what came up in the process recordings. Through the process recordings, I gained not only greater insight into the tutors but also a better understanding of issues in our center, including how time constraints affect sessions and prioritization of writing concerns and how the nature of our student population enables tutors to develop strategies responsive to student needs. For example, over the course of the spring, Candice submitted half of her process recordings on sessions with the same student, whom we'll call Lewis. She and I discussed how she developed strategies, such as goal-setting, for effectively

working with this student. Using this strategy, she was able to “see his process and his progress” over the semester. She writes: “The fact that he begins projects in advance is helpful to both of us when working together.” Bo’s process recordings from the spring each describe a session with a different student, yet every session involved “working through the revision process at the sentence level” rather than global concerns. He felt that lack of time with students led, at times, to “missed opportunit[ies] in what might have happened.” Reading and discussing the process recordings with Candice and Bo helped me talk with them about their particular practices and identify target areas, like motivating students to start early on their writing.

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS (CANDICE’S ACCOUNT)

Although I have tutored at the Football Academics Center since August 2009, being faced with the task of writing a process recording each week forced me to look at my work in new ways. Given the open-ended nature of process recordings that Alanna outlined for us, I spent several weeks writing before I fell into an easy rhythm. Once I became comfortable with using process recordings as a platform to discuss issues, I found an unexpected advantage: the foreknowledge that I must write a process recording created a sense of mindfulness about the strategies I employ in each session. I pay more attention to details and look for opportunities to use resources and teaching methods. A potential pitfall is that I can become self-conscious about my work in a way that can distract from a session, but an advantage is that greater attention yields greater accountability. When selecting a session to write about each week, I ask myself: Do I write about a meeting that was challenging, disappointing, or heartening? I try to maintain a balance when choosing. Sometimes I need to reflect on a frustrating experience, other times, to understand why a positive session was successful. In most cases, I have found it helpful and enlightening to write my process recordings about sessions with students I see on a regular basis because I can see both “process” and “progress,” prompting me to tailor sessions to students’ individual learning styles. In the case of Lewis, with whom I have worked multiple times, I observed early in the spring that he was good about beginning projects in advance, so I used the extra time to our advantage when it came to revising his essay. Of one of our sessions, I wrote: “Most of his errors were careless typos as opposed to systematic problems, so I told him to read through the paragraph himself and see if he could catch the issues.” Having him edit his own paper established trust because he saw my faith in his ability to catch errors; this also developed his confidence in his writing, which, in turn, made him less dependent on me as the “expert.” In fact, of our next meeting, I wrote in Analysis: “He stays focused for longer periods and needs less affirmation or prompting in order to keep working.” The mindfulness involved in writing a process recording allowed me to see both immediate and long-term benefits, and because encouraging Lewis to self-edit yielded such positive results, I saw it as a viable method when working with other students.

“Through the process recordings, I gained not only greater insight into the tutors but also a better understanding of issues in our center.”

Mindfulness in the moment may have benefited Lewis in a significant way, but it was only upon later reflection that I saw how the session affected my ongoing professional development. I observed in the Feelings section of my third process recording: “The biggest challenge for me as a tutor will be to recognize a pattern in the types of errors he makes and to come up with a good teaching strategy to help him identify his own issues and understand the mechanics involved.” Through writing a process recording, I was able to identify weaknesses in my tutoring methods that I could target for improvement in the upcoming summer semester.

CHANGING METHODOLOGY

Heading into the summer, the Writing Lab staff doubled, and tutors had more flexible schedules, so we were able to schedule a weekly check-in meeting with all the writing tutors together. The three of us also began discussing work on an article regarding the process recordings. Gaskins argues that an advantage of process recordings is that tutors have “more chances to express their questions and concerns, which

**INTERNATIONAL
WRITING CENTERS
ASSOCIATION AND THE
NATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
PEER TUTORING IN
WRITING**

Call for Proposals

October 30-November 1
Disney's Coronado Springs
Hotel Resort

Lake Buena Vista, FL
*"The Wonderful World of
Writing Centers"*

Keynote speaker: Beth
Boquet

Co-chairs: Melissa lanetta: <me-
lissaianetta@gmail.com> and
Brian Fallon: <brianjfallon@
gmail.com>. Conference web-
site: <iwcancptw2014.com>.
Please direct any questions to
the conference e-mail address:
<iwcancptw2014@gmail.com>.

**INTERNATIONAL
WRITING CENTERS
ASSOCIATION—2014
SUMMER INSTITUTE**

The IWCA Summer Institute will
be held from June 22 to 27, at
the Lexington Hilton. Registration
is now open, and details of this
weeklong event, including the
list of speakers and outings, are
available on the institute website
at <www.iwcasummerinstitute.
org>.

they could then share in staff meetings”(14). We thought it may be beneficial to try something different from the spring, instead having tutors exchange process recordings during the weekly check-in to help generate dialogue and create a collaborative learning opportunity. To facilitate conversations, Alanna provided tutors with individual, written feedback on the process recordings to help them think more deeply about their sessions, and in the check-ins she called attention to shared experiences or points of divergence among tutors and sessions, providing the group a partial agenda or discussion guide. For us, then, the process recordings became the foundation of our meetings, creating a “break room” dialogue, a forum for venting frustrations, raising questions and concerns, describing successes, brainstorming strategies, and identifying new types of information to include in process recordings.

NOTICING POSITIVE CHANGE (BO'S ACCOUNT)

The advantages of tutoring in the Writing Lab are many, from the autonomy enjoyed by the staff to the close and frequent proximity to students. The main reward, however, has been the ability to undertake new projects such as our recent process recording experiment. For my part, I have preferred writing about sessions with different students each week in hopes of tracking my development as a tutor as well as maintaining a sense of our students' progress with their prose style. For the sake of this account, however, I want to focus on a series of particularly illuminating process recordings from the summer documenting my sessions with a student whom I'll call Matt. He showed remarkable progress in his writing development, a success seen more clearly through the evolving methods of assistance I used with him, which I captured in the process recordings. When we began, Matt's philosophy towards writing was that he just needed to sit at the computer and furiously type until reaching his word limit. This approach can make for less-than-ideal prose. We would often sit together as he typed sentence by sentence, and he would ask for approval after each one. This approach also wasn't working. Over the next few days, I thought about how we might break this pattern, and, as a meditative exercise, I tried capturing these difficulties and frustrations in my process recordings. It wasn't all rosy; but the process recordings allowed me to document these difficulties, and, as I later discovered, this catharsis provided the impetus to change Matt's and my habits. For our next session I decided that rather than sitting down, I would tell him instead to bring me a printed draft once he had finished a particular section. While Matt was slightly uncomfortable—as he perceived it—with being left adrift, the challenge to work independently was just what he needed. It was not until looking back over two successive process recordings in preparation for writing another that I noticed an important aspect of our interactions: challenging Matt's comfort zone was a stated goal that had been achieved. Together Matt and I had moved the goalposts for thinking about his writing. He internalized the new approach to drafting, giving us the freedom to discuss a wider variety of writing issues, including coherence and style.

