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**GRADUATE WRITING CENTERS:
PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, POSSIBILITIES**

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ABSTRACT

In “Graduate Writing Centers: Programs, Practices, Possibilities,” I argue that Graduate Writing Centers (GWCs), which offer one-to-one writing consultations to graduate students across disciplines, blend traditional writing center pedagogies with tutoring practices intended to respond to the unique contexts of graduate writing. These sites also play an integral role in defining and attempting to meet the needs for writing instruction at the graduate level. In the seven years since the last comprehensive study of GWCs was published, the number of GWCs in the United States has grown from seven to over thirty. Through survey data from twenty-one GWCs and case studies at UCLA, Penn State, and Liberty University, my project identifies relevant issues faced by GWCs, describes in depth the practices and pedagogies developed by GWCs in response to their institutional contexts and the high-stakes demands of graduate writing, and theorizes the potential value of these centers to writers and their institutions.

The descriptions and analyses in my project are significant in at least three ways. First, they are useful to GWC directors and consultants and those considering opening a GWC because they depict the range of practices and policies employed by GWCs. Moreover, they will help directors and consultants consider how to best integrate their practices into existing institutional structures and values. Second, this project contributes to the growing interest among rhetoric and composition scholars and universities in developing best practices for supporting graduate writers. Finally, writing program administrators at all levels can benefit from this project’s focus on writing in the disciplines, tutoring with technologies, and supporting multilingual writers. Increasingly, writing programs of all kinds are attempting to teach writing skills that will transfer across disciplines, to integrate digital technologies into their teaching and assessment practices, and to adapt their curricula and pedagogies to the needs of both resident and international multilingual students. I argue that one key site to locate and study these practices is the GWC.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
CHAPTER ONE Introduction.....	1
PROGRAM NOTES Location.....	40
CHAPTER TWO Consultations Across Disciplines: Inexperience and Expertise in UCLA’s GWC.....	43
PROGRAM NOTES Services.....	88
CHAPTER THREE Consultations Across Distance: Electronic Innovation in Penn State’s GWC.....	91
PROGRAM NOTES Staff and Administration.....	141
CHAPTER FOUR Consultations Across Difference: Constructing Scholarly Identities in Liberty University’s GWC.....	146
PROGRAM NOTES Funding.....	198
CHAPTER FIVE Possibilities: Where GWCs Could Lead Us.....	201
APPENDIX A List of Graduate Writing Centers.....	218
APPENDIX B Data Collection Instruments.....	220
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	227

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Handwritten Codes.....	32
Figure 1.2 Codes in a Word Cloud.....	32
Figure 1.3 Visual Map of Codes.....	32
Figure 2.1 An Office in UCLA’s GWC.....	48
Figure 2.2 The UCLA Student Activities Center.....	48
Figure 3.1 The Entrance to Penn State’s GWC.....	97
Figure 3.2 Penn State’s GWC.....	97
Figure 4.1 The Liberty University DeMoss Building.....	154
Figure 4.2 The Liberty University Center for Writing and Languages.....	154
Figure 4.3 The Liberty University GWC.....	154
Figure 5.1 Heuristic for understanding GWC practices.....	210

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 An Overview of Five Features of Case Study Sites.....	25
Table 1.2 The Numbers and Types of Data Collected at Case Studies.....	29
Table 2.1 UCLA Case Study Participants.....	51
Table 2.2 Expertise Based Tools.....	78
Table 3.1 Penn State Case Study Participants.....	94
Table 4.1 Liberty University Case Study Participants.....	150

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“I was starving for feedback,” a doctoral candidate at Penn State University explained. “I needed feedback from somebody other than my advisor, and I didn’t have a writing group, and I didn’t have any of those cool things to help writers. I’m writing for the first time now in my last year, so I don’t have any idea how to do that.”

A master’s student at University of California, Los Angeles just wanted to know that she “wasn’t going crazy” when she felt unprepared to meet the expectations of graduate writing. “Am I the only person here at grad school that doesn’t know how to write an abstract or doesn’t know the parts of a proposal? I felt like maybe I was the only one, because nobody in my classrooms, *nobody*, asked questions.”

