

Transcript

Esther: We are very excited to bring you this conversation we had with directors of writing centers that have been established in South Africa, and a director who has just started a writing center in Uganda. The conversation happened between them along with another colleague really highlights the necessity of community, understanding context, and collaborating to support one another in the field. We hope you enjoy this episode.

INTRO

Esther: We're here to learn more about the writing center in Sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa has a lot of other countries as well. So we don't want to make it seem like our guests here are representing the entire region because the dynamics are different from one country to the next. I think that's very important to clarify. So as we have this conversation, our hope is to be specialized to the locations we have represented here, South Africa and Uganda. Our first guest is Lillian Lyavaala from Uganda Christian University. Hi Lillian.

Lillian: Hi, Esther.

Esther: Lillian is a lecturer of English and literature writing and study skills. She holds a master's degree in literature from UCU and She's also a researcher in oral literature and done transcribing and translating. And she's very passionate about editing and student writing. Our other guest here is Rose Richards. Hi rose.

Rose: Hi everyone.

Esther: Rose has spearheaded the writing lab, for Stellenbosch University in South Africa since its inception in 2001. And in 2011, she co-edited the book "Changing spaces: Writing centers and access to higher education." she co-authored the introduction "Writing centers as alternate pedagogical spaces," and she also contributes regularly to our blog Connecting Writing Centers across Borders.

Esther: And we also have Tom Deans. Hi Tom.

Tom: Hello. Great to be here.

Esther: Tom is a professor of English and also the Director of the Writing Center at the University of Connecticut. He was recently in Uganda collaborating with Lillian on the writing center in Uganda Christian University and he was there as a full bright scholar. it's such a pleasure to have all of you here. So let's see if we can start at the very beginning very briefly and hear a little bit about the centers that some of you are directing in Sub-Saharan Africa. Lillian and Rose, tell us maybe five things about your center. so I'll start with you Rose.

Rose: Our center is called the Writing Lab and we're part of a larger center. So we couldn't be a center inside a center. We were originally a center, but now we're not. We started in 2001 as a very small project and it took quite a bit of energy to develop it into something that was sustainable. We work across campus with all different disciplines of students, all levels of study postdocs as well and staff too. But what we do in the center is consultations and writing workshops. And those are for our graduate students. If you're a staff member who's studying, you're welcome to visit the center as a writer. And if you are a staff member teaching or supervising, you're welcome to visit us to discuss your students' writing needs or to work on your own writing, even if you're not registered as a student.

Esther: What about you Lillian?

Lillian: It's Uganda Christian University writing center. It's housed in the main library of the university called, Hamu Mukasa Library it's a small office space that we have, but we also have space outside that office where students can interact. I am shy to mention that we haven't yet launched it. It's still very, very young, but I can see us making progress. We recently got a donation through Uganda Christian University partners. The Lyle [Hohnstine] Memorial Foundation in Michigan gave us a donation of 10,000 dollars. And we are yet to establish ourselves. We hope to acquire some computers and furniture and probably a screen where we hope to have interactions with students. The major objective of setting up this writing center definitely which was birthed by Professor Dean was to assist undergraduate students in their writings. But we realize it's not only undergraduate. Some of the aims of the center are to help staff and students in all kinds of writings. You have creative writing, academic writings and in future we also would like to have outreaches to communities. Sometimes people have unwritten stories, unwritten documentaries that they would want to document. So the center would want to be part of those people's journeys in their writings. We also hope to offer translation services. Sometimes people have written in local languages and they would want their pieces to be, you know, read by everyone. Currently, we haven't even started recruiting what

we call the writing center fellows, the tutors. It's a one man team right now. I am the one in charge and I am tasked with seeing that all those are put in place, but with these interactions, I know I'll get there.

Esther: Thank you so much, Lillian. And what a privilege to speak with you at this moment when you're just starting this big project. Tom, you are working with Lillian to help bring this center together.