Writing about sessions with Matt has been ideal for showing me how process recordings can be productive, both in diffusing the feelings that frustrate student and tutor and in documenting how change can happen rapidly. The ability to retrace my work with Matt also impacted my process with the rest of our students. I was able to take the approach I had adopted with Matt and press students “to work independently” during writing sessions, as I wrote in the Analysis section of one process recording. Despite such gains, I still have seen recurrent problems in sessions that are recorded and conveyed to the student without any real solution. The act of writing a process recording on these cases tends to be redundant. I know the problems and have voiced them to the students, but no amount of reflection will remedy the impasse. What remains clear is how powerful our discussion as a staff about these process recordings has been for venting grievances without involving students in any negativity.

RESULTS AND OFFERINGS

In writing this article, we aimed to offer our thoughts on how and why process recordings may be useful. We are in a position to achieve self—and collective—reflection gains, since we have a set population of students with whom we work over time. In addition, we have time to write, read, and discuss process recordings and enjoy the benefit of a shared willingness to use them. Reviewing and talking about process recordings as a staff has led to the recognition that writing about sessions with students can offer an opportunity for examining our

practices, and as Candice and Bo describe, process recordings have helped them become cognizant of successful strategies to use in their writing sessions.

We have also identified potential issues of long-term workability. One issue is a tendency for tutors to conflate Analysis and Feelings, using both sections to write about subjective reactions, ignoring a more critical evaluation of how writing center practice played a role in the session. Moreover, at times, rather than serving as an opportunity to think more deeply about our Writing Lab practices, writing process recordings can feel forced or rote, perhaps when a tutor lacks the energy to produce an insightful process recording. Process recordings also raise issues of audience: how frank can a writing tutor be when sharing an experience with others? What if a tutor feels compelled to write about positive sessions to showcase tutoring strengths or because they are easier to write about? To address these issues, we have discussed possible revisions to the practice of process recordings—namely having specific prompts that ask tutors to consider certain practices or topics raised during check-ins or assigned texts—to bring the reality of writing process recordings more in line with ideal aims. Ultimately, the utility of a “process recording” will vary depending on a writing center’s particular circumstances. Our small staff prioritized the process recordings, making them a staple of our practice that proved helpful. For writing centers with the time and desire to engage with the inherent ambiguities of process recordings and the space for open exchanges between leaders and tutors, we have found that our experiment has produced an outlet for self-expression, meaningful conversations about best practices, cohesion among tutors, and an archive of tutoring sessions to which we can refer in adapting our work with students. ♦

Endnotes

1 For example, see Suanna J. Wilson’s *Recording: Guidelines for Social Workers*. Free Press: New York, 1980. Print.; and Audrey J. Berman and Shirlee Snyder’s *Kozier and Erb’s Fundamentals of Nursing*. 9th ed. Prentice Hall: New Jersey, 2011. Print.

2 See Gaskins’ “Using ‘Process Recordings’ to Train Tutors.” See also Gaskins’ “Using Process Recordings to Train Tutors in the Writing Center and Peer Responders in the Classroom” (with Elizabeth Roeger), *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education* 11.2 (Spring 1995): 57-69. Print.

3 See William Broussard’s “Collaborative Work, Competitive Students, Counter-narrative: A Tale from out of (the Academy’s) Bounds.” *Writing Lab Newsletter* 28.1 (2003): 1-5. Print; and William Broussard and Nahal Rodieck’s “One for the Gipper (and One for the Tutor): On Writing-Center Tutorials with College Student-Athletes.” *Writing Lab Newsletter* 28.7 (2004): 1-5.

4 See Donald Schön’s *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. London: Temple Smith, 1983. Print. For an application of Reflective Practitioner Theory to writing centers, see Alanna Bitzel’s “Managing a Writing Center within a Changing University,” M.P.Aff. Report, University of Texas at Austin, 2010. UT Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Web. 23 July 2012

5 See Bitzel’s “Managing a Writing Center,” 68.



Works Cited

Gaskins, Jake. “Using ‘Process Recordings’ to Train Tutors.” *Writing Lab Newsletter* 19.2 (1994): 14-15. Print.

Schön, Donald. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. London: Temple Smith, 1983. Print.



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION

Call for Proposals

April 5, 2014
Rohnert Park, CA
Sonoma State University
*“Playing To, From, and With
Our Strengths: Authorizing
Centers and Students”*
Keynote speaker: Kevin
Dvorak

There will be a pre-conference workshop on April 4, 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. For information about the conference, see the conference website: <www.sonoma.edu/writingcenter/ncwca2014/>. Deadline for proposals is January 15, 2014. Conference organizers: Scott Miller <707-664-4402>, Sheryl Cavales-Doolan <707-527-4429>, Loriann Negri <707-664-2629>, and Katie Pinkston and John B. Kincheloe <707-664-4401>.

MIDDLE EAST/NORTH AFRICA WRITING CENTER ASSOCIATION

Nov. 7-8, 2014
Canadian University of Dubai
Dubai, UAE
*“Sustaining Writing and
Writing Centers in the Middle
East-North Africa Region”*
Keynote speaker: Clint Gardner

For the Call for Proposals and conference registration, see the Conference website: <menawca.org>. Deadline for submissions: April 15, 2014. Co-chairs are Nadine Ashkuri <Nadine@cuad.ac.ae> and Kathy O’Sullivan (<Kathy@cuad.ac.ae>).

BOOK REVIEW

Jackie Grutsch McKinney. *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2013. (174 pp., paper \$26.95; e-book \$20.95)

◆ R. Mark Hall

University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL

What are the stories we tell of our writing centers—at home behind closed doors, across our institutions, and, more broadly, as a discipline? What are the consequences of those stories? What do they afford? What do they inhibit? What do they help us see and do? Equally important, in the telling and retelling of some stories, what other stories don't get told—and with what consequences? These are the questions that animate Jackie Grutsch McKinney's *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers*. For readers familiar with Grutsch McKinney's 2005 article in the *Writing Center Journal*, "Leaving Home Sweet Home: Towards Critical Readings of Writing Center Spaces," *Peripheral Visions* will be a welcomed elaboration. For newcomers, the introductory chapter of Grutsch McKinney's book lays out her argument, that a grand narrative of writing center work occludes other "peripheral" stories. In the spirit of Nancy Grimm's *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times* and Harry Denny's *Facing the Center: Toward an Identity Politics of One-to-One Mentoring*, Grutsch McKinney questions deeply held assumptions about writing centers to prompt more varied, complex understandings of our work. Three assumptions, in particular, make up the writing center grand narrative: 1) writing centers are cozy homes; 2) writing centers are iconoclastic; 3) writing centers tutor all students. Grutsch McKinney organizes her book around these propositions, devoting a chapter to each. While this grand narrative has served effectively to bind us together as a field of study and to communicate certain aspects of writing center work, Grutsch McKinney argues that it also constrains those of us working in writing centers from seeing—and thus valuing and arguing for—other equally important aspects.