Across the country, graduate writers are struggling to find support for the complex, high-stakes writing they must produce to complete their degrees and begin their academic careers. In 2008, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) reported that only 57% of doctoral candidates finish their degree within ten years, a number that drops to 49% in the Humanities (4). This figure does not take into account the master’s and doctoral students who drop out before they complete their candidacy exams. As the graduate students’ statements above suggest, one potential cause for this low rate of completion is a lack of writing support and writing instruction at the graduate level. If, as these comments suggest, students are “starving” for feedback but uncomfortable asking questions about writing, they are unlikely to build the writing knowledge they need to sustain lengthy and complex thesis and dissertation projects or high-stakes fellowship proposals and professional articles.

This dissertation argues that one potential site to study practices for better supporting graduate writers is the Graduate Writing Center (GWCs). While GWCs are not the only writing programs for graduate students, these centers offer a valuable starting point because they are easier to identify and study than more diffuse, ground-up initiatives for graduate writers, such as departmental writing groups. Moreover, the wealth of writing center scholarship focused on undergraduate writers offers a theoretical starting point and basis of comparison for understanding how GWCs' practices are similar to and differ from those of their undergraduate predecessors. With over thirty centers nationwide (see Appendix A) and at least three institutions considering opening centers in 2014, GWCs are gaining momentum as a way to help graduate students understand the writing processes and complete the writing tasks necessary for degree completion and sustained scholarly success. However, little scholarly investigation of these sites or their practices exists.

For as many as forty years, suggestions to pay greater scholarly attention to graduate writers and GWCs have gone largely unheeded. Scholars in both composition and education have also made pleas for more sustained investigation of both graduate writers and GWCs (Delyser; Lavelle and Bushrow; Lee and Kamler; Micciche and Carr; Mullen; Rose and McClafferty). Education scholars Ellen Lavele and Kathy Bushrow, for example, note that in their field, calls for graduate writing research emerged as early as the 1970s, but as of 2007, they still know little about graduate writers and their needs (807). In 1994 John Thomas Farrell, then the director of a GWC at Yale Divinity School, attempted to "initiate a dialogue" in the writing center field about supporting graduate writers. Yet, over a decade later, higher education scholars Betsy Palmer and Claire

Howell Major admonish us that “despite what we have learned about the benefits of this approach [peer tutoring] at the undergraduate level, little work has been done to examine peer tutoring at the graduate level” (164).

“Graduate Writing Centers: Programs, Practices, Possibilities” addresses these calls for more research and provides a foundation for future research on GWCs and graduate writers. Using qualitative research, specifically survey and case study data, this project identifies relevant issues faced by GWCs and describes in depth the practices and pedagogies developed by GWCs in response to their unique institutional contexts. These descriptions and analyses will be useful to GWC directors and consultants and those considering opening a GWC by depicting a range of practices and policies employed by GWCs. Moreover, they will help directors and consultants consider how to best integrate their GWC practices into existing institutional structures and values. This project also contributes to the growing interest in developing best practices for supporting graduate writers. Finally, writing program administrators at all levels can benefit from this project’s focus on writing in the disciplines (WID), tutoring with technologies, and supporting multilingual writers.

In what follows, I first provide a background of the lack of support for graduate writers and its potential consequences. Then, I explore the beliefs that have led to limited graduate writing support and scholarship about graduate writers and GWCs. Next, I demonstrate how my dissertation address this problem and pose the critical question the project will address. I then provide an overview of the literature that informs this project. Then, I describe my methodologies, rationale for subject selection, and methods of data

collection and analysis, I define key terms, and I acknowledge the limitations of this study. I conclude with an overview of the dissertation's chapters.

The Crisis of Completion: Institutional Anxiety about Graduate Writing

From 2002 to 2003, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) initiated a “national discussion” about Ph.D. completion and attrition, which included an April 2003 conference, assessments of doctoral programs, analyses of institutional data, and surveys of doctoral students (*Completion*). These assessments resulted in the publication of four reports from 2004-2010. Adding to this work were the Carnegie Foundation's 2006 *Envisioning the Future of Doctoral Education: Preparing Stewards of the Disciplines* and 2009 report, *Education Scholars: Doctoral Education in the Humanities*, based on an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation study. Together, these studies paint a bleak picture of doctoral education, citing low completion numbers and even lower numbers of job and fellowship opportunities for Ph.Ds.