Tom: Yes. And, and I will say that even though operations haven't started, it has been approved by the university. As with many universities, there are multiple layers of approval at least at UCU. So it is an idea that's been endorsed by the university senate and the upper administration. So that's also a good sign. Some centers need that kind of procedural support and some can just be kind of created by administrative fiat. At UCU, there are quite a few layers. So Lily and I both talked to quite a number of people across the university and they are all quite excited for this, because there are little pieces of writing support that will be gathered into the writing center, but the one-on-one tutoring and coaching will really be new.

Esther: Anna, you had something to add as well.

Anna: I was actually wondering of the origin story of the UCU writing center. Lillian, was it something that you were like, I would like to do this and you were hoping to start a writing center and then just somehow Tom, it was just like the serendipitous moment or Tom, was it something where you went there and then that's how it started.

Tom: Well, some of these things work through personal networks. So the current Vice Chancellor, essentially the president of the university, Aaron Mushengyezi did his PhD in my department at the university of Connecticut. But I didn't know him when he was there. So, Aaron was a Uganda student who came to the U.S. to do his PhD in English. I was arriving at the University of Connecticut as he was exiting. And he then went on to a career at Makerere University and ultimately to the Vice Chancellorship. He and some colleagues were touring U.S. Universities, teaching and learning centers, not specifically writing centers, because he was seeking a grant from the Mellon Foundation to start a teaching and learning center at Makerere University where he was a Dean. And so I was just part of the tour and there was a group of, I think, four academics from Makerere, Aaron among them who just came into the writing center.

And I asked the question that I always ask people, which is like, "what's going on with writing support in your region? I know a little bit about this South Africa context, cuz I noticed that those publications like Rose were coming outta there." I said, "I don't know anything about writing support needs to Africa, tell me." And they said "we don't have writing centers." You know, we have writing courses. We have some of them like first year writing at UCU, some other universities don't have any. And so that just got us a conversation started and then they said, I said, you should do this. This is great. Look around you. There's students working at the tables over here. And, and this is, this is my favorite thing to do at the university. So there was already a, a certain rootedness or at least a transatlantic connection at the university. And, and that just helped me form a relationship that led to an invitation to, to come to UCU. That's that's my version of the origin story. I don't know if Lillian has another one, if there was things going on before that, that I was not aware of. Certainly one of the important origin stories that Lillian can speak to is, is the writing and study skills course at UCU, which is somewhat distinctive in, in the context of east African higher education. At least as far as I can tell the degree of emphasis of a required first year writing course that she's, she's rightly suggested, creates a nice compliment to what we imagine the writing center will be.

Lillian: Before COVID at the onset of COVID 19, the administration was changing administration. The former vice chancellors' term of office was ending. So it came Professor Mushengyezi who is who had started from University of Connecticut and had already met with Professor Dean. So when he came in, of course there was the lockdown and things were really stuck. So at around 2021, I think at the beginning when the economy was open and schools institutions were beginning to open up, we were told that we, we were going to have a Fulbright scholar sorry, professor from University of Connecticut. Professor Deans. Of course, when he came in, he came to the department of languages and literature and he was teaching with us that writing course to first year students. And so we were invited to have a, you know, a chat with him and on our first meeting you know he began talking about the writing center, but at the back of my mind, I already knew that it was the idea of a Vice Chancellor because he himself has a background in English. And so that was the talk. And so we would have those, there were kind of impromptu meetings. Professor Deans sometimes he would, or most of the times he would himself talk to the VP and give him updates of you know, what was happening. So for me it came as a surprise when my name was suggested that I would head the center because ideally we were, you know helping to, you know, give the center a start. And so when I was told that I was going to create the center, I was surprised. I didn't know what to expect. But of course professor Deans shared with me some of the ideas of how the center that he runs operates and he introduced me to the blog where we, I got some information and I've been

reading about writing centers that are in Africa. Some of the centers, of course, the U.S. Has so many writing centers.