Grutsch McKinney's second chapter, a literature review, grounds her argument in narrative theory, aligning the author with ideas about storytelling from Jerome Bruner. Narratives, according to Bruner, reflect our efforts to fit into a community by adhering to certain cultural conventions. Furthermore, stories have consequences: They shape not only what we do in the present, but also the future stories we tell. And narratives are, by definition, interpretations, which are multiple and invested. Drawing also on Kristie S. Fleckenstein's *Vision, Rhetoric, and Social Action in the Composition Classroom*, Grutsch McKinney argues that certain visual and rhetorical habits lock us into seeing and repeating this grand narrative, at the expense of other equally important little narratives. Grutsch McKinney's next chapter, which is a revision of her earlier article in the *Writing Center Journal*, argues that the metaphor of "home" to describe and design writing center spaces is problematic, because notions of home are marked by culture, social class, and gender. Importantly, Grutsch McKinney does not argue that we should cast aside efforts to make writing centers inviting places. Rather, she asks us to take a wider view, to look critically at the underlying principles and propositions that guide writing center designs. If writing centers are "homey," then whose home do they represent? If they are "comfortable," then whose comfort is valued? Whose is ignored? Instead of designing "ideal" writing centers around white, middle-class notions of home-as-comfortable-retreat, with writing center directors as caretaking mothers, Grutsch McKinney challenges readers to examine the work that actually takes place in our writing centers, and to construct them deliberately as spaces of challenging academic activity, where tension and conflict are acknowledged, not papered over and ignored.

Chapter Four, "Writing Centers are Iconoclastic," is, I think, a bit of a misnomer, or at least an overstatement. Here, the aspect of the writing center grand narrative Grutsch McKinney takes on is not so much, as the term *iconoclastic* suggests, that writing centers attack and seek to overthrow commonplace ideas or the institutions of which they are a part, but that writing centers exist on the margins of those institutions. "[N]o other word," argues Grutsch McKinney, "haunts writing center scholarship more than *marginal*" (39). She notes that our story of marginality takes varied forms: Some insiders lament the low status of writing centers, while others reject this characterization altogether. Some concede that writing centers were once marginal, but they are no longer

marginalized. Still others revel in a liminal status, championing marginality as a position from which to resist. All this talk of marginality, Grutsch McKinney argues, has significant negative consequences, among them a persistent lack of engagement in and with rigorous research, and that tenure-track positions for writing center administrators remain uncommon. As Grutsch McKinney points out, “If writing centers are outside of institutional structures and do not conduct scholarship recognized by academe, it follows that writing center directors will not be tenure track faculty positions” (47). Let’s stop fretting over the writing center’s status, Grutsch McKinney says. Instead, let’s examine the ways that writing centers are always already enmeshed in their institutions. This shift may prompt new relationships and alternative ways to engage in campus ecologies.

Peripheral Visions culminates in Grutsch McKinney’s critique of the commonplace assertion that “writing centers are places where all students go to get one-to-one tutoring on their writing” (58). Focusing narrowly on this one—albeit central—aspect of writing center work, she argues, has multiple negative consequences. It endangers writing centers by associating them with remediation, at a time when cuts to remedial programs are all too common. What’s more, individualized instruction isolates students and locates literacy “problems” in them. This deficit thinking discourages writing centers from working toward broader social and institutional change. Likewise, storying writing centers as sites of individual instruction ignores the fact that, as Grutsch McKinney shows from multiple national surveys of writing center use, not all students want tutoring in the first place.

In this fifth chapter, Grutsch McKinney also presents survey data to demonstrate the wide range of activities writing centers engage in, far beyond individual tutoring. Together with Rebecca Jackson, Grutsch McKinney documented more than seventy commonplace non-tutoring activities, from providing writing resources and workshops, to collaborating with other campus programs, to gathering and reporting data, to promoting services via social media. Because writing centers already take part in so many different kinds of work, Grutsch McKinney does *not* call on us to do more than we currently do. And she does not mean to say that, in order to be effective, every writing center must tackle all the items on her list. Rather, she asks us to widen our gaze, to acknowledge—and thereby value—activities beyond individual tutoring. For example, Grutsch McKinney notes that 84 percent of writing centers offer workshops for students, pointing to a high level of involvement in group instruction. But our collective story of writing centers is, for the most part, narrowly concerned with tutoring one-to-one. Grutsch McKinney’s point hit home with me recently when I set out to develop a new group tutoring initiative in collaboration with our campus Multicultural and Academic Support Services program. While searching for tutor education materials about working with groups, I found Magdalena Gilewicz’s “Sponsoring Student Response in Writing Center Group Tutorials” enormously helpful, but like so many of activities beyond individual tutoring that Grutsch McKinney lists, published writing center research on group communication and pedagogy is scant compared to work on one-to-one tutoring.

The writing center grand narrative, Grutsch McKinney concludes, is counterproductive for several reasons: “it has obfuscated material realities, it has perpetuated subpar conditions for writing center professionals, and it has restricted the subject of writing center theory and research too narrowly” (91). Tantalizingly, Grutsch McKinney speculates that one reason this story persists is because, unlike other disciplines, writing centers, by their very nature, experience high rates of turnover and, thus, are continually peopled with newcomers. She suggests that many newcomers take up the grand narrative, but don’t stick around long enough to acquire the depth of knowledge and experience necessary to critique it. If Grutsch McKinney is right, then long-standing members of the writing center community must take primary responsibility for ushering in peripheral visions. As one of those long-time members myself, I am keenly aware that one of the great pleasures of working in a writing center is engaging with new cohorts of tutors and administrators each year and watching them discover this work and find their way in the field of writing center studies. But

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Assistant Writing Center Director California Lutheran University

The Assistant Director will have primary responsibility for managing the daily operations of the Writing Center, including scheduling all aspects of center instruction as well as supervising and mentoring undergraduate and graduate writing tutors and directly providing writing consultation as needed. The Assistant Director will assist in the professional development of writing tutors; assessment of programs and instructional design; and in coordinating instructional plans for writers with complex needs. This position also provides direct instructional support and requires assigned teaching responsibilities, depending on need and expertise.