The results of these studies led to a perceived crisis in graduate education that extended beyond the ivory tower. In the years following the release of these reports, articles in both academic and popular publications capitalized on what seem like dire numbers. In 2006, the *Washington Post* published “As Many Dropouts as Degrees: Poor Ph.D. Completion Rate Prods Group to Evaluate What's Lacking.” In 2007, the Canadian publication *University Affairs* published “PhDs in Science Finish Faster in Canada than in U.S.,” a headline that calls to mind international competitions over K-12 education outcomes. The same year, the *New York Times* published “Exploring Ways to Shorten the Ascent to a Ph.D.,” which begins with a caricature of the frazzled dissertator:

The hair is well-streaked with gray, the chin has begun to sag, but still our tortured friend slaves away at a masterwork intended to change the course of civilization that everyone else just hopes will finally get a career under way. We even have a name for this sometimes pitied species—the A.B.D.—All But Dissertation. (n.p.)

As the problems surrounding the Ph.D. become a part of the public discourse about higher education, pressures mounted within institutions to address attrition and completion. Campus newspapers across the country, from Yale to Arizona State and Howard to Notre Dame, published stories about grants, retention initiatives, and mentoring programs intended to improve Ph.D. completion. The public was talking about the Ph.D., and institutions felt compelled to respond.

One potential response to this crisis in some institutions was a focus on graduate writing. In fact, the CGS's 2010 report explicitly mentions the importance of writing support and highlights institutions that have developed programs for graduate writers since the start of—and implicitly as a result of—their study: “There is widespread recognition that students at the dissertation stage feel isolated and vulnerable and universities are putting into place a number of efforts to help students overcome these feelings and remain on track” (57). Among the “promising practices” that the report notes is to “provide support through a graduate writing consultant and graduate writing tutors who offer face-to-face tutoring and assistance” and offer a variety of workshops on both writing and project management (59). So, not only did these reports construct a need for graduate student writing support, they also reinforce graduate writing programs as

“promising practices” for emulation. In other words, GWCs and other initiatives aimed at graduate writers become one potential solution to the crises facing graduate education.

Giving into outside pressures and rhetorics of crisis is a contested decision in writing centers and in composition studies more broadly. As Kelly Ritter argues in her history of basic writing at Yale and Harvard, “Composition, unlike other disciplines, is perpetually at the mercy of cultural conceptions of literacy” (134). In this case, graduate-level writing instruction—or the lack thereof—was at the mercy of cultural beliefs, fueled by academic and popular media, of inadequate and even unnecessary doctoral programs. Some worry that building a writing program within these contexts may seem to “further the view of a nation of ever-more failing writers” (Isaacs 136). However, as writing program administrator Emily Isaacs argues, these moments of crisis give compositionists momentum to create new programs, engage with critics, and change the national conversation about writing.

As Isaacs suggests, some institutions did capitalize on these mounting concerns to institute more support for graduate writers. From 2006 to 2010, at the height of the CGS research, eleven GWCs opened.¹ While certainly many of these centers may have opened for a combination of reasons or other reasons all together, some GWCs were responding directly to the results of these studies and the subsequent pressure put on institutions to increase Ph.D. retention and completion in order to increase or maintain national rankings. Compositionists and administrators Dana Ferris and Chris Thaiss explain that the development of writing support for graduate students at their institution, UC Davis, and elsewhere “reflects the graduate realization by U.S. graduate schools that lack of

¹ This figure includes three GWCs that later closed.

such assistance has kept retention and degree completion rates at disappointing levels” (n.p.) Similarly, writing center scholar Paula Gillespie references the CGS report directly in her description of the conversations that led to the development of Marquette’s GWC. She also notes the importance of Ph.D. productivity for Marquette’s national reputation: “Because of Marquette’s size, our status in the research community, for grant and recruitment purposes, could diminish with just a small drop in Ph.D. productivity. The university wishes not merely to maintain its ranking, but to advance in the rankings. Increasing and strengthening the Ph.D. programs are central aspects in our strategic plan” (4). Developing a program that would provide one-to-one peer consulting for graduate students was a first step in improving Ph.D. productivity across the institution.