And, you know, I, as in shock that in Uganda, we didn't even have a writing center, but this being the first of it kind, I believe we're going have collaboration with so many, so many universities will actually come to us and definitely will collaborate with them to help them also establish writing center.

Esther: Wow. It's amazing when these things happen so serendipitously and everything just falls in place at the right moments. Building relationships is crucial. It's something I'm noticing as a theme the different people who've asked how their centers come together, there's always a beginning informal relationship or just a conversation that leads to something more formalized. So that's really interesting. Tom, you had just unmuted yourself. So go ahead.

Tom: Oh, I was just gonna say my one other sort of connection to the South African context was I remember being right around the time when I was in grad school, where you are, Esther at that kind of midway through grad school, or maybe a little bit later, I remember my dissertation director, Ann Harrington, doing consulting down in South Africa as South Africa was kind of figuring out its post-apartheid higher education system. And one of the things that struck me when I talked to Anne on the, after her trip is she said, you know, whenever whenever a university system's trying to widen access to people who have been either denied entry to the university or, or, or otherwise excluded formally or informally, writing is an issue. And this is an issue that David Russell's brought up in his scholarship too. And, so she's saying it's, it's perfectly fitting that writing centers will become a more urgent concern when a university is in a moment of real change or a national higher education system is in a, is in a moment of trying to widen access beyond the elites. And, I think there's an impulse to that in many African nations. South Africa might have been sort of ahead of that, cuz they had a more robust, higher education system to start with. But, I remember that from, from almost 25 or 30 years ago.

Rose: Absolutely. As you were talking, I was, I'm thinking back on the ways in which we've traced in different sorts of research, writing that my colleagues and I have done, I mean, our colleagues I'm talking about across the country. I mean, that's a theme that's emerged. Very much the writing centers here started in the late 80s, the UWC one started around then. And that was why, I think we've often drawn on what we see as the type of liberatory pedagogy in writing centers. And so that emerged, I think in the states when in the sixties, the seventies and so on. Yeah. Mm-hmm, it's, it's been important to important to us. And, you know, I think for all of us, we try in writing centers, we've tried to get

away from the remedial type of legacy that we've kind of in some ways has been forced. When I say forced. And I said, I mean, individual people literally came and, you know, compelled us to, to partake in this. But because of the circumstances, there's a sort of a tendency. To say, you know, you've had this sort of background, you need remedial this and that. Whereas, you know, and that often stigmatizes and disadvantages people further. So you don't really want to embrace that apart from the fact, it isn't, you know, nice for the people anyway. So to be treated as if they're, you know, deficient rather than just students trying to study.

Anna: And Rose what about you?

Rose: Well, there are actually quite a few writing centers in South Africa. When we started 20 something years ago, there were only a handful. The eldest one was at the University of the Western Cape, which is in Cape town itself. So Stellenbosch is a little town about 40 minutes outside of Cape Town it's basically a university town. Cape Town itself has three universities. A couple of them merged so I'm just hoping I've counted this right. So, so there's UCT, which has two writing centers. It's got the general one and then the law one. And then there's UWC and there's CPUT. CPUT has a number of different campuses so I think of it as two universities, but it's actually one, Cape Peninsula University of technology. So that's in our immediate area. And then the other provinces of the country have universities as well. Each province now has universities. I think we've got 26 universities now in total, there've been a couple of new ones built and many of the universities have writing centers at this point. Some of them are programs that have to keep being renewed and others are more permanent fixtures. So they take all sorts of shapes and sizes.

Esther: Rose as someone who has directed a writing center in South Africa and interacted with other centers in that country, what dynamics or factors are you noticing that significantly impact the success of the center?