Education and experience:

Any combination equivalent to: Master's degree in Rhetoric and Composition, English, or a closely related field. A minimum of two years of experience working in a university writing center. A minimum of one year of experience teaching English courses at the university level.

Preferred qualifications:

- Experience in managing a writing center is desirable.
- Substantial experience teaching college-level composition is desirable.
- Substantial experience working with graduate and adult students is desirable.
- Additional experience or interest in TESOL is desirable.

Able to work flexible hours, including evening and weekend hours.

Application procedure: Completed Application Packet includes CLU Application, cover letter outlining your qualifications for this particular job, and Resume. For more details, please see the HR website: <www.callutheran.edu/hr/jobs_detail.php?position_id=1044>.

Only complete packets will be forwarded to the search committee. Please submit your cover letter and resume by e-mail to <jobs@callutheran.edu>, or mail to:

California Lutheran University
Human Resources, MC1100
60 W. Olsen Road
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

Grutsch McKinney's speculation reminds me, uncomfortably, of the many times I have dismissed an idea from a newcomer, sweetly, and patronizingly, because I know better from long experience that idea—what ever it is—has been tried and can't possibly work.

While I am persuaded by Grutsch McKinney that so many newcomers always learning the grand narrative gives it its staying power, novices are not doomed merely to replicate the visual and rhetorical habits that foster its reproduction. To disrupt the grand narrative, old-timers need to ensure they are not avoiding or shutting down fresh, innovative visions. Grutsch McKinney's book, then—though she does not say so explicitly—is a call to long-time writing center workers to reconsider how we train and mentor newcomers. We must work together with novices to help them to recognize (with the help of books like Grutsch McKinney's) the writing center grand narrative—what the story says, what work it does, what values, assumptions, and beliefs it forwards, whose interests it serves, and, importantly, what alternative stories it overshadows. Grutsch McKinney's *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers* is a must-read for both novice and experienced writing center tutors and administrators. Its pointed yet affectionate critique calls on us to throw off the well-worn, comfortable cloth of the writing center grand narrative and to become more reflective practitioners, to ask what *work* our stories—both big and small—*do*. At the same time, Grutsch McKinney's book can be read as a call for long-time members of the writing center community to do more to train newcomers, not only to critique writing center stories, but, equally important, to study the work of particular writing centers directly. In order to push new and varied narratives to the fore, we must teach newcomers to conduct rigorous research. As the side-view mirrors on our vehicles caution, "objects in mirror are closer than they appear," so untapped subjects of writing center research are right on our heels, perhaps in our blind spots. ♦

Works Cited

- Denny, Harry C. *Facing the Center: Toward an Identity Politics of One-to-One Mentoring*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2010. Print.
- Fleckenstein, Kristie S. *Vision, Rhetoric, and Social Action in the Composition Classroom*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2010. Print.
- Gilewicz, Magdalena. "Sponsoring Student Response Groups in Writing Center Group Tutorials." *Writing Groups Inside and Outside the Classroom*. Ed. Beverly J. Moss, Nels P. Highberg, Melissa Nicolas. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004. 63-78. Print.
- Grimm, Nancy. *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1999. Print.
- Grutsch McKinney, Jackie. "Leaving Home Sweet Home: Towards Critical Readings of Writing Center Spaces." *Writing Center Journal* 25.2 (2005): 6-20. Print.



BOOK REVIEW

Jackie Grutsch McKinney. *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2013. (174 pp., paper \$26.95; e-book \$20.95)

♦ Russell Carpenter

Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY

We all tell stories about our writing centers—from our experiences working in them to the many ways they have shaped our lives. I've worked in writing centers for over ten years, and understandably my story

has developed quite a bit from my first experiences as an undergraduate consultant. As Jackie Grutsch McKinney reminds us in *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers*, the work of writing center directors can include research, scheduling, teaching, administration, service, and a list of other activities. Grutsch McKinney begins the book with her central argument that “writing center work is complex, but the storying of writing center work is not. By and large, the way that writing center scholars, practitioners, and outsiders talk about writing center work fits into a relatively familiar pattern” (3) or what she calls the “writing center grand narrative”: “writing centers are comfortable, iconoclastic places where all students go to get one-to-one tutoring on their writing” (3). While this narrative might sound familiar to many directors, a number of programs have changed, and I wonder if the storying of writing center work is more complex than the grand narrative would have us believe. While Grutsch McKinney captures a number of narratives that writing centers can challenge, I question to what extent writing centers have already challenged these narratives and to what degree the narratives are inscribed in our programs.

As the director of a program that has developed in unique ways and was designed as an ideal writing center space, I was drawn to *Peripheral Visions*, which is organized into four narratives: “Story Vision,” “Writing Centers Are Cozy Homes,” “Writing Centers Are Iconoclastic,” and “Writing Centers Tutor (All Students).” Of particular interest for many readers, “Writing Centers as Cozy Homes” explores the stories of writing center spaces, claiming that part of what distinguishes writing center work from other forms of writing program administration is the physical space in which our work takes place. Spatial narratives are not new to this story, but many of us can relate to them. Often, the stories we tell about our spaces are politically driven. Writing center spaces reflect departmental affiliations, institutional contexts, and funding sources. They also suggest aspects of each center’s values and pedagogies. The writing-center-as-cozy-home narrative is comforting, although not necessarily productive. It is easy to trace this story to our attempts at creating comfortable spaces—complete with couches, lava lamps, and coffee pots—attempts to make writing center spaces look more like home or our perception of home, which often resemble cultural (and political) affiliations. That is, our homes often reflect our beliefs and interests. In our efforts to make writing center spaces look more like our perceived home, Grutsch McKinney prompts us to ask, “whose home”? While I applaud efforts to make the writing center feel comfortable to students, the “cozy home” narrative discussed in the book is suspect and perhaps problematic, as writing centers like my own develop flexible, active-learning spaces, visually inscribable areas, and resources that facilitate collaboration, spaces that resemble tech startups more than “cozy homes.” As the director of a program that is creative in spatial design and programming, and often in consultation pedagogy, I suggest that we also examine the ways in which writing centers are revising these narratives. Our program values creative approaches, as they productively “complicate ideas of what writing centers can be” (Dvorak and Bruce xiii).

