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A JOURNAL OF WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

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Editor's Note
Muriel Harris

We begin this difficult academic year wishing everyone well as we cope with the challenges of a pandemic. Most of all, we hope everyone is staying safe while finding effective ways to continue assisting students. As the responses posted in the COVID-19 section of the *WLN* blog (www.wlnjournal.org/blog) indicate, there has been great concern for caring for the welfare of students as well as for supporting them emotionally in the strange times we find ourselves in.

MURIEL HARRIS

In a different confining environment with all sorts of limitations and constraints—a prison, Melissa Pavlik writes about her work as she developed a writing center for inmates. That meant dealing with endless rules, delays, and difficulties, while holding classes to educate tutors and watching as they demonstrated collaboration. The inmates managed to form a community of writers despite stringent restrictions on their interactions. Their dedication should convince us that, with effort and determination, major hurdles can be surmounted. One of those inmates, Benny Rios, writes this issue's Tutors' Column about the forms of collaborative learning that he and his fellow writers engage in. And Rios asks us to take a closer look, to study how collaborative learning works within the confines of a prison.

In another environment, that of STEM courses at her institution, Anna Rollins and her co-authors take us through the steps her team followed to develop a series of workshops for various STEM courses, to train the tutors, to evaluate students' responses to those workshops, and to prepare resources for tutors and teachers for future workshops.

The realm of digital writing is yet another—and very complex—environment in which writing center staff assist writers. To help tutors understand and navigate this digital world and to support students writing within this world, Brian Hotson and Stephanie Bell offer what they describe as "three foundational concepts that speak to the writing center experience of the digital turn" (p.19).

As so many gatherings are temporarily postponed or canceled, we are not including our usual conference calendar. In the meantime, stay safe, stay well, and keep leaping all the hurdles in your path.

Three Cs of Stateville: A Writing Center in Prison

Melissa Pavlik
North Park University

When I accepted the position of writing center director at North Park University in 2017, a rush of joy hit me for two reasons: (1) after twelve years of adjuncting around Chicago, I would work full-time at one school with benefits, and (2) my workspace came well-stocked with what Peter Carino calls "the 3 Cs of writing centers: coffee, cookies, and couches" (102). In January 2018, my second semester at this liberal arts school that enrolls about 3,000 students, undergraduate Writing Advisor (WA) Emily Smith started a letter partners project that would eventually lead to a dual-campus writing center between university tutors in Chicago and students at our seminary's extension campus, Stateville Correctional Center, a nearly-century old maximum security facility that houses 1,137 adult males (*Stateville Correctional Center*). At a training session to prepare WAs and myself to participate in this write-to-learn experience, Emily cited the *Sentencing Project* to inform us of the 2.2 million people incarcerated in the United States with a "500% increase over the last 40 years" ("Criminal Justice Facts"). She also noted how a 2013 RAND study linked participation in correctional education programs to a reduced recidivism rate of 43 percent (Davis et al. 57) and closed by reading from a handout that outlined the project's rationale:

> to humanize victims of mass incarceration, improve writing skills of both parties, further incorporate North Park Theological Seminary students incarcerated at Stateville into the North Park Chicago campus, and encourage all involved to rethink the prescribed image of a good writer by breaking stereotypes of race, ethnicity, and levels of education organically. (Smith)

Logistics-wise, writing partners would complete a series of four exchanges throughout the semester, commenting on one another's writing assignments in a manner that mirrored our center's conferencing practices. A Theology professor who had

worked in Stateville since 2015 and currently taught the students we were paired with would facilitate letter exchanges. The first essay from my partner—39 pages handwritten, single-spaced, with 113 footnotes properly documented in Chicago style—initiated a written conversation between us that remains unfinished to this day.

Because of my first letter partner's prowess with his pen, I was surprised when asked, the following fall, to provide a basic diagnostic for students enrolled in the seminary's newly-launched MA in Christian Ministry program at Stateville. Students accepted into the program came from a variety of non-traditional educational backgrounds; some had earned bachelor's degrees through correspondence courses, for example, while others possessed only a GED. The accredited program emphasizes rehabilitative aspects of education in the form of restorative arts training for those working in ministerial contexts susceptible to violence. While applicants need not be Christian, they must enroll ready to write (by hand) 3000-word research papers. I was surprised again when 28 of 36 students who had already been accepted to this graduate-degree seeking cohort failed the diagnostic I provided, based on Andrea Lunsford's "top 20" errors in *The Everyday Writer*, the same diagnostic I use in undergraduate developmental writing courses. The writing partners program continued in fall 2018, but were there other ways our center could provide support for North Park students at Stateville? I applied to receive clearance to enter the prison, intent on teaching a few workshops. Support from the seminary based on a conversation with a student during my first visit inside led me to eventually offer a credit-bearing "Tutoring Writing: An Introduction to Writing Center Studies" course to 14 students at Stateville in fall 2018. Pre-established collaborative practices in this prison community continued to develop in the Tutoring Writing class with success both despite and because of constraints. While you will find no coffee, cookies, or couches in the writing center at Stateville Correctional Center, the Tutoring Writing class provided space and time for us to establish our own 3 Cs: collaboration through conversation sparked within a developing, beloved community.

FIRST CONVERSATIONS
Prior to the Tutoring Writing class, on the day of my initial visit in October 2018, I couldn't tell if my teeth were chattering because I hadn't worn a jacket in an attempt to simplify the process in the shakedown room or because I was nervous about entering prison. Probably both. After following an escort through a series of gated checkpoints and confusing indoor passages, we walked outside

until we reached the school building. I would have three groups of about ten students pulled from class, one group at a time, to work with me in a space big enough for three round tables that seated maybe five grown men comfortably. I figured the students would sit at two of the tables and leave the third for me. The first group of guys filed in; several lined up to shake my hand and introduce themselves. Others rearranged the space so that we had ten chairs around the one round table where I had set my notebook. Was it a bad idea for these men to sit so close together, at a table suited for five?