Rose: Talking about my specific center, I suppose the things that would help make it sustainable are perhaps the same things that would count in other environments as well. One of the things we found really interesting at the Writing Lab is the way we have to keep promoting the lab year after year. You would think that after a while people would realize that you're there and some people do, but so many others seem to need to be told. And it's lovely when students say, "goodness, I wish I'd learned about this in first year. It was so helpful. I loved your work with us." But it's not so great if their fourth year students. And you're thinking, 'but where were you? We've been waiting for you for years.' so we've found that word of mouth and networking is terribly

important for us. What's very important is that you've got buy-in from your university's upper echelons and proper support. So for some of the writing centers that doesn't appear to be the case. They're doing great work, but they're not being funded in a sustainable way, which means you can't retain staff. If you're only going to have a contract of a year or a couple of years, it's difficult to plan your future and people, you know, maybe want more than that after a while. And there's the space issue as well. I think where your university is situated literally, and metaphorically is important too. For us at Stellenbosch, we are not attached to a faculty. So we're attached to the Division for Teaching and Learning Enhancement which I suppose has the same kind of status as a faculty, but it's not a faculty. It's helped us in that we don't become too much associated with one type of discipline. That can make one seem a little bit more accessible to people from non-language divisions, for example. At the same time, it does mean we don't have academic status and on a university campus that can affect you in a less positive way too. So, there are a lot of factors.

Esther: Lillian you've just started your center. What are you noticing?

Lillian: There's a lot of excitement about the writing center. The university has a program called Writing and Study Skills actually the one that have been teaching for the last 10 years. So many people are connecting writing and study skills to the writing center. But the unique aspect about the writing center that we are starting, or we have already started is the fact that this writing center is open to everyone, whether in fourth year, third year, they are staff, you know, it's, it's open to everyone. But of course there are challenges that are on ground. For example, the university hasn't yet released funding for the center. We are just lucky that we got a donation from a well wisher passer-by actually. She was on a mission in Africa and someone told her about Uganda Christian University and a writing center. And she came and we just had an impromptu chat. And there she gave us a donation, which we just received. So we shall have challenges, but I think we should be able to handle one, you know, at a go the way they they'll come in. And, we anticipate that we're going to receive as many students open to the center as we can. One of the challenges though is bureaucracy. I am thinking I need to hire so and so but the university has to approve A, B, C D.

Tom: I'll just amplify universities are conservative institutions, they tend to move slowly. At least my experience at one university outside the ones I've experienced in the U.S. suggests that's the case as well. So some places will be more nimble and some places will move more slowly. But when you were doing the overview earlier, Esther, I wanted to just say, I think you're right, that this is a very small slice and, and there might be a lot going on behind the scenes in

Sub-Saharan Africa that we're not seeing. So for example, just in my six months there I got a connection from a former student of mine undergraduate student at University of Connecticut. And she was in Rwanda starting a writing center, like totally unexpected and a bit of a joy. And she was doing it a little bit differently than Rose or Liliana. She was doing it with no funding and just kind of gathering up students. And she was also on a Fulbright student Fulbright grant. So that was, that was kind of a, just kind of a nice surprise. And it got me wondering how many other of these sort of small sort of under the radar kinds of centers are there. I also saw through some of the Fulbright network, there's another person working on a writing center right now in Madagascar. You know, something that there's no reason for me to come across it except kind of accidentally as I did. So if I came across two, two of them, you know, at least just through the Fulbright network or, or, or through former students, there's probably some of those grassroots kind of things happening and that's where forming a network would help make those visible, help those grow, amplify the kind of work of more established centers like Rose's and more definitely emerging centers like Lillian's at UCU. So I'm kind of excited to see what emerges once we start having more conversations like this.

Rose: If I can jump back I mean, I know that a couple of our writing consultants who are international students from other African countries have been very keen to start writing centers. One in Kenya, one in Cameroon. And so what I would love to be able to do is gather people because as you say, one finds out about this accidentally, and there are things going on. Sometimes these smaller operations disappear because they're not getting support. And sometimes because the powers that need to be convinced are not aware that there are writing centers around in other places and they are successful. So they're unwilling then to start to fund something that sounds like a bit of a strange proposal.