While important, the centralizing narrative—writing centers are cozy homes—doesn’t speak to recently established programs such as the Noel Studio at Eastern Kentucky University, the Multimodal Communication Center at Georgia Tech University, the Knowledge Market at Grand Valley State University, the Multiliteracy Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the Howe Writing Center at Miami University, the Writing and Media Center at Iowa State University, the Writing Center at Michigan State University, the Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, etc. In the Noel Studio, consultants make students feel comfortable in the space by encouraging conversation and posing open-ended questions, but the space isn’t designed as a “cozy” environment. In fact, it encourages movement, activity, and visual and verbal noise, quite the opposite of a cozy space. Hadfield, et al., note the importance of our writing center environments “where interaction between and among people occurs is crucial as it affects the way people feel and, therefore, the way people interact” (175). The Noel Studio, for example, is designed as one of the university’s marquee spaces, countering narratives discussed in the book. *Peripheral Visions* doesn’t examine writing centers that have expanded to include collaborative missions or created innovative spaces on their campuses, but such centers are revising the writing center grand narrative. These programs have



Writing Center Directory Being Updated

The Writing Center Directory is once again in the process of updating. Please take a moment and check your writing center’s contact information: <web.stcloudstate.edu/writeplace/wcd/index.html>.

Thus far, there is contact information for about 1100 writing centers from around the world listed on the website. Send corrections or additions to <writeplace@stcloudstate.edu>. Please write WCD in the subject line.

CANADIAN WRITING CENTRES CONFERENCE

May 23, 2014
Brock University
St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada
“*Writing without Borders*”
Keynote speaker: Laura Greenfield

Please send inquiries to Liv Marken: <Liv.Marken@usask.ca>. Conference website: <cwcaaccr.wordpress.com/2013/12/17/cwcaaccr-2014-conference-registration-now-open/>. Registration is now open and available on the conference website.

SWCA—ALABAMA

January 24, 2014
Samford University,
Birmingham, AL
“*Writing Centers, Teaching, and Learning: Lighting Fires*”
Keynote speaker: Stephen Chew

Those interested in attending the event should e-mail Dr. Tony Ricks at <tony.ricks@athens.edu> by January 10, 2014 and indicate the names of those in their group who will be attending. There is a \$10 registration fee per person at this event, which will be collected at the conference registration table on January 24. Registration will be from 9 to 10 a.m. on January 24. Lunch and morning refreshments will be included at the event.

broken out of the shadow of Grutsch McKinney’s narratives and found ways to centralize their work within the institution.

Grutsch McKinney then discusses the notion that writing centers are iconoclastic. In this related story, writing centers resist the larger academic institution, describing a view of these programs as marginal or marginalized and staff members as outsiders. Grutsch McKinney acknowledges that writing center work is seen as nonessential even among faculty and the same has been true of those entering tenure-track lines as directors. The writing center is not seen among faculty peers as a desirable location or director as an admirable (or even long-term) role. However, the writing centers mentioned above push against this narrative as well, as staff members (including consultants) are seen as central to the university, and their spaces reflect innovative practices.

We have come to memorize the standard descriptors that have seemed to transcend writing centers and have recited them to faculty and administrators to explain our programs: our work is non-remedial, peer-to-peer, giving higher-order concerns preference over lower-order concerns, and doing minimal marking to name a few. “Writing Centers Tutor (All Students)” “takes under consideration the main clause of the writing center grand narrative that writing centers are places where all students go to get one-to-one tutoring on their writing” (58). Grutsch McKinney notes that writing centers tell the story of a specific kind of tutoring that permeates the literature. However, a number of writing centers experiment with collaborative, small- and large-group sessions that explore a range of perspectives on the writing process. These programs have developed writing center roles far beyond traditional one-to-one tutoring.

Grutsch McKinney leaves us speculating about the next steps for writing center scholars and the narratives of those entering the profession. We are asked whether the grand narrative will be disrupted with the development of new multiliteracy centers and centers for writing excellence, both of which suggest a move beyond the remedial label (89) and—to some extent—resemble my own program. Readers will want to situate their own stories within Grutsch McKinney’s writing center grand narrative while considering how these narratives have changed. I am one of those directors whose programs rewrite these narratives. As readers explore *Peripheral Visions*, perhaps we should also consider how writing centers have grown out of the shadow of such narratives to become centralizing agents, spaces, and programs on their campuses where both students and faculty teach and learn, literacy extends beyond paper, and pedagogies are some of the most innovative on campus. ♦

Works Cited

- Dvorak, Kevin, and Shanti Bruce. “Introduction.” *Creative Approaches to Writing Center Work*. Ed. Kevin Dvorak and Shanti Bruce. Cresskill: Hampton P, 2008. xi-xviii. Print.
- Hadfield, Leslie, Joyce Kinkead, Tom C. Peterson, Stephanie H. Ray, and Sarah S. Preston. “An Ideal Writing Center: Re-Imagining Space and Design.” *The Center Will Hold: Critical Perspectives on Writing Center Scholarship*. Ed. Michael A. Pemberton and Joyce Kinkead. Logan: Utah State UP, 2003. 166-176. Print.



UNTAPPED RESOURCE: FORMER TUTORS TRAINING CURRENT WRITING CENTER TUTORS

◆ Bonnie Devet

College of Charleston, Charleston, SC

In the spring, when I see experienced tutors graduate, I think of T. S. Eliot's line, "April is the cruelest month" (1.1). Although, as a long-time director, I am pleased for the graduating students, I lament the loss of these graduates' tutorial talents that have developed over many terms. These departing tutors—before they had left the center—placed in a notebook for all to read short "Advice to the Future" essays, directed to the current and incoming consultants, detailing two or three suggestions for success. These short essays, however, did not adequately tap into the departing tutors' talents and expertise. So, I invited back to campus four former tutors (whose experience as a group added up to fifteen years) so that they could speak to the current tutors.

Writing center scholarship abounds with advice about using currently employed, experienced tutors to train and/or mentor newly hired workers. In *Noise from the Center* Elizabeth Boquet describes how new and returning tutors underwent a summer training session together. In "Tutor Training Comes Full Circle: From E-mail to Practicum and Back Again," Matthew D. Klauza explains how to use current tutors to mentor new ones through e-mail. The most popular training books (Gillespie and Lerner; Ryan and Zimmerelli; Capossella) also stress the value of having new tutors observe other tutors. There is, however, a relatively under-utilized resource for training: using former tutors who are now pursuing advanced degrees in graduate school, enjoying careers, or flourishing in home life. Bradley Hughes, Paula Gillespie, and Harvey Kail have demonstrated that former tutors not only acquire expertise for their careers but also come to understand how a liberal arts education benefits their lives. The graduated tutors whom I invited back included those who were now pursuing advanced degrees (Ph.D. in Physical Therapy and a Masters in Sociology), teaching high school English, or staying home as parents after being a computer technician.