A plastic chair was pulled out for me, accompanied by a verbal welcome. I sat and soon realized that, due to the noise from the full classrooms on each side of us and the walls ending in open air a few feet before the ceiling, close proximity was essential in order to maintain a conversation. The genius behind this design aligned with higher education in prison scholar Alexandra Cavallero et al.'s claim that, in carceral settings, "material conditions demand extraordinary closeness." In our case in particular, closeness allowed me to use my notebook for "board work" so everyone could see what a semicolon looked like. Since students sat elbow to elbow, we could hear each other above noise from other classrooms and the constant whir of what I hoped was heat but was actually an industrial fan. Also, while speaking, we could observe one another's facial expressions. I was struck by the eye contact connections made and the intensity of laughter the topic "fixing common grammar errors in academic writing" generated. The sun snuck across smiles on individual faces and marked the passing of the next three hours that felt to me like thirty minutes. The experience reminded me of sitting down for a meal with family where the conversation alone leaves you feeling full.

On that first visit to Stateville, words were cut short by an officer's call, "Time to go!" As we were halfway out the classroom, several students asked when I was returning. I visited twice more that semester, bringing two Chicago WAs along. Since students were working on various assignments at different stages in their processes, during my second visit we offered one-to-one assistance, completing 21 conferences in 2.5 hours, leaving with names of students we didn't have time to meet with still left on our lists. One student I did meet with asked how his cohort could access more long-term writing support. We talked about the Tutoring Writing class I taught to first-semester Chicago WAs and the possibility of offering it at Stateville. (He liked that idea.) On our ride home that day in November, the director of the seminary program said we could run a Tutoring Writing class the following

semester. So, our North Park writing center team from Chicago evaluated applications from North Park's Stateville students over break, and in January 2019, I had 14 names on my roster. In March, I received approval from my university's IRB for the study "Training Writing Advisors at Stateville Correctional Center." In the 11 weeks from March to May, Stateville WAs enrolled in the course offered one-to-one conferencing to their peers during weekly study halls and documented 115, or 21%, of North Park writing center's total spring semester drop-in conferences. We put in writing a plan to offer weekly conferencing to a second cohort of MA students who would start in fall 2019, and we called ourselves a dual-campus writing center.

COLLABORATION BECAUSE OF AND DESPITE CONSTRAINTS

Students in the first Tutoring Writing class I taught at Stateville adopted collaborative elements into their work as WAs fairly quickly because many viewed collaboration as a practice pre-established in being housed at this particular maximum security prison. In his essay "Collaborative Learning in a Prison Context," for example, Stateville WA Scott Moore opens with the realization that "the majority of productive learning I have done has been of the collaborative variety, especially where the ten years since my incarceration are concerned." Moore then explains how conversations with peers in informal settings like chow hall before class each week become "premium" sites for co-constructing knowledge later used in academic writing assignments because access to resources such as faculty office hours or research materials is limited to non-existent. Other students in class explained similar habits of carceral collaboration established outside of an educational context, some of which include assisting one another in the law library with cases, sharing commissary resources to prepare meals, and networking to run non-profit organizations. Because the seminary's MA in Christian Ministry program requires applicants to have long-term convictions with at least 15 years left on their sentences, many students had already been incarcerated together for years, if not decades. Students started the class with experience in what they call "building." Stateville WA Rayon Sampson explains this term in his essay "Building with Someone" as "commonly used when cellmates bond or engage in conversations to get to know each other" and as a successful technique when applied in writing conferences. This ability to collaborate by what Sampson calls "building" does not minimize the fear and lack of trust embedded in the prison culture, but it does suggest that a history of teamwork pre-existed my presence.

My students also wrote about how the constraint of restricted

movement could invite collaboration. For example, when lockdowns cut class short or cancelled it, or when students missed class due to unexpected visits or miscommunication with officers about class rosters, classmates worked together to get handouts to absent students in different cell houses and to hand in absent students' missing work. I learned from my students how to use restrictions on my own movement as opportunities to collaborate. I needed an escort to class, the entry process could take an hour, and Stateville is already an hour's drive from Chicago, so I held conversations on the drives and in the shakedown room lines with other educational volunteers that allowed me to plan and reflect verbally in a way I rarely experienced with colleagues in Chicago.

Because they understood our time was limited and that effective communication could lead to successful collaboration, students prepared thoroughly for class conversations. I had (and have) never had more prepared, engaged, cordial students than my first term in Stateville. (Want to witness a class that does *all* the reading and never runs out of things to say? I can get you in on a gate pass.) These students were so eager to engage assigned texts dialogically that I misremembered Carino's "three Cs of writing centers" and told the class one C stood for "conversation." Conversing about Carino's "coffee, cookies and couches" that we didn't have united the class. A self-declared prison chef described recipes that left all our mouths watering as we leaned forward, tipping our plastic chairs. I drew perpetual smiley-face emojis on the chalkboard next to names when calling students to lead discussion, raising energy levels in the absence of caffeine. As an icebreaker before a difficult conversation on post-colonialism and queering the writing center, I was gifted an imaginary apple, and gratefully so; what would I do with a real apple that constituted contraband?

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY

Our class variation on Carino's "three Cs" set a foundation where collaboration through conversation led to the development of community. When Cavallero et al. point out that "the simple act of collaboration among teachers and students constitutes a tactical move with real effects" in an education-in-prison setting, I recognize one real effect of teaching the Tutoring Writing class: engagement of North Park's dual campuses in a definition of community that provides Stateville WAs the reward of visibility within a carceral setting and in the free world.

An interviewee in a study by Maggie Shelledy discusses his experience of surviving seven years incarcerated without a visit and notes how it is humanizing "to realize that someone else sees you." Stateville WAs experienced the reward of being seen not as

numbers or "offenders" but as productive members of the prison community. When a state senator visited Stateville in June 2019, students confidently introduced themselves as Writing Advisors. Taking the class and facilitating drop-in hours provided new reasons to be seen outside the cell as well as increased motivation to socialize, further building community between students. Scott Moore comments on how brainstorming conversations at chow resembled those in a "Burkean Parlour" because they illustrated communal construction of knowledge outside of censorial constraints of the classroom or cell house. Isolated in his cell, one student relied on self-conferencing; he read his paper aloud in front of a mirror and documented the experience in a tutor report so others in our community could see what he had done. WAs held impromptu conferences in intermediary spaces based on knowledge of the movement patterns of their peers, and they welcomed advisees from other educational programs in the prison. Students in my class who already viewed themselves as writers could inhabit a space where a culture of writing was embraced instead of ridiculed, as had been their past experience while incarcerated. I witnessed students-turned-Writing-Advisors care more about helping others succeed than their potential lack of self-confidence when conferencing. Shared language developed in the Tutoring Writing class, which included nicknames and a mutual understanding that, whether we viewed our North Park mascot namesakes as problematic settler colonists in the free world or slobs with poor personal hygiene in prison, in class we were all proud to be seen as "Vikings."