This concern about Ph.D. productivity and institutional rankings extends beyond large research universities. Liberty University, a private Christian school that offers eight master’s degrees and three doctoral degrees, as well as professional degrees and post-master’s degrees, created a GWC in 2006. The report explaining the rationale for the center indicates that “it is anticipated that this initiative will enhance the University’s research profile” (Runion 67). Like Marquette’s, Liberty’s GWC, at least in its initial development, is bound up in initiatives to improve Ph.D. productivity and institutional rank. As I argue in Chapter Four, this yoking of GWCs to institutional benchmarks, such as time to degree, is not without problems for GWCs and their commitment to process pedagogy. However, that some institutions took notice of graduate students’ needs for writing support is an important step in recognizing graduate students as writers who—like all writers—need both formal and informal opportunities to hone their writing process.

Roadblocks to Research and Graduate Writing Programs

Despite the attention to the potential failings of graduate education, very little scholarship exists on the ways institutions might better support graduate writers. GWCs in particular have received limited scholarly attention, with writing center directors Helen Snively, Traci Freeman, and Cheryl Prentice's 2006 "Writing Centers for Graduate Students" the only published study of multiple GWCs. I argue that two widely held—and often implicit—assumptions about GWCs and graduate writers have contributed to the relative invisibility of GWCs in scholarship on writing centers and writing programs: (1) that GWCs are not different enough from undergraduate writing centers (UWCs) to merit separate scholarly attention and (2) that graduate writers should already know how to write. One aim of this dissertation is to write GWCs into the narrative of how fully developed writing programs provide support to students, and to do so, I must first address these beliefs and provide an alternative perspective that recasts GWCs as sites worthy of study.

Assumptions about GWCs vs UWCs

The first problematic belief is one held within the writing center community: GWCs are not significantly different from undergraduate writing centers (UWCs). Farrell argues that "if writing center professionals think about graduate students at all, they often accept the conventional wisdom regarding undergraduates as applying to graduate students as well—acknowledging perhaps that graduate students are a bit older and brighter" (3). Scholarship about tutoring undergraduate writers and training tutors for UWCs is robust, and a tacit assumption exists that practices developed and studied in

UWCs can be transferred to GWCs with minor adjustments to create longer and more complex documents.

Writing centers often do not distinguish between the needs of undergraduate and graduate writers, providing them with access to the same tutors and same services. While Farrell offers his observation in 1994, Talinn Phillips's 2013 survey of fifty-one writing centers that serve graduate students demonstrates that the attitude Farrell characterized still prevails: "Fifty-six percent of respondents did not provide any training for tutorials with graduate students" (n.p.). This finding is made clearer when compared to the less than one-third of writing centers surveyed who did not provide any training for tutorials with multilingual writers. In other words, the majority of these writing centers see multilingual students as a distinct population whose presence merits additional tutor training; these same writing centers do not make a meaningful distinction between undergraduate and graduate writers. This lack of distinction is also evident in edited collections and writing center guides. *The Longman Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice* from 2008, for example, has separate sections for tutoring "multiple cultures" and tutoring online students but includes no such section for graduate writers or even adult students.

Of course, the failure to distinguish graduates from undergraduates in scholarship and training creates a chicken and egg debate. Is there such little scholarship about graduate writers because the field does not distinguish them from undergraduates? Or does the field not make this distinction because of the lack of scholarship? While the list of articles specifically about GWCs is short (Farrell; Gillespie; Powers; Snively, Freeman and Prentice; Snively), there is certainly enough literature on graduate tutors and graduate

writers, as the subsequent section of this chapter demonstrates, to create a training session or a book section devoted to graduate students in the writing center. Thus, an important goal of this dissertation is to demonstrate that graduate writers and their writing are different enough from undergraduates to merit separate scholarly inquiry.