Tom: Rose I I'd be curious whether in the South African context, there have been conferences because I think that's something I was hearing folks in East Africa eager to do. But hasn't happened yet. So could you let us know if, if there's been, you know, physical sort of gatherings, pre COVID I assume and maybe even online since COVID?

Rose: I certainly can. So regarding the conferences, Stellenbosch hosted a couple of many conferences. It was supposed to be a space for cons writing consultants or writing tutors to present about their own work and reflect on it. So it was meant to really represent them rather than the directors or the more permanent teaching staff. The reason we did that was because we have a South African Writing Centers network that meets in various ways. It hasn't been

doing it really during COVID, but we used to meet at a conference called the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of South Africa. And that was a national conference, which meant that people would attend it for various reasons and not just for writing center work. So it was easier to get funding for that. So we used to have some opportunities for the core staff or permanent staff to meet up at events like that but there seemed to be a gap for the consultants. So we started doing that and then the University of Victoria did a nice conference on training for writing consultants. And what else? We've had a number of smaller events like that, and there's a new academic literacies organization, which is very keen on writing centers. And there have been running some very nice online seminars and things like that. I mean, if one of good things come out of the pandemic, it's that, you know, people are more willing to put the sort of thing online. So the short answer is yes, there are things. The long answer is, well, we would need to contact people at other institutions that we could include when we advertise these sorts of things. I mean, obviously our focus is somewhat more on South Africa, but we really aren't going to limit ourselves to that. I mean, if other people want to present or join in or participate in other ways.

Anna: I'm so glad that we're in this space because I, and what you said earlier about possibly connecting the, South African writing center listserv and if Lillian could join or others and kind of expanding that conversation. Tom, one of the things that we've been really interested in on the blog is this idea of whether or not and in what ways and to what degree the North American model really translates. And being from University of Connecticut and as a Fulbright scholar going to Uganda Christian university, how were you navigating that tension? Is this an imagined tension or, I imagine there was the local ground, what needed to happen there and the north American sort of orthodoxy.

Tom: Yeah. I think there are a few cross currents there. Some of them troublesome and some of them really positive. So in, in a real positive sense one of the things that would come up when I would talk to the vice chancellor and the the, the other folks on campus is that they realize at least at the university, I was at that, that some of the old sort of structures inherited from the 19th century you know, sit down exams that needs to change just based on what we know about learning, about where higher education across the globe is going. And they see writing centers as consistent with the kinds of active peer learning that, that they also have ambitions towards, you know, more laboratory work, more undergraduate research. And so in that sense, the North American model is, is a, is a nice amplification or a nudge in, in that direction. And I think that was pretty universal, you know, except for the folks who are really committed to a more conservative sense of the solo writer, the sit-down testing culture. But I, found, even though that that's pretty embedded say at UCU, Lillian you can

correct me if I'm wrong, there are ambitions to sort of incrementally change that. And they saw the writing center as part of that. One place where we had to adapt the model as something Lillian's also already brought up, which is that at my writing center, at the University of Connecticut, we don't serve faculty. We have our hands full supporting undergraduates and graduate students, but it was a real priority for, for Lillian, for everyone at UCU, that's saying, Hey, our staff-- and when they say academic staff, it's what the U.S. might call faculty-- but their administrative staff and their academic staff were eager to see the writing center start because they wanted to work on their own writing. And there's more of a push to do more research among the faculty but they're called academic staff, the instructors. So they're being pushed to research. The administrative staff who are working at all those important middle ground places in the university are saying, Hey, our world is changing too. We have different writing demands and different technologies. Can we go to the writing center? And so that is one place where we, we swerved from, from the traditional serving students. And so the proposal that was approved even if not realized yet the vision is very much about that. So those are two kind of interesting cross currents that I found, maybe one that's just really affirming of the north American model and one that says, hey maybe we need to critique this. The ones I'm still kind of curious about that I didn't have time enough to learn is the student culture, for example, different different regions have different cultures around student work on campus, right? Like campus jobs that are paid are ubiquitous in the U.S. But I didn't see as much of that in my experiences in Uganda where the idea of hiring undergraduates was kind of new, but also kind of welcome. That would be a nice thing that I think would support students in their financial support, where there are plenty of students who are struggling to make their budgets and we all know the benefits of writing tutoring for learning and for personal growth of our tutors, but they also deserve a paycheck. Right. And, and that culture wasn't really pronounced as far as I could see at our university. And that took a people, getting their head around it a little bit, wait a minute, we're gonna pay the students. And I said, yes, it's valuable work. It's it's challenging work. It's important work mm-hmm and it will help them grow. But those are a few kind of things that I've noticed. Anna