Students in the Tutoring Writing class contributed visibly to writing center communities outside of prison. Stateville WAs created their own tutor reporting forms they submitted, and I shared this information with faculty who taught at Stateville via email weekly. Also, Chicago WAs got to know our Stateville WAs in various contexts. I matched WAs from Chicago and students in the Tutoring Writing class at Stateville as mentor/mentee pairs where Stateville mentees received written feedback on their approach to conferencing scenarios as well as two formal essays they wrote for our class. Two Chicago WAs visited Stateville to facilitate workshops; others visited study halls. Even WAs who did not participate directly in the project learned about one another because we posted bios and work by Stateville WAs in our writing center in Chicago and read from Stateville students' poems at an open mic on our Chicago campus. Three Stateville WAs' essays were accepted for outside publication. Essays written by Stateville WAs in their Tutoring Writing class were cited in final papers written by Chicago WAs taking the same course the following semester.

Reciprocal learning between Chicago and Stateville WAs and the broader North Park community continued after the Tutoring Writing class ended. Shelledy touts that "Writing studies needs more stories that move beyond the privileged spaces and practices of our discipline;" within writing *center* studies, I argue the same. One example of this broadening of community happened when a Stateville student's contest-winning poem was read at a "North Park's Got Talent" event in fall 2019 by the president of our Black Student Union, sparking a conversation about racism and representation that may never have started at a writing center whose main campus is run mostly by traditional college-age, white, middle-class females. Add our male Stateville WAs to the mix, mostly black and brown and middle-aged, and we approach the possibility of sharing stories in collaborative situations to establish the mutual respect for all students on both campuses necessary to continue building community.

CONCLUSION

All of the coffee, cookies, and couches in the world won't make a writing center if the conversation, collaboration, and community aren't in place; at least, that is what I learned from my first semester Tutoring Writing class at Stateville. The WAs in class taught me that the best way to maintain momentum in terms of sustaining collaboration is to hold one another accountable, which we have done by continuing to "conversate" in monthly team meetings during study halls. In fall 2019, Stateville WAs facilitated 15 workshops and 5.5 hours of weekly conferencing, and they reviewed applications over winter break for a second cohort of WAs who enrolled in and completed the tutoring course in spring 2020. Be it quixotic to expect all readers of this article to initiate writing center work in carceral settings, there are ways we in the free world can hold one another accountable to support those affected by mass incarceration. Writing center folk can actively pursue working with current education-in-prison and re-entry programs or simply be more inviting to students who endure trauma due to the incarceration of family members and loved ones or their own previous incarcerations.

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Improving Students' Comprehension of STEM Writing Conventions

Anna Rollins, Kristen Lillvis, Shoshannah Diehl, Shayla Owens, and Cynthia McComas

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Recently, faculty and Writing Center staff at Marshall University partnered to improve undergraduate STEM students' ability to clearly and efficiently communicate their knowledge of STEM concepts through discipline-specific writing conventions. We (Anna Rollins, the Writing Center director, and Kristen Lillvis, the English Graduate Programs director) corresponded with STEM faculty and coordinated writing classroom workshops in engineering, math, biology, geology, and computer science classrooms; we also hired and trained three graduate tutors who planned and facilitated each of the classroom writing workshops.[1] The tutors had a minimum of one year experience tutoring in the Writing Center and had completed courses in composition theory and pedagogy; none were undergraduate STEM majors. As part of their teaching, these tutors compiled genre and discipline-specific writing activities and developed a pedagogical handbook for future tutors working with student writers in the STEM fields. What we learned from our workshops will benefit writing centers hoping to offer tutor-led workshops aimed at increasing student comprehension of STEM writing conventions. Below, we offer background on our program of workshops, a model of our tutor preparation and workshop offerings, and reflections on potential future modifications of our program.

BACKGROUND: DEFINING STUDENT NEEDS

In informal conversations with students in the STEM disciplines, we learned that due to the lecture format of many STEM courses, students reported receiving little feedback on their writing. Instructors with large class sizes (a common situation in the STEM fields) who include writing assignments in their courses have noted the impracticality of providing feedback on writing, and these instructors often request assistance from teaching assistants or turn to practices such as Calibrated Peer Review (The Regents of the University of California).[2] Students still expressed frustration

with not receiving feedback on writing from STEM instructors, especially because they were being required to compose in new, discipline-specific genres that required a discussion of complex, newly-learned content. As we reflected upon this frustration expressed by many STEM students, we realized that this would be an ideal opportunity for the Writing Center to intervene in the form of tutor-led classroom workshops.

We sought STEM instructors who were open to incorporating tutor-led, STEM-focused workshops into their classrooms one to three times during the semester. We intended for the tutors to help students understand discipline-specific writing conventions related to a particular assignment or type of assignment that involved writing. We requested a syllabus, assignment sheets, and rubrics from interested faculty. With the understanding that negotiating demands of discipline-specific discourse is crucial, not just for clear communication but also for understanding course content (Martin; Unsworth), we crafted pedagogical materials related to the specific writing conventions of each of these disciplines prior to our classroom visits. Of the fifteen professors in the STEM disciplines we contacted with our proposal, six wanted us to work with seven STEM courses during the semester. We then arranged one or more writing workshops in biology, computer science, civil engineering, geology, and math courses that covered a range of genres being assigned (including team writing assignments) in the courses. The genres included mini-posters, memos, lab reports, vision statements, mapping assignments, and population model reports.