During the session, I was expecting the graduated tutors would merely pass along practical advice, such as tips for successful tutoring and writing center skills useful for post-graduation. Indeed, one current tutor did comment after the session, "The information from the veteran tutors showed me new ideas for consulting techniques and gave me a perspective on what they took away from their experiences in the center." But the meeting accomplished far more: it reinforced the value of reflection, helped current tutors find greater significance in their work, and showed that being a tutor means establishing a "deeper human connection" (Johnson 8) between themselves and the clients they serve.

ESTABLISHING BONDS

As the close encounter between graduated tutors and current ones began, the first few questions focused on the veterans' experiences as tutors. The former tutors' stories established a bond between the two groups, a "comradship" (Johnson 7) where equals meet and talk about their common experiences, not unlike what also happens in tutorials when clients and tutors connect and support each other. For instance, the veterans shared their favorite types of tutorials as well as "horror" stories. One past tutor, Kathy, enjoyed working with writers who just needed encouragement because, as she explained, she and her client together "were working on ideas not being distracted by out-of-place commas." The horror stories, too, forged bonds, with the veterans describing some of their worst experiences. Sally and the current tutors connected when she told about the client who would not be corrected when he wrote that Ahab was the name of the whale in Melville's *Moby-Dick*. Establishing links through such stories had an immediate advantage. When workers who are doing or who have completed the same jobs meet, they often exchange strategies. Here, with a rapport established, current tutors were more than receptive to learning from the veterans.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tweet WLN? "Like" WLN?

If your writing center and/or tutors have Twitter accounts and/or Facebook pages, we invite you to "follow," "tweet," "like," and/or "post" on our Twitter account and Facebook wall. We invite you to post news of your writing center, photos, online resources, conference notices, other news you wish to share, and links other writing center folk would be interested in.



@WLNewsletter



Writing Lab Newsletter



International Writing Center Blog

CONNECTING WRITING CENTERS ACROSS BORDERS

"Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders" is a blog intended for those of you in writing centers around the world to share blog entries, photos, questions, resources, and comments about topics relevant to your work. There is a link on the WLN home page, or connect directly to it at <www.writinglabnewsletter.org/blog/>.

ENCOURAGING REFLECTION

Hearing the narratives also encouraged current tutors to reflect on their own experiences. Reflection on the meaning of an event is, indeed, a prime way to develop as a human being (Frankl). As Pat Belanoff argues in her article “Silence: Reflection, Literacy, Learning, and Teaching,” reflection can direct one to a “changed concept of one’s actions and the actions of others, which leads to a change in individual and group action” (416), exactly what directors desire for all tutors. The veterans’ telling about the worst experiences fostered this reflective process, with current tutors seeing that they were not alone in their problems. As one current tutor noted, “I realized the things I am struggling with are inherent to the job, which encouraged me.”

REVEALING IDENTITIES

Another advantage of meeting the veteran tutors was that the current ones saw that they are part of a long line of student workers hired by the center over the years, student workers who share characteristics, all of which point to an identity as a writing tutor. From listening to the veterans, current tutors learned one part of this identity is being able to deal with both pleasant and not-so-pleasant situations. While thoughtful clients will return to tell tutors how the papers turned out, there will also be those students who refuse to listen to advice. The veteran Terry provided an example of the latter: “A writer brought his short story, but it had so many spelling and grammar problems. He claimed, though, that he was an artist so he did not have to edit.” A major part of being tutors, then, is handling every kind of client, from the grateful to the recalcitrant. The veterans demonstrated another part of the tutors’ identity: all tutors grow. When the past tutors first started to work in the center, they faced problems that allowed them to develop into tutors, the same evolution the current tutors were encountering. Mary, for example, told the current tutors, “I was afraid to tell clients, ‘I don’t know the answer.’ If you don’t know, tell the client that you will research it and ask the student to return later.” Terry added a new angle to how tutors develop—they will become extremely sensitive to clients’ problems: “I did not like working with those who just came as a requirement. They were hostile. I just tried not to take it home with me.” The veterans’ insight into the characters of student writers revealed the all-too-human struggles shaping tutors as they grow into more experienced writing center workers. Besides learning about human interactions, the center also molds tutors’ knowledge, providing them with experiences not readily available elsewhere. Mary stressed she had learned from her many clients: “Working in the Center was like being in a class without paying for it.” Terry provided the current tutors with a slightly different view: “Working in the Center I began to understand the struggles teachers were handling.” Thus, being a tutor means gaining an education from others as well as obtaining valuable insight into the academy itself.

DEVELOPING INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

In addition to reflecting on experiences and understanding tutorial identities, the former tutors placed writing center work into a larger perspective—tutoring “[has] a purpose that brings about a deeper human connection” (Johnson 8). Because of their work, the veterans developed vital interpersonal skills that helped them to relate to others. Sally explained: “I am more diplomatic. In graduate school, when we have to write a group paper, I have learned how to rephrase suggestions, such as ‘Should it go more like this. . . .’” Kathy, a high school English teacher, connected her tutoring to her career: “When I help my own high school students, I am like a consultant now.” The veteran tutors’ comments provided the current tutors with an additional point about connecting with other human beings: valuing each client. In her article “Existentialism in the Writing Center: Tutors’ Searching for Meaning,” Peggy Johnson explains: “[T]utors [should] see as much dignity and value in the literacy and life experiences of others different from them as they see in their own” (8). Sally, the veteran, talked about learning that “I can appreciate others’ styles of writing. I realized that they didn’t have to write as I do.” For Terry, her tutorial work meant she has been a better parent: “I avoid the Mommy Mold when I help my eight-year-old son with his book reports. Instead of pushing to help him get an ‘A,’ I am trained to help him to help himself.” Such emphatic engagement became, then, a key feature of these tutors’ identities.

LEAVING BEHIND THE IVIED WALLS

The former tutors were equally eager to provide advice on how working in the center transfers beyond the college’s ivied walls. Kathy described an immediate, practical benefit: “From being in the Center, I could get part-time jobs while I was going to graduate school. It was handy to have on the résumé.” Terry, with the most work experience, offered insights into how writing center tutoring is invaluable in the corporate world: “I have also used my tutoring to my advantage because I have a skill other workers do not

possess. If I help others like my boss, they remember, and they like that I helped them not to look like an idiot.” For current tutors, the veterans opened up the future.

MEETING THEIR YOUNGER COUNTERPARTS

The meeting of the two groups was more than a one-way street. Just as current tutors took information back to their daily work, so did the veterans. Kathy reported, “Meeting current tutors rejuvenated my love for helping others with their writing. I plan to include more writing workshops and mini-grammar lessons in my English classes.” The meeting of veterans and current tutors was, therefore, a session of mutual support, like any writing center tutorial where clients and tutors learn from each other.