General writing center practices such as theories of peer-to-peer learning certainly apply to both UWCs and GWCs. In many ways, GWCs extend the work of UWCs; however, because graduate students and their writing differ from undergraduates, GWCs differ from UWCs in ways that deserve consideration. The rhetorical situations faced by graduate writers are often unique to their learning context, which—unlike most undergraduate contexts—is professional as well as academic. For example, articles for scholarly publication and dissertations are very different genres from the course-based writing that is tutored in most UWCs. As Writing Across the Curriculum scholars Anne Harrington and Charles Moran point out in *Genre Across the Curriculum*, undergraduate writing assignments are part of “genre sets” that include a syllabus, assignment sheets, and classroom conversations and instruction (249). In contrast, graduate writing tasks lack these supportive documents. So, while UWCs most often tutor relatively short, self-contained writing assignments (such as response papers and lab reports) accompanied by assignment sheets from the instructor, GWCs are likely to see large, long-term, and highly specialized projects that depend on sophisticated genre knowledge rather than a professor’s instructions.

Such complex documents require GWC tutors to develop practices in order to tutor students working in a variety of disciplines, genres, and formats that are markedly different from successful UWC practices. Judith Powers explains in “Assisting the

Graduate Thesis Writer Through Faculty and Writing Center Collaboration,” that when her writing center began tutoring graduate students, “the model conference approach we had been using with great success with undergraduate writers in basic courses across the curriculum did not work well with research writers in the disciplines, particularly graduate thesis and dissertation writers” because of the “multiple objectives and models for graduate research writing across campus and technical material of high density and sophistication” (14-15). This dissertation illuminates the kinds of differences from UWCs that Powers and her tutors noticed and reveals the strategies that GWCs use to address them.

Assumptions about Graduate Writers

A second obstacle to research about GWCs and graduate writing more broadly exists largely outside the writing center community and, to some extent, outside the fields of those who study writing. Graduate faculty and administrators sometimes assume that graduate students already know—or should already know—how to write and thus do not—or should not—need additional writing instruction or support. As David Russell, who studies academic writing genres, explains in *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History*, faculty members often misinterpret a student’s difficulties with writing and genre acquisition as the student’s lack of intelligence or preparation for graduate school. He argues that “Faculty are merely reinforcing the competitive values of the discipline when they refuse to ‘spoon feed’ graduate students by devoting time and conscious effort to tutoring their writing” (244). In other words, some faculty assume that academically competitive graduate students will already know how to write well and need no additional instruction. For these faculty members, low completion numbers

reflect not an absence of writing support but an educational environment where only the strong survive.

This belief is compounded by a tendency to separate content knowledge from writing knowledge and the desire for graduate faculty to address only content (Mahala and Swilky; Jordan and Kedrowicz). In their study of faculty attitudes toward multilingual graduate writers in Engineering, Jay Jordan and April Kedrowicz found that many graduate faculty had an “it’s not my job” attitude toward teaching writing. They separated what they saw as students’ writing problems from, in this case, students’ ability to “do the science” (n.p.) If writing ability interferes with a student’s ability to “do the science,” the student is to blame, not the lack of instruction. Compositionists Irene Clark reinforces this finding in *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation*, noting that both faculty and graduate students often mistakenly believe that previous coursework prepares students for writing in graduate school and that the dissertation is generically similar to seminar papers or undergraduate research papers (3). Thus, graduate students need to learn only content, not writing.

Despite these widely held beliefs that suggest being a qualified graduate student equates to being a good writer, many graduate students are unfamiliar with the genres required of them in graduate school and have “almost no extended writing experience” (Jordan and Kedrowicz n.p.). In “Teaching Graduate Students to Write: A Seminar for Thesis and Dissertation Writers,” geographer Dydie Delyser recalls asking her graduate students when they had last had a writing course. For most of them, the answer was first-year composition (169). Certainly, a first-year composition course taken five or more years prior cannot adequately provide a writer with the skills to produce the highly-