TUTOR PREPARATION AND PEDAGOGY
Having pinpointed student need for STEM writing support, built a framework for our project, and partnered with six STEM faculty across a wide range of disciplines, our next step was to train the tutors who would be working in those classrooms. The three tutors were asked to consider assignments given by STEM faculty through the lens of Michael Carter's four metagenres (or ways of doing that influence the structure of written genres) that characterize compositions in the academy: writing for performance, writing for problem solving, writing for empirical inquiry, and writing for research from sources (394-402). Through the lens of these metagenres, tutors were able to analyze the STEM writing assignments and articulate key discourse features based upon the assignment's overarching purpose. To better understand the use of Carter's metagenres in this context, consider this example of their application to a workshop on mini-posters in an Introduction to Cell Biology course. First, tutors assessed that this genre falls under Carter's description of the metagenre "writing for empirical

inquiry," which consists of "answering questions by drawing conclusions from systematic investigation based on empirical data" (396). The features that characterize this metagenre result in a particular structure: a text with clear subsections often utilizing versions of the terms introduction, materials/methods, results, and discussion. By learning the features of the "writing for empirical inquiry" metagenre, the tutors were able to highlight the connection between the purpose of the genre and its structure. Tutors noted that learning about the way generic features relate to purpose and structure aided the development of more specific lectures and guided questions in class workshops.

Tutors also learned key register features in the grammar of various academic genres and discussed how the genre's grammatical features related to students' current writing assignment in each course. For example, for multiple classes, tutors worked with students who were composing in the genre of procedural writing. We gave tutors information about the grammar that can be expected in procedural writing, such as the use of simple present tense clause structures in directions or imperative clause structures in instructions (Bloor and Bloor 85). This knowledge of the specific grammatical features was helpful for the tutors since they were able to provide specific instruction about word and sentence level expectations for a particular genre's discourse. This information was often implicit knowledge to STEM faculty, but was rarely expressed explicitly in class instructions.

A final key component of tutor preparation was reassurance. While the tutors were well-prepared to present writing workshops focused on the STEM instructors' writing assignments, we still needed to assure them that though they may be less familiar with the content of STEM disciplines, their knowledge of features related to the values of particular discourse communities would benefit students as they learned to negotiate the linguistic demands of a new discipline. During group meetings, we reminded them of situations where they had successfully given feedback to students in STEM disciplines and asked them to share additional examples of their successes. We reinforced the crucial role of the generalist tutor, as articulated by Dory Hammersley and Heath Shepard: the lack of knowledge that a tutor may have about the content in a particular discipline can actually be beneficial to the tutoring session as tutors work from their lack of content knowledge and translate the student's writing in order to navigate the revision process. While our tutors were outsiders to the STEM disciplines, their ability to analyze metagenres was enhanced by the fact that they were not embedded in one discipline. The tutors left these meetings

expressing their preparedness to tutor in unfamiliar disciplines.

FROM PREPARATION TO PRACTICE: THE CLASSROOM WORKSHOPS

Our tutors reviewed the course materials for each of their assigned class workshops and modified the workshop instruction to more clearly teach writing in conjunction with material already being taught in the class. Depending upon each professor's preference, tutors visited one to three times over the course of the semester. Each tutor conducted approximately four one-hour visits. For instance, in the Introduction to Cell Biology course previously discussed, tutors worked with students who were beginning to compose mini-posters based upon a lab they recently conducted. The tutors analyzed an instructor-provided mini-poster model according to both the "writing for empirical inquiry" metagenre and the discourse features expected in the genre of a lab report (past tense for procedures and present tense for discussion and conclusions) (Ryan and Zimmerelli 89). Tutors provided students with this information regarding genre expectations and then crafted self- and peer review questions by taking those expectations into account. For instance, when considering the genre of the mini-poster, which requires clarity and conciseness, questions that focused on global issues of the text were as follows:

- Is there any information that does not pertain to the requirements of the intro section (e.g., information that pertains more to other sections such as describing specifics of the experiment)?

- Does the intro contain accurate background information that correctly references the article? Is that information relevant to the specific organelle in question?

Questions that focused on local issues were as follows:

- Could the background information be simplified? Could words be omitted? Do sentences flow?

- Is the hypothesis clearly presented to readers or displayed as a statement of fact? Is the hypothesis specific to the organelle in question?

Our tutors followed this same process—combining instructor-provided models with metagenre and discourse features analysis—for each of the four class sessions they visited during the semester. For example, tutors giving workshops in the biology classroom also helped students unpack the staging of a lab report. The STEM faculty member provided a model lab report, and tutors

explained what type of information and writing was expected in the introduction, methods, results, and discussion sections. For instance, tutors explained what was expected in the introductory section of a lab report by noting that the first few sentences should provide specific information about the topic of research that led to a hypothesis. Following that background, tutors instructed students that they should explicitly state their hypothesis in a first- person plural active sentence (i.e. "Our hypothesis stated …"). Similarly, in the computer science classroom, tutors worked with students on conciseness as a composition skill. Tutors composed a sample paragraph that discussed content related to the course and that included writing issues related to conciseness that students often struggled with, as noted by the instructor. Tutors spent workshop time working with students to revise the paragraph by focusing on the following instructions: say a lot in a small space, state only what is necessary, and use simple sentence structures. Tutors projected this paragraph on a screen and asked for a volunteer to read the paragraph aloud. Students were then asked to revise this sample paragraph independently. Tutors circulated throughout the room, asking students to share their revisions and working with them to put the instructions into practice. Once all of the students completed their revisions, the tutors asked for volunteers to share their work aloud. After a revision was read, tutors led the whole class in assessing the revision for conciseness, asking students to identify concise passages and to revise (as a whole class) passages that could be simplified. The tutors and students worked together until they agreed that the passages met genre conventions.

EVALUATING THE WORKSHOPS: SURVEY RESULTS AND PROGRAMMATIC IMPROVEMENTS

We gained valuable information from student feedback surveys administered by tutors immediately after each class workshop. On each of the Likert scale surveys, students were asked the following three questions: "How would you rank your writing ability prior to this semester?"; "Did the work we completed in [the] class [workshop] help you better understand the writing assignments given in the course?"; and "Did the work we completed in class help you understand the standards and expectations for writers in your major?" We noted an interesting trend in the responses: an inverse relationship between how students rated themselves as writers and how students assessed the instruction and work we completed in the workshop. For instance, students who self-identified as weak or average writers were more likely to assess our instruction as incredibly helpful. Students who self-identified as strong writers, however, were more likely to assess our instruction as moderately helpful or less than helpful.

There are, of course, several ways to interpret the information from our survey: students who self-assessed as stronger writers could have felt that the information discussed in the workshops was information that they were already familiar with. These students may have already believed they did not need writing instruction due to prior writing success in their composition courses or in high school writing classes. In addition to these possibilities, student feedback may have been influenced by the fact that our tutors were still generalist tutors. Our tutors all had undergraduate degrees in majors outside of STEM disciplines, something that the STEM students were aware of in the workshops. It is possible that, despite our tutors' extensive preparation, knowledge of generic conventions, and ability to teach writing, STEM students assumed their lack of a STEM degree still translated to a lesser ability to tutor STEM writing topics.