Anna: mm-hmm . Thank you, Tom.

Weijia: And the other thing that I can think about is language. I know Rose at your center because some of your writing consultants contributed pieces to the blog, I've learned that sometimes consultants carry out the session in multiple languages.

Rose: Uh, We've yes, we've we've tried to keep our consultations as writer focused as possible. So if the writer wants to speak English, but it's not their first language, then that's fine. If they would prefer to speak another language and we are able to assist them in that language, then we go for that. Because our goal is to get the students to talk and to talk their way through things and to articulate. Our consultants speak a number of different languages. Hmm. I suppose at this point, most of our, all of our postgrads pretty much are writing our graduate students are writing in English. Some of our undergrads still write in Afrikaans and if students are studying, sorry, if students are studying other languages, they may write in those languages too. So, we don't, we don't expect them just to stay with one language. They use what, what works for them, but it's got to work towards helping them to develop their argument, they're writing, et cetera.

Anna: Lillian and Tom, how are you thinking about the question of language?

Lillian: One of the aspects that we thought of is having translation services at the center. For example, we, we, we have international students. We have students that come from Francophone speaking countries, and so definitely the, the biggest challenge is that Uganda, as a, as a country follows the British system of education and English is the official language and expected in any academic piece of writing but I think we build on the fact that it's not a classroom environment where you're going to tell them, no here you have to say this or say this, this is a wrong thing. Since they're going to interact with one another, it's going to help them. When they come to the writing center, they have ideas that they want to share. For me in sharing they will be, I strongly believe they will learn from one another and be able to advance their arguments and get to a point where they want to.

Rose: Lillian, as you were talking, I was also thinking I mean, I've shown one side of things that's kind of cheery and all that, but I mean, the other side of things is that you always end up in English. And I think for a lot of people, that's, that's really quite challenging and difficult. And sometimes I think they feel as if they've left part of themselves behind when they've become a student, you know, and it's not always a part of themselves that they would like to leave behind. So at one point we were trying to run our consultant training in English and Afrikaans, but then of course the difficulty with that is those are not the only two languages in the country. So then, so then and to my embarrassment and shame, I don't speak any of the other languages. I had a year of Zulu when I was like 12, but I mean, I don't really remember much of that now. And I certainly couldn't teach in it. So the thing that I always wrestle with is the inequity or the inequality, I suppose, of, you know, how one uses language in

the end. If, if one's ultimate goal is to get people to speak English or to write well in English. I don't know. I, I, I feel I can see why it's practical and I can see why there's a big arena for English writers to publish and to share ideas and to communicate and so on. So people could be limited if they don't use English, but at the same time looking at how some of the students I've known have battled with language, I think it's really it's a challenging and uncomfortable situation for me. And I would've loved to have included something in training that was more accessible to everybody, but you know, in the end we, we, I mean, we actually, we just train an English now. So cuz that was our, our magical solution to the language problem was, well, we'll just, just work in English. So, and I, I feel very guilty every time I do it cause, in my experience, the majority of our students are not English speakers and with our consultants as well. I'm just thinking of our current intake. We've probably got, out of 25, I think we maybe have a few who are first language English speakers. The rest on the rest are not so it's at least 20 of them or not. They well, perfectly competent in English. I mean, their English is great, but it seems a little strange and it's the same with our students as well, to a large extent.