specialized and long-term writing projects required of a graduate student. Graduate students, however, often internalize the message that they are expected to know how to write, so they struggle with their writing in isolation. Russell argues that the model of dissertation writing, which focuses on a students' ability to design and produce an independent writing project, further isolates students from any kind of writing support (242). Ultimately, this isolation contributes to graduate student anxiety surrounding writing and creates a sense of shame that prevents them from asking for help (Bloom; Micciche and Carr; Palmer and Howell Major; Wellington). As Jordan and Kedrowicz found, "Students would apparently rather leave meetings [with an advisor] without asking for clarification and do what they think they should, according to one informant, rather than risk embarrassment by asking a question or admitting that they don't understand" (n.p.) GWCs, then, have been slow to gain attention because historically some faculty do not believe graduate students need writing instruction and many graduate students are too embarrassed or anxious to demand more writing support. In other words, the beliefs that graduate writing is not different from undergraduate writing and that graduate students should already know how to write have limited the discourse surrounding graduate writing to focus more on the problems with individual graduate writers than the possible institutional solutions and the existing structures of graduate writing support.

GWCs as Sites of Inquiry

In this dissertation, I focus on GWCs as sites that are providing possible solutions to the need for greater attention to graduate writers. These sites, I argue, attempt to identify and address the unique needs of graduate writers through practices that

sometimes differ from those of UWCs. As WPA Laura Micciche argues in her review of recent books on critical writing, “The writer in the garret is these days the writer of critical, intellectual texts, not the poet, novelist, or memoirist” (“Rhetorics” W47). The metaphor of the garret draws on Romantic ideals of individual genius and recalls images of the writer, alone with his thoughts, waiting for inspiration (Lunsford 7). In a graduate context, the garret is often a shared cubicle and waiting for inspiration often means reading endlessly without ever writing. This model of graduate writing, however common, has become increasingly untenable with the growing concerns about high graduate student attrition, low Ph.D. completion rates, and highly competitive job markets that demand national publications from candidates.

This dissertation argues that GWCs are sites where we can study ways to move graduate writers out of the garret and into, as Andrea Lunsford might suggest, Burkean Parlors. As Lunsford explains in, “Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center,” Burkean Parlor centers—which she contrasts against garret centers—are built on “the notion of knowledge as always contextually bound, as always socially constructed” and position true collaboration as their highest ideal (9). GWCs, like UWCs, do not always live up to this high ideal. However, the GWCs in this study do act as sites that intervene in the isolation of graduate student writers with the goal of revealing the socially constructed nature of academic genres and collaborating with writers to better understand these genres and the social and rhetorical nature of academic writing.

Critical Questions

“Graduate Writing Centers: Programs, Practices, Possibilities” asks: What are the day-to-day practices (administrative and pedagogical) of GWCs and what forces (institutional, intellectual, and cultural) have shaped these practices? As these questions indicate, this project is an investigation of tutoring practices within specific institutional contexts and the possibilities these practices offer graduate writers. Through case studies, I provide descriptions of three different models of GWCs focused on three different populations of graduate writers.

Each body chapter of this dissertation investigates a series of subquestions specific to each case study site. These questions include:

- What pedagogical strategies do GWC consultants adopt to discuss and improve the content of discipline-specific writing?
- What strategies do GWCs use to conduct digital consultants for distance writers?
- What practices do GWC consultants use to support international and returning adult students?
- How do GWCs position themselves within their unique insitutional contexts?
- To what extent do GWCs face the remedial stigma that sometimes characterizes writing centers?

This project is not a study of outcomes. So little research exists on graduate writers and GWCs that assessment—a topic I address at length in the conclusion of the dissertation—was not a possibility when designing this study. Moreover, case studies are not meant to be broadly generalizable or prescriptive (Lauer and Asher; Yin). Instead, the primary goal of answering this critical question is to highlight the practices GWCs use

and how these practices both respond to and potentially intervene in their institutional contexts. Thus, these case studies are not meant to be the final word on best practices for supporting graduate writers; instead, they are meant to continue a burgeoning conversation about GWCs and graduate writing by providing specific data about and contextualized examples of GWC administration and pedagogy and using that data to move toward theorizing the work of GWCs.

Scholarly Approaches to GWCs and Graduate Writers

The burgeoning conversation that I join includes scholarship on GWCs but also other areas of inquiry that help provide a rich background for understanding the role of graduate students in writing centers and the needs of graduate writers. Taken together, this scholarship illuminates some of the key issues this dissertation will address: the need to better understand GWC tutoring practices, the complex roles of peer and expert assumed by graduate student tutors, and the growing interest in focused support for graduate student writers.