After reflecting on our survey feedback, we decided that one key to promoting the Writing Center to advanced writers is to highlight the training tutors have received in writing across the disciplines. As Catherine Savini discusses issues that accompany generalist and discipline-specific tutoring, she notes that writing consultants can help students across the disciplines gain access to new discourses through the following methods: sharing personal experience with a specific genre and discipline, interrogating students about that genre and discipline, and instructing students on how to find and analyze model texts (3). Like nearly all undergraduates, tutors were required to complete general education requirements in the STEM disciplines during their coursework. Additionally, they are required to complete a four-credit Writing Center and Composition Theory course. As we modify this course in accordance with our workshops and survey findings, during the "tutoring across the disciplines" unit we will ask tutors to reflect upon writing they have composed for their general education courses outside of their discipline and to consider how they will speak about their prior composition experiences with students in those disciplines.

While surveys of students yielded mixed results, holding tutor-led workshops in a variety of STEM courses resulted in our center's ability to improve pedagogical resources for tutors working with students across all disciplines. After our STEM classroom workshops, our tutors composed two "best practice" handbooks— one for tutors and one for STEM faculty—based on the work they completed analyzing faculty assignments and providing in-class STEM writing instruction; the handbooks provided specific instruction for individuals working with students writing across the disciplines. Our handbook for tutors included the following

components: evaluating assignment sheets and rubrics, identifying STEM writing conventions, providing feedback, navigating the drafting/revision process, drawing on APA style basics, and giving a discipline-specific class writing workshop. Our handbook for STEM faculty included the following components: creating and explaining assignment sheets, designing a rubric, conducting a writing lesson, planning the drafting process, facilitating peer review, providing feedback, and advocating for the writing center. We have promoted this handbook to STEM faculty at our annual campus teaching conference and also at our campus's Center for Teaching and Learning and Writing Across the Curriculum events.[3] Faculty have expressed appreciation for resources that aid in the development of written course materials and have even inquired about scheduling Writing Center appointments in order to work with tutors as they craft their written classroom materials, though faculty have not followed through with these meetings. To further increase tutor competence in STEM tutoring, in the upcoming academic year we will be awarding digital badges, a strategy for continuing education and professionalization discussed by Tammy Conard-Salvo and John P. Bomkamp. Tutors interested in earning these digital badges will be assigned reading material about genre and tutoring across the disciplines; they will also be instructed to review the STEM writing best practice handbooks authored by our tutors. After reviewing these materials, tutors will be asked to engage in guided, reflective writing about their assigned readings; they will also be given assessments of their comprehension in the form of quizzes. Finally, tutors will be required to complete a particular number of sessions with STEM students in the Writing Center, and they will be asked to compose a reflection about one of these sessions, applying their knowledge of genre and tutoring across the disciplines in their discussion of the session. This final activity, we hope, will make generalist tutors feel more personally experienced in working with STEM writing assignments and will improve their ability to reference that personal experience in future tutoring sessions with STEM students. It is our hope that, by providing this additional training rooted in the cumulative knowledge gained from conducting workshops in STEM courses, we will have more skilled tutors to work with all student writers across our university's campus.

NOTES

1. This research project was funded by Marshall University's Hedrick Program Grant for Teaching Innovation.

2. With Calibrated Peer Review, students prepare for reviewing their peers' work training to be an evaluator, first evaluating sample "calibration" texts to align their responses with the instructor's criteria before responding to anonymized peer

writing. Finally, students respond to and evaluate their own writing (The Regents of the University of California).

3. The handbooks are available online at www.marshall.edu/ctl/faculty-awards-and-grants/hedrick-program-grant-for-teaching-innovation/2016-2017-improving-stem-students-writing.

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Three Foundational Concepts for Tutoring Digital Writing

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A social *turn*, such as the *digital turn*, is a recognized moment in time when a society changes its ways of thinking of reality. The digital turn is a recognized moment when our society began to think of reality through and within a digital perspective. This turn affects all aspects of our society, including education and academic writing. The impact on writing centers and tutoring has been profound. Since the digital turn, the digital tools commonly used to write and produce enable and determine our praxis as writers and writing tutors. Writers increasingly think in and through digital writing tools (Deuze 137), and we engage with students in this digitally-influenced process during tutoring sessions. Digital tools hook us and our students into searchable information reservoirs and provide multimodal narrative forms and scholarship. These tools also connect individual writers with community, and their infrastructures shape the social interactions of public-facing writers and collaborators.

An important aspect of tutoring after the digital turn involves understanding the risks of digital writing tools and helping students navigate them. Some of these risks involve the ways digital tools learn the behaviors of users and profit from their activity through surveillance and data collection (Prasso). Other risks result from the tools' design as socially stratified and economically and racially unequal social spaces (Gonzales, Calarco, and Lynch 5). It is within this unequal and risk-laden context that writing tutors work and that students write. Tutors require training in digital literacy—practical, hands-on training in the terminology and language and risks of digital writing tools. Training manuals and procedures need to be developed specific to writing centers and writing tutoring. From these, writing centers should develop support materials—digital writing guides—for students to use as they think in and with the tools they're using for writing and research. Faculty may also

use these support materials in writing assignments and projects when providing feedback and assessment.

Student writers use digital tools to create digital writing projects (e.g., blogs, podcasts), and, in turn, create online socialities: social-media lives and digital footprints (van Dijck 33; Depietro 185). Supporting the development of student writers must involve more than a provision of access to and instructions for digital tools precisely because the act of writing is entwined and embedded in digital writing tools and their social environments, which shape and constrain writers in new and often unexpected ways. Writing centers are spaces where students and instructors have opportunities to work in and through the politicized and often hidden aspects of digital writing.