Tom: The other, the other just personally, the thing that I had to reckon with was my American accent. So I always had to say, you know, it, it it's, it's it's languages and then it, then it's, then it's dialects and, and, and accents as well. So I was often saying, sorry for this American accent, which sometimes struggle for students in the same way that I was dealing with a little bit of just sort of adjustment to Ugandan English. So, so it's, both languages and English is, I guess, is how, what, what the issue is there. And as we, as we know, there's no, there's no, there's no, no magic solution to that, except for people of good will coming together to figure it out in each local context.

Esther: Mm-hmm , so we obviously have a lot more to discuss about language and the idea of global English, how you decide what you would like your writing center consultants and teachers to train in while also balancing their linguistic identities and then also keeping in mind institutional expectations, but as we begin to wrap up, is there a question or a quick thought that you'd like to add to everything that's been said?

Lillian: Ever since this idea of a round table discussion about writing centers came up, I've been harboring idea of you know, just visit one of you and see how you operate and, and probably carry lots of ideas back home and, and see that, see that we are the same page in terms of what you're doing, that we don't really do things that are different. Cause I believe the needs that you're addressing in your community are the same writing needs that, you know, I'm also going to address.

Rose: Well I, I would, I'll take this opportunity then to extend the invitation to Lillian. If you're interested in visiting us, you're welcome to do that. We'd love to see you and love to hear all about your exciting new center and all the fun and interesting things you're going to be doing. I did just want to say, you don't have to worry about trying to be too much, like what other people are doing. You need to adapt your center to what you are doing on your campus and your student demographics and things like that, because you'll find, I mean, if you come out here, especially in the Cape, the four universities that are in close proximity to each other, and I'm sure all of the writing centers I'm sure would be happy to see you, but you'll also see that the four of them are very, very different from each other. For. For reasons which the centers themselves could explain. So yeah, I'm but I'm happy to, to have you over and consider that a formal invitation

Lillian: I'm so humbled. Thank you so much,

Esther: Tom. Is there anything you wanted to make sure that we heard about

Tom: Just on a theme of connection. Sorry, I got dogs barking in the back. The one of the things I'm kind of eager for and I keep made a promise for when I left is that, Hey, I wanna connect my tutors to the ones that eventually staff Lillian center. So that there's, so there's exchange going back both ways in, in both directions. Cuz I think I met so many wonderful students who imagine as tutors while I was there at UCU. And I'm excited, always about my own tutoring staff here at Connecticut and the idea of, of, of just putting them together for part of our orientation and their orientation. That I just wanna see what happens there. I think, I think that kind of exchange that Lillian's talking about between directors is really vital. And I'd like to facilitate that as best I can but also students who work for us can connect with each other as they do at the kinds of, in person conferences that we tend to have here in the states where, where writing tutors get together. This would be even in some sense more exciting cuz it's crossing continents.

Anna: That's very exciting. I love that idea. The connecting tutors across borders. And I would like to throw in the mix, George Mason university tutors. Esther works at the writing center. I'm the former director of that writing center. But I do think that That would be an incredible opportunity to sort of think through collectively about even if it's just, you know, an hour conversation among tutors in our different centers. What a great idea, Tom, I'm loving this. I think something we can continue to, to consider maybe next time we offer a tutor training. Esther, you can propose that to our director.

Esther: I am like taking notes right here, making sure I can write her immediately after we're done. These are all fantastic, fantastic ideas that I look forward to bringing to fruition. Thank you, Tom, Lillian, and Rose for joining us today

Rose: Thank you.