ARRANGING AND IMPROVING THE MEETING

Because other directors might also want to bring back veterans, here is some practical advice on setting up this special session. Luckily, my center had kept a fairly up-to-date list of former tutors’ e-mails so it was easy to contact those who had remained in the area. Thus, directors should ask more veterans than needed; sure enough, one of the former tutors canceled at the last minute for the all-important reason of having a job interview. Naturally, I made sure to leave enough time during the meeting so current tutors could also ply the veterans with their own inquiries. Finally, this useful encounter between the two types of tutors occurred about two months before graduation, so tutors expecting to receive a diploma would be especially interested in the meeting with graduates. All training sessions can also be improved. After the questions, it would have been useful to break the meeting into smaller groups, assigning one veteran tutor to a group composed of just a handful of current tutors so there could be even more interaction. And more time could have been scheduled for the veterans and current tutors to mingle socially, over snacks and sodas (if only the school would have allowed the meeting room to be used this way).

CONCLUSION

It is true that directors could avoid all the effort of locating graduated tutors by merely reminding their current staff about how working in the center is useful. However, it is hard for directors to compete with the unimpeachable authority of former tutors, as one current tutor voiced to me: “You had told us the benefits of working in the Center, but here in these former tutors we can see how the benefits carry over.” The power of peer-to-peer is strong, especially because of the veterans’ vivid stories and anecdotes. As a result, the graduated tutors and the current ones formed a team of shared concerns, interests, and goals, all re-enforcing a key concept for any center: the need for “human interdependence” (Burmeister 15). ♦

Works Cited

- Belanoff, Pat. “Silence: Reflection, Literacy, Learning, and Teaching.” *College Composition and Communication* 52.3 (2001): 399-428. Print.
- Burmeister, Beth. “Letter from the President.” *Southern Discourse* 13.1 (2009): 15-16. Print.
- Boquet, Elizabeth H. *Noises from the Center*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2002. Print.
- Capossela, Toni-Lee. *Harcourt Brace Guide to Peer Tutoring*. New York: Harcourt, 1998. Print.
- Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land*. 1922. Web. 23 June 2013.
- Frankl, Viktor. *Man’s Search for Meaning*. New York: Washington Square, 1959. Print.
- Gillespie, Paula, and Neal Lerner. *Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring*. 2nd ed. New York: Longman, 2004. Print.
- Hughes, Bradley, Paula Gillespie, and Harvey Kail. “What They Take with Them: Findings from the Peer Writing tutor Alumni Research Project.” *Writing Center Journal* 30.2 (2010): 12-46. Print.
- Johnson, Peggy. “Existentialism in the Writing Center: Tutors’ Searching for Meaning.” *Writing Lab Newsletter* 28.9 (2004): 6-9. Print.
- Klauza, Matthew D. “Tutor Training Comes Full Circle: From E-mail to Practicum and Back Again.” *Writing Lab Newsletter* 35.2 (2010): 1-5. Print.
- Ryan, Leigh, and Lisa Zimmerelli. *Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2010. Print.



TUTOR'S COLUMN

DISSERCAMP: DISSERTATION BOOT CAMP 'LITE'

◆ Elizabeth Powers

Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL

I am an over-planner. Recently, I packed two hats, three types of sunblock, four pairs of shoes, and six outfits for a two-day excursion to Savannah. I'm not even a stylish person. I just like to be prepared. I brought this attitude to the task of planning the Florida State Reading-Writing Center's pilot dissertation boot camp (DBC). As assistant director of the Center and current dissertator, I was excited to both design and participate in the program. After consulting scholarship and receiving guidance from members of the writing center community involved in DBCs (the universities of Minnesota and Oklahoma, among others), I designed a week-long program that included various writing activities, workshops, discussion topics, writing time, and tutor consultations. On the first day of Dissercamp, I came armed with a full itinerary, guidebooks, craft supplies, and sunblock (just one bottle—Dissercamp was inside, after all). Then, I met the dissercampers. We were a small group: three dissertators from different humanities programs at various stages in their writing, a graduate student tutor, the Center's director, and me in my nebulous role. After an initial discussion, I understood that the major challenge for all three dissertators was not problematic writing practices as much as finding an environment that facilitated productivity. For example, one participant had a concrete vision of what she needed to do and how to do it, but hadn't yet given herself the time. So, I decided to privilege uninterrupted writing time in our schedule. Dissercamp could best serve the group by providing time and space for dissertators to shape and embody practices they could carry through the entire dissertation writing process.

Sohui Lee and Chris Golde describe two DBC models: 1) "Just Write," which focuses on productivity and word count, usually offered through graduate centers, and 2) "Writing Process," which interweaves writing time and structured activities, workshops, discussions, and consultations (2-3). While I originally constructed Dissercamp into an elaborate "Writing Process" DBC, I realized the first day that I had overplanned and overpacked. I ditched 75 percent of my plans the first morning and reassessed the week's agenda. To meet the needs of the dissercampers, I simplified our schedule: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., independent writing time; 12 to 1 p.m., activity and lunch; 1 to 4 p.m., more writing time. One tutor, the Center's director, and I were available for consultations throughout the day. Thus, what started as a grand vision of a "Writing Process" DBC quickly turned into a program that resembled a "Just Write" model.

This simplified approach to a DBC still adhered to the three tenants of a "Writing Process" program: 1) offering consultations, 2) emphasizing collaboration, and 3) keeping focus on productivity (Lee and Golde 4). Our program specifically worked through four elements: activities, tutors, environment, Post-Its.

1. *An activity a day keeps the burnout away.* While greatly pared down from the original agenda, activities remained in our schedule—one at noon each day to provide a break after a morning of writing and a reboot for the writing-filled afternoon. The activities ranged from articulating goals to creating Valentines for our dissertations (to rekindle that research-interest flame). Noon became a time for light discussion and decompressing.
2. *Great minds think unlike. (That's why they talk.)* Lee and Golde stress the importance of offering consultations at DBC, which resonated with the Dissercamp experience. The daily opportunity for one-to-one discussions about writing kept us grounded. Like most writing center consultations, Dissercamp tutoring provided participants opportunities for self-assessment, goal calibration, collaborative problem-solving, and idea clarification. Because we were a small group, we didn't need much planning and coordination to accommodate consultations.
3. *Dissertations abhor a vacuum.* The director and I planned Dissercamp's location to accommodate differing preferences for levels of noise, light, and activity. We designated the center's Digital Studio (a room with seven computers and a couch) the center of operations, for activities and consultations. Since classes weren't in session, other areas—the writing center, our offices, the department graduate student lounge, an outside courtyard—were available as quieter areas where the dissercampers could write. The whole week, no one left the Digital Studio to work in another space. To me, this demonstrated the ultimate value of Dissercamp: the power of working together. Not all of the participants knew each other at the beginning of Dissercamp, but after first-day introductions when we shared where we were

in the dissertation process; we formed a small dissertating community, both competitive and supportive. Drafting my first dissertation chapter in a room full of other dissertators fueled my competitive spirit. Clicking keyboards, audibly mumbled thoughts, and quiet consultations constructed an ambiance steeped in productivity. Even when no one was talking, I understood in this space that writing can be a social practice in the act of writing alongside others. We seemed tuned into this ambiance of productivity so much so that by Day 2, participants began crowd-sourcing suggestions for word choice, formatting tricks, and other small issues. The minor interruptions functioned less as distractions from our own writing as they did reminders of the productive/working space we inhabited.