As writing center scholars, we have long considered how to support students with digital writing projects, as well as how to tutor digital writing (Trimbur 30; Grutsch McKinney 29). At the same time, it is increasingly the case that we must commit more deliberately to both communicating that students can and, indeed, should seek support for digital projects at our centers, as well as providing training for tutors in digital writing support. Since all writing is digitized in some way, it is necessary to return to our philosophical foundations around understandings of writing and collaboration—both radically transformed by the digital turn. More necessary than before, our support for students must be rooted in an appreciation of the relationship between writer and writing tool, which we might describe as an *enmeshment*, where the two are caught up together in relational practices and assemblages of writing tools, tooled-up writing, writers, scholarship, and IT technical knowledge (see Wargo 5).

To support students in understanding and then navigating this enmeshment, tutors require training in specific and nuanced terminology and language of digital tools and writing—digital tool literacy. To this end, we are suggesting three foundational concepts that speak to the writing center experience of the digital turn: *tooled-up writing*, *digital writing projects*, and *digital writing tools*. These terms reflect the digital turn's paradigm shift for writing centers and help to conceptualize and categorize digital writing—what it looks like, how it's created, where it lives, and what it does (and for whom).

TOOLED-UP WRITING
First used in manufacturing in the 1930s, *tool up* describes the act of equipping for a task by selecting and using the specific tools needed. Stephanie Bell borrows this term to recast digital writing

"as a means of (re)making knowledge, self, community, and place through forms of digital authoring" (1). For writers, the phrase allows an acknowledgment of tooled-up practices, as well as the connections between writing and writing tool, as each necessarily influences the other. Writing-as-technology enables discrete practices for working through ideas, retrieving information, making connections, and producing meaning (Emig 14).

Writing involves the use of multiple secondary technologies that enable and shape human processes and products: a pencil's free-formness; a word processor's linearity. The ways writing technologies shape writers and their writing is captured best by *extended mind theory*, which contends that the human mind may exist external to the physical body in an "active externalism." Consider, for instance, the pencil or stylus acting as an additional appendage, constraining experience, action, and thought. When the brain is "linked with an external entity in a two-way interaction," the coupling "can be seen as a cognitive system in its own right" (Clark and Chalmers 48, 50). This approach asks us to acknowledge that writers and writing tools are enmeshed: "the world and its objects are essential to the ability to think, speak, write, make, and act" (Brooke and Rickert 168). Using this reasoning, Mark Deuze insists that we live "a media life" (138), living *within* media, no longer simply *with* media.

Writing centers can help student writers become aware of the ways writing tools make cognition possible through learning by "making, playing, and tinkering" with digital tools (Bell 2). This involves encouraging students to integrate multimodal production with digital writing tools into their recursive writing processes. In one-to-one tutoring sessions, this can be done, for example, by inviting a student working on a podcast project to record a brief audio clip. The opportunity to listen back to early drafting work can foster revision based on greater understanding of the ideal listening experience. Writing with sound is an embodied experience. We can hear the layers of sounds, feel sound vibrations, and see soundwave forms in an audio editing tool's display as they are recorded. In this way, the writer writes *within* the recording tool's software, which contributes to author decisions about structure and content. The writer is not always constrained by the tool as the tool can also be a co-author. A recursive writing process with, in, and through digital writing tools prompts writers to consider a participatory listening experience in an audio composition as they refine, clarify, rethink, re-see. This is tooled-up writing; it involves consciously writing with, in, and through the right "tools for the job." For writing tutors, referring to writing as "tooled up" can be a means of acknowledging the constitutive role of digital tools in the production of meaning,

and of prompting an expansion of tutoring strategies attuned to effective multimodal production processes.

DIGITAL WRITING PROJECTS (DWPS)

Digital writing projects take many forms: blogs, wikis, podcasts, videos, memes, comics, infographics, slide presentations, playlists, and collages. Although these are quite diverse, they tend to share common characteristics. They are

- inventive and in-process;

- multimodal and highly designed;

- networked and interconnected via the Internet;

- produced using digital writing tools (hardware and apps);

- focused on the user's visual, often multi-sensory and interactive, experience;

- public-facing, meaning online and publicly available with varying degrees of visibility;

- unconventional, often playful and creative, while being rigorous, informative, and scholarly.

DWPs may not privilege written text as a primary modality, which means that they often call for a broader conception of "writing" and "text." They employ different rhetorics that may seem less textual, formal, rigorous. DWPs are sites of interaction, networked and public-facing like a town square, rather than separated like a cloister. However, they invite students to engage in a variety of scholarly tasks—explication of abstract concepts, analysis, critique, reflection, argumentation. Arguably, DWPs enhance these tasks with opportunities to think with and through digital tools, multimodality, multiliteracy, and connectivity. This can involve a journey of "making, playing, and tinkering" with digital tools (Bell 2) that expands the ways in which writing is a "unique mode of learning" (Emig 7). DWPs are academically meaningful and rigorous, both as knowledge producers and products.

As writing tutors, we can support students in their efforts to recognize the "assignment verbs" (e.g., make, record, design, create) implicit within digital writing projects and take advantage of the learning opportunities such projects present. For example, when a student is asked to create a podcast, the assignment will use verbs such as "design," "record," and "produce," verbs not often associated with academic writing. In such a project, the verb "edit" takes on greater meaning, as it refers to both editing the

words in a podcast script, as well as editing the recorded audio files in an audio editing tool. Further complicating this is that many faculty, in our experience, do not fully grasp these assignment verbs employed in their digital writing assignments. Tutors trained in digital writing support can provide students with an understanding of both writing and production of a podcast, by becoming literate in the terminology (e.g., assignment verbs) and the resulting rhetoric.

DIGITAL WRITING TOOLS (DWTS)

As Robinson Meyer explains, "The computer is a writing tool. Tweets, papers, email: They're all composed in what is, at least in part, writing software…. Writing tools are everywhere." *Digital writing tools* (DWTs) are combinations of software and hardware that permit writing, document design, and circulation; they make words material. Students live within DWTs' influences. Writing tutors should be equipped to support students as they navigate these influences by, for instance, helping students to experiment with a variety of digital writing tools as they brainstorm, outline and organize, and edit.

DWTs, like all writing tools, are not neutral technological objects. Ian Roderick explains that technological objects are products of their social environments with the power to influence not just how users think and interact but also what they think about. For students and instructors, each DWT has the potential to affect how writing is understood, framed, and approached with implications for outcomes of that writing. DWTs are designed to make certain kinds of writing possible, which, in turn, can perpetuate certain approaches to, uses of, and attitudes about writing. An example is Jon Wargo's 2018 study of children using GoPro cameras to produce video essays.