Among the scholarly work on GWCs, Snively, Freeman, and Prentice's article is perhaps the most comprehensive. In addition to outlining the unique problems faced by GWCs, they describe the benefits of GWCs to graduate writers. GWCs, they argue, are well-positioned to support these students by providing "readily available, intensive, and long-term writing support in ways that advisors cannot" (155). They suggest, for example, that graduate students are more likely to ask peer tutors questions about writing that they deem too remedial or basic to ask their advisors and that peer tutors are better able than advisors to support graduate writers facing writer's block and procrastination

(155). The article, however, does not expand on the tutoring practices that enable this kind of writing support in a GWC. Very little attention is given to the actual tutoring or tutor-tutee interaction.

Perhaps because GWCs are newer and less established than UWCs, most articles focus on how to start a GWC and the challenges an administrator might face (Farrell; Gillespie; Gillespie, Heidelbrecht, and Lamascus; Powers). For example, Gillespie's two-part series in the *Writing Lab Newsletter* focuses predominately on developing a GWC at Marquette University by collaborating across disciplines, securing cross-institutional support, and designing a tutor training course. Although the second article, which describes the tutor-training course, does include an analysis of how a tutor used her training during a tutorial, the main purpose of the series is to provide support for those hoping to establish a GWC. Similarly, the majority of Snively, Freeman, and Prentice's article provides narratives about the establishment and administration of the authors' GWCs. While this practical knowledge is important, these articles indicate a gap in the understanding of GWCs' pedagogical practices during tutorials.

The most recent research on graduate writing centers and writing center services for graduate students is moving toward a discussion of pedagogical practices. For example "Tutor Training and Services for Multilingual Graduate Writers: A Reconsideration" by Phillips, who directs the Ohio University GWC, uses survey data from consultants and clients to determine what tutoring practices and philosophies multilingual graduate writers prefer. Based on the data, she argues for a holistic approach that attends to both disciplinary conventions and sentence-level concerns. Other discussion of specific practices comes from work that discusses writing center or graduate

school services for graduate writers, including dissertation boot camps² and writing groups (Lee and Golde; Maher, Seaton, McMullen, Fitzgerald, Otsuji, and Lee; Palmer; Phillips “Graduate;” Simpson). Together, these articles suggest that boot camps and writing groups can be low-cost ways to support both the production of graduate writing and the processes of graduate writers while also serving as “first steps in developing larger networks of campus graduate support” (Simpson n.p.).

Another fruitful area of scholarship for understanding GWCs is work analyzing the writing processes of graduate students (Berkenkotter and Hickin; Paré, Starke-Meyerring, and McAlipine; Prior; Tardy) and about the needs of graduate student writers (Delyser; Lavelle and Bushrow; Micciche and Carr; Palmer; Prior; Russell; Wellington).³ These scholars all agree that graduate writing is socially and rhetorically complex and carries high stakes but that we have yet to successfully integrate writing instruction into graduate curricula. In part, the lack of instruction dovetails with a lack of knowledge about graduate writers. As Lavelle and Bushrow argue in “Writing Approaches to Graduate Students,” “Little is known about what graduate students think about writing or about what they do when faced with academic writing tasks” (816). In other words, we have many best practices for teaching undergraduate writers—writing across the curriculum; peer review; peer tutoring; process-based writing instruction with an emphasis on revision—and years of research to support these practices. These evidence-based practices are largely absent from discussions about graduate students as writers.

² The University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate Student Center is most often credited with inventing the Dissertation Boot Camp. Lee and Golde list the thirteen institutions as having boot camps run by a “graduate school, graduate student center, or a graduate student council” (5). Presumably, this list does not include boot camps run out of writing centers and could be much longer with those inclusions.

³ While this area of research has not been a primary focus of Rhetoric and Composition in the United States, there is a long tradition of studying graduate students in European contexts. For examples, see the *Journal of Writing Research* and *English for Specific Purposes*, which both have an international scope.