4. *A Post-It is worth a thousand words.* Throughout the week, participants wrote and rewrote goals on Post-It notes, which were displayed on a Digital Studio wall. Once a goal was reached, the participant moved the sticky note to the Studio's opposite wall. Through the week, some sticky notes were crumpled up and thrown away, revisited and rewritten, but others were proudly carried to the accomplishment wall. These Post-Its, tangible artifacts of dissertation work, constructed a manifest narrative of the work of the camp. The constant material visibility of the sticky notes through the week facilitated individual productivity and collaborative/competitive refashioning (e.g. breaking down large goals after seeing another participant's smaller goals—more sticky notes meant more goals reached).

These four elements built an environment that the participants found productive for dissertating that they can carry with them as they continue to write. Activity time can be adopted by the participants on days they have reserved for long writing periods, providing a midway point in which to zoom out from the immediate work they're doing to reassess the bigger picture. The participants can continue to meet with graduate student tutors at the Graduate Student Writing Center. At the end of the week, participants brainstormed ways to continue writing in a shared workspace, considering getting together as the same group, or simply situating oneself in a busy coffee shop or area of the library where others are working. (Post-Its stick to any wall, and thus can be easily transferred.) These four emphasized components, adaptable and adoptable, helped shape a DBC "lite." While this DBC format did not offer a rich variety of process-based resources and workshops, it still developed from the "Writing Process" model. And it aimed to organically frame a pathway for the participants to continue on as they write. The pilot Dissercamp may have been successful because of the specific dynamics at play with the small group of people that made up the camp. All three dissercampers, for example, were students in Literature, Rhetoric and Composition, and Humanities, and shared similar views of writing processes and practices as the writing center. Still, the enhanced productivity that Dissercamp fostered (all participants, including myself, produced and revised a healthy amount of dissertation pages) persuaded me of the potential value of a simplified model of dissertation boot camp, which could be brought into other contexts.

At conference presentations and in informal meetings with graduate students and writing center administrators, the topic of dissertation boot camp facilitates energetic and excited discussion. Then, things get tricky as the conversation turns to funding. For many under-funded centers, the reported costs of running a DBC can dash the dream of hosting one's own. The Stanford model explained by Lee and Golde costs \$2,500 per session, plus additional administrative expenses (3). While such a figure can loom large in the mind of an under-funded writing center, the success of the pilot Dissercamp leads me to argue that a dissertation-assistance program in line with the values of current writing center theory can be sustainably practiced without a substantial monetary commitment from any party. If participation is kept to five students or fewer at a time, one or two tutors can accommodate consultations with the participants each day. The lack of workshops led by guest speakers or administrators does not mean the camp can't be process-minded. Additionally, such a small group can be accommodated in a relatively small space, including a reserved classroom or library study room, if not a writing center. Sticky notes are easy to come by, and dissertators can bring their own lunches (and sunscreen). Overall, Dissercamp offered dissertators support through a small community that values effective writing practices—a workable, 'lite' program that may find success in other centers too. ♦

Work Cited

Lee, Sohui, and Chris Golde. "Completing the Dissertation and Beyond: Writing Centers and Dissertation Boot Camps." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 37.7 (2013): 1-5. Print.



CALENDAR FOR WRITING CENTER ASSOCIATIONS

January 24, 2014: Southeastern Writing Centers Association—Alabama, in Birmingham, AL

Contact: Conference chair: Tony Ricks: <tony.ricks@athens.edu>.

February 6-8, 2014: Southeastern Writing Centers Association, in Greenville, NC

Contact: Will Banks and Nikki Caswell: <swca.ecu@gmail.com>; Conference website: <www.iwca-swca.org/Conferences.html>.

March 1, 2014: Southern California Writing Centers Association, in Irvine, CA

Contact: Shareen Grogan: <sgrogan@nu.edu>; Conference website: <sandbox.socalwritingcenters.org/2014-tutor-conference/>.

March 1-2, 2014: Northeast Writing Centers Association, in Smithfield, RI

Contact: John Hall: <johnhall@bu.edu>; Stephanie Carter: <scarter@bryant.edu>; Conference website: <www.northeastwca.org/2014-conference/>.

March 28-29, 2014: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Oxford, OH

Contact: Joshua Kiger: <kigerja@miamioh.edu>; Conference website: <writingcenter.lib.muohio.edu/?page_id=3524>.

April 5, 2014: Northern California Writing Centers Association, in Rohnert Park, CA

Contact: Scott Miller: <707-664-4402>, Sheryl Cavales-Doolan: <707-527-4429>, Loriann Negri: <707-664-2629>, and Katie Pinkston and John B. Kincheloe: <707-664-4401>; Conference website: <www.sonoma.edu/writingcenter/ncwca2014/>.

May 23, 2014: Canadian Writing Centres Conference, in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

Contact: Liv Marken: <Liv.Marken@usask.ca>; Conference website: <cwcaaccr.wordpress.com/2013/12/17/cwcaaccr-2014-conference-registration-now-open/>.

com/2013/12/17/cwcaaccr-2014-conference-registration-now-open/>.

July 19-22, 2014: European Writing Centers Association, in Frankfurt (Oder), Germany

Contact: <ewca14@europa-uni.de>; Conference website: <www.ewca14.eu>.

October 30-November 1, 2014:

International Writing Centers Association and the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, in Lake Buena Vista, FL

Contact: <iwcancptw2014@gmail.com>; Conference website: <iwcancptw2014.com>.

November 7-8, 2014: Middle East/North Africa Writing Centers, in Dubai, UAE

Contact: Nadine Ashkuri: <Nadine@tud.ac.ae>; Kathy O'Sullivan: <Kathy@tud.ac.ae>.