In Wargo's study, children first see the writing tools, GoPro cameras or wearables, as passive, but then the tools transform. This transformation occurs within the children's experience and use of the tool to write—the digital writing tool becomes a co-author and the children experiencing the wearable as "writing with us" (1). If DWTs are co-authors, composition "from a more-than-human" or post-human "perspective is a writing *with*" (3). DWTs, then, are not passive. From a post-human perspective, writing moves from a "way of being" to a "way of becoming"…Writing is always already a becoming of future relations *with*. In such an instance, technology as co-author affects structures, and formats inform content, syntax, grammar, and spelling, which then inform style, pedagogy, and instruction, ultimately affecting knowledge production and acquisition. As a result, writing centers require

rhetorics and pedagogies based in multiliteracies for supporting the multimodality of digital media writing and production (Grutsch McKinney 34-35).

In our writing centers we are not seeing digital writing projects in the numbers that we know are being assigned. We should be seeing more. Students and faculty will continue to shift in their use of digital platforms and will continue to change the way DWTs are used and experienced. The students in Wargo's study who see DWTs as posthuman co-authors will be in our classes and writing centers in only a few years. These students will expect that when they come to our centers, we can understand their language, thought processes, and rhetoric when using these tools. We need to provide support to students and faculty in writing with these tools, reveal and explain biases and inequities in these tools and platforms, and provide training for our tutors and procedures for our centers.

Writing centers also need to be aware of the ways DWTs affect writers, effects often purposefully hidden from the writer. *Machine bias*, for example, embedded in DWTs, has implications for reproducing and perpetuating inequalities based in economics, geography, and ethnicity, which cause vulnerability and anxiety among student writers and tutors. Machine-biased algorithms are rhetorical and come to the writer already biased (McRaney) due to biases of DWT programmers (Beck; Simonite). For example, Microsoft Word's dictionary rejects certain words (*Englishes*; non-gendered pronoun, *hir*), voice-recognition software recognizes only certain speech patterns, and search engines provide results that are gendered and racially selective.

Estee Beck's analysis of persuasive computer algorithms helps us think of DWTs as opaque-with-code with a pleasant visual interface. When algorithms work well, their coding is invisible, and we lose sight of the ways they engineer and create our experiences of DWTs. Even when the manipulation of personal data by "surveillance capitalists" (i.e., Facebook and Cambridge Analytica) (see Szalai) and terms-of-service agreements that blur ownership of user-created content (Instagram) is revealed, use of these tools does not decrease. What writing centers can provide is an ability to reveal to students how their writing is part of these inequities and biases simply by their use of DWTs. Our centers can provide a conceptual shift for students who may not know of these inequities and biases.

TURNING TO MEET STUDENTS
For writing centers, the digital turn prompts a return to questions

about our purposes and positionings within higher education. In her consideration of writing-center-as-multiliteracy-center, Grutsch McKinney argues, "A radical shift in the way that writers communicate both academically and publicly necessitates a radical re-imagining and re-understanding of our practices, purposes, and goals" (49). Our centers and tutors support all writing projects at any point in students' writing process. Our centers are about thinking and knowledge-making (Kinkead and Harris), as well as providing access to academic discourse. To continue in these tasks, we need to become literate in the languages and terminologies of the digital turn in order to instruct and tutor students and support faculty in these processes and assignments. Such language can be useful to train tutors, to write policies and procedures, to develop rhetoric and discourse, and to communicate within the communities of writing centers. We offer this terminology to create momentum for the project of reformulating the understandings of writing that inform our praxis post-digital turn.

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Tutors' Column: "A Writing Center in Prison: The Value of Collaborative Learning"

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BENNY RIOS

When you think of prison, what comes to mind? People locked in cages, with no hope for rehabilitation? Illiterate people without potential to learn? It might be rare for one's first impression to be that prison is a place of spiritual growth, transformation, and learning, but that has been the case for me. Whether or not formal education opportunities have been available where I am incarcerated, we have always had a learning community here.

Informal learning in prison is driven by collaborative learning. After reading several articles for my Tutoring Writing class as an incarcerated student training to be a Writing Advisor, I realized that what Andrea Lunsford, Kenneth Bruffee, and John Trimbur refer to is the kind of collaborative learning that has always taken place in this prison environment. Theories of collaborative learning developed by these and other authors, though, consider university settings. Since prison is not considered a place for learning, data that shows what collaborative learning looks like in a prison setting is limited. By identifying the barriers that hinder collaborative learning, finding creative ways to work around those barriers, and gathering data on what works in prisons, tutors and teachers both incarcerated and free can make collaborative learning in prisons more effective.

WHAT COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IS AND IS NOT

This term "collaborative learning" covers a range of techniques. John Trimbur describes it as "practices such as reader response, peer critiques, small writing groups, joint writing projects, and peer tutoring in writing centers and classrooms" (87). Trimbur also points out that collaborative learning consists of shifting responsibility from the teacher to the group (87). Collaborative learning is not about individualism, nor is it meant to be hierarchy-based. Instead, the students assume leadership as they actively participate in their own learning (Trimbur 87). It is important to be mindful that

students should not just be thrown together without any guidance. Otherwise, students could suffer from negative effects (Bruffee 334).

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING
The variation of collaboration that has been most productive for me is when my peers and I have spontaneous, informal discussions about our writing assignments. Currently, I'm earning a Master's Degree in Christian Ministry and Restorative Arts. It is a four-year program that prepares students in violence prevention, conflict resolution, and ministerial work. Since this path trains us to work with people, working together collaboratively is crucial. In prison, spontaneous discussion is the most common way to collaborate. These gatherings occur as we walk in lines going from one place to another and in places such as the dining room, yard, and commissary waiting room, and in various bullpens within the institution. When students come together in these situations, I act as a Writing Advisor and guide in the conversations that take place. Students often state their concerns about their papers, and I suggest how they might deal with those concerns. Together, we bounce ideas off one another; however, whenever other Writing Advisors are present, then the role of the guide alternates in a conversational way which allows everyone in the group to learn from one another. Bruffee explains it best when he speaks of "normal discourse" as conversation that takes place within a community of knowledgeable peers (329). It is through these conversations with my peers that I compose my papers. Talking helps me with my reflective thinking, broadening my internalized conversations that guide my writing as I "re-externalize" my internalized conversations in the papers that I produce (Bruffee 328).

HOW AND WHEN DOES COLLABORATIVE LEARNING WORK?
Lunsford, in advocating for collaboration in the form of Burkean Parlor Centers, points out that this center is collaboration aligned with diversity, and it goes against the grain of American education (7). One barrier she identifies is dealing with an institution that can be hostile towards collaboration if its stakeholders feel threatened in terms of authority. In prison, however, we deal with a different kind of authority, an authority that has absolute control over what goes on and puts security as its highest priority. There is no way to decentralize the authority of the prison administration; as a result, we are confronted with barriers that include: 1) limited mobility for students; 2) no internet access; 3) limited access to the education building; 4) little communication with peers, tutors, and teachers; 5) no opportunities to work formally in small groups or hold conferences aside from our weekly classes and study hall; 6)

the possibility of lockdowns; and 7) stresses caused by the prison environment. All of these factors limit collaborative learning.

I do want to mention how we can overcome some of these barriers. As conversation plays a major role in successful collaboration, conversation works especially well in prison because when we return to our cells, we reflect on and re-contextualize these conversations in our writing (Bruffee 327-328). One way to address limited mobility is to try to get permission from administration to allow students who reside in the same cell house opportunity for small group sessions on the first floor of the cell house or in the bullpen for an hour a day. Outside of attending programs, prisoners are kept separate in different cell houses, and they are also separated within the cell houses as well as on different galleries, narrow walkways that allow prisoners to walk to and from their cells. The thing about being in the same cell house is that it is easier for officers to let us out of our cells to meet in the bullpen for tutoring with minimal security concern. Another thing we could do is utilize letter writing to offer reader response and peer critiques to fellow peers within the same cell house with the help of inmate porters, workers that do custodial work in the cell house. John Trimbur states, "Peer feedback is no doubt the most common form of collaborative learning used in teaching writing" (98). Through these letters we can offer constructive peer feedback and partake in collaborative learning.

Our writing center here at Stateville is relatively new; it's a satellite center of North Park University's Writing Center. However, one of the major differences is that we do not have a writing lab with computers. We do not have access to our center five days a week where students can drop-in during school hours. For the most part, the writing center at Stateville is facilitated by peer tutors, which decentralizes the authority from the teacher to the students. Maintaining a collaborative learning environment in prison is not something new, but what can be new is to begin gathering information for research purposes about what works in prison in terms of learning collaboratively. Lunsford points out that a collaborative environment calls for monitoring and evaluation of the group process; in doing so, each person involved should build on a theory of collaboration (6). Currently, tutoring conferences take place once a week for almost three hours during study hall. Writing Advisors usually consist of the inmate students and, at times, Writing Advisors who come as guests from North Park's Writing Center (Chicago Campus). The data that we collect is mostly from formal conferences that last up to half an hour depending on how many people need tutoring. However, some of the inmate

Writing Advisors record informal conferences that take place during the week. Most importantly, it would be wise to gather data for future research purposes, especially on the informal collaborative discussions that take place. Monitoring data collected in a prison context would shed light on what areas we can strengthen or eliminate. The data collected in this prison is given to our writing center director Melissa Pavlik so that it can be stored electronically. Writing centers in universities often document nearly everything they do; to create a writing center in a prison context that effectively encourages collaborative learning and peer tutoring, it is necessary to gather data and find ways to share what this data shows both within and beyond our university and prison communities.

CONCLUSION

Universities have a long history with writing centers, whereas the history of writing centers in prisons is a new concept. One thing that connects us, though, is collaborative learning. We may face different challenges with collaborative learning, but our approaches to confront these challenges can be similar. I hope to challenge teachers, students, and advocates outside of prisons to think about innovative ways to develop effective strategies that help make collaborative learning flourish in a prison environment.

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Announcements & Updates

A NEW DIGITAL EDITED COLLECTION COMING SOON

In early 2021, the third Digital Edited Collection (DEC), *Wellness and Care*, edited by Genie Giaimo, will be uploaded to the *WLN* website. This DEC has a wide-ranging set of pedagogical and scholarly chapters on wellness explored through labor studies, social movements, anti-racism, critical theory, and lived experience. This collection features authors such as Yanar Hashlamon, who rightly resituates wellness in community care models developed during the Civil Rights Movement, and Lauren Brentnell, Elise Dixon, and Rachel Robinson, who discuss vulnerability, empathy, and their social justice-oriented approach to writing center work. Other chapters focus on imposter syndrome, stress, emotional labor, emotional intelligence, and conducting site-specific wellness research.

COVID RESPONSES AND BLOG REDESIGN

Visit our newly designed *WLN* blog, Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders, at wlnjournal.org/blog. The blog offers a space for writing center people across the globe to interact, exchange ideas, and find community.

During the summer dozens of contributors from Lebanon, South Africa, England, Denmark, China, Germany, Norway, Kuwait, and the U.S. all shared strategies they are using as they adapt to online tutoring, stories about how writing centers are surviving and thriving during the pandemic, and efforts to reckon with linguistic diversity and equity issues. These responses were uploaded into a section of the blog, COVID-19 responses, for you to read and find more ways for your writing center to continue online.

We invite you to comment on the blog articles and to subscribe to the blog and its newsletter. For general inquiries or ideas for articles, please email us at: writinglabnewsletterblog@gmail.com

Anna Sophia Habib, Esther Namubiru, and Weijia Li
WLN Blog Editors

SPECIAL ISSUES ON LIBRARY/WRITING CENTER COLLABORATIONS

We currently have in process special issues related to library/writing center collaborations. Such collaborations are often productive if not always comfortable, and they can offer opportunities for writing center professionals to reconsider common writing center praxis. For example, what happens when writing center practitioners' understanding of protecting writers' confidentiality and engaging in social activism seem almost fundamentally at odds with the understandings of the library professionals with whom they work?

WANT TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS? CHECK THE *WLN* BLOG: CONNECTING WRITING CENTERS ACROSS BORDERS.

WLN's CWCAB blog is a great way to quickly share and connect with colleagues directing or working in writing centers around the world. Post questions, find advice and recommendations, and share ideas and scholarship in one place: www.wlnjournal.org/blog. Help grow our community and enhance our global virtual conversation, ideally both in English and in other languages.

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