In light of this absence, much scholarship on graduate writers calls for interventions in graduate curricula (Lee and Kamler; Micciche and Carr; Mullen; Rose and McClafferty). For example, in “Toward Graduate-Level Writing Instruction,” which calls for an “explicit commitment” to graduate writing instruction, Micciche argues that “writing critically, writing toward the production of scholarship, can and should be taught” (“Toward” 479). Yet, she claims, graduate student writers often suffer in private, unsure of the demands of their writing tasks or how to approach them. To help graduate students identify and meet the demands of graduate writing, Micciche developed an interdisciplinary critical writing course that addresses typical writing problems, provides strategies for professionalizing graduate student writing and relies heavily on peer review. Ultimately, Micciche argues that “writing instruction at the graduate level presents exciting possibilities for reimagining where and how writing can be taught” (497). In addition to the type of course that Micciche outlines, GWCs are one such location for observing this reimagination.

In fact, it is this possibility for reimagination that makes studying graduate writers and writing centers together a productive endeavor. The need for novel approaches to teaching graduate writers and writing centers’ histories as experimental sites creates a fruitful partnership for studying pedagogical practices. Those, such as Peter Carino and Neal Lerner, who study the laboratory history of writing centers (then called writing labs) link that past to an experimental spirit. Lerner argues in *The Idea of a Writing Laboratory* that “*laboratory methods* were created as alternatives to the lecture and recitation that had dominated instruction in first-year English composition classes. . . . Laboratory methods and subsequent writing laboratories, in short, were experiments in teaching and learning

that were largely forgotten in the move to writing *centers* [emphasis in the original]” (3). Early writing labs were sites of hands-on learning, student-driven inquiry, and collaboration. Lerner suggests that as writing teachers, we sometimes need to unlink writing instruction from the traditional classroom context in order to create room to experiment: “teaching writing as an experiment in what is possible, as a way of offering meaning-making opportunities for students no matter the subject matter, is an endeavor worth the struggle” (197). GWC consultants are necessarily teaching writing as an experiment because they lack codified practices, a rich body of research and specialized training. As the case study sites in this dissertation demonstrate, GWCs are reimagining writing center consultations to attempt to meet the needs of graduate writers.

Study Design, Methods, and Methodologies

My research questions arose from my own experiences as coordinator of Penn State’s GWC from 2010-2011. I wanted to know how other GWCs approached the administrative and pedagogical challenges I faced, such as reading long, highly technical documents in the standard fifty-minute writing center appointment and helping students in disciplines very different from my own. Thus, this project began as what writing center researchers Sarah Liggett, Kerri Jordan, and Steve Price call in their taxonomy of writing center methodologies “pragmatic inquiry,” which “begins with a local, practice-related experience or observation that prompts the Practitioner to engage in research that results in local, personal, practice-related implications” (61). I soon realized, however, that just my list of other GWCs—let alone knowledge of their practices—would be valuable beyond my local context, so I created an empirical project to study GWCs. I received

IRB approval (December 2012) and designed a mixed-methods study that includes a survey distributed to all of the GWC administrators I could identify followed by three case studies at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State), and Liberty University. These case studies included observations, interviews, and the collection of documents, to investigate administrative and pedagogical practices in depth. This qualitative approach was complemented by library, online, and archival research, including the collection of documents from each case study site.

Methodologies

My primary methodology is grounded theory, which research methods expert John Creswell describes as a methodology in which “theory-development does not come ‘off the shelf,’ but rather is generated or ‘grounded’ in data from participants who have experienced the process” (63). In other words, grounded theory begins with the data—as opposed to external theories—and allows data collection, analysis and theory building to be related, recursive processes. Central to grounded theory is the concept of letting themes emerge from the data itself rather than imposing *a priori* theories or categories onto the data. While I designed the survey with topics based on my own experiences in a GWC, the survey results reframed my thinking about these themes and introduced new ideas. In turn, these emerging themes influenced the selection of case study sites and the creation of interview questions.

Not only is grounded theory the most reasonable approach for this project due to the lack of previous theorizing of GWCs practices, it also best affords me the flexibility to account for the complexity of these sites. In fact, Kathy Charmaz, a sociologist and

expert in grounded theory, calls grounded theory a “systematic, yet flexible” approach to collecting and analyzing data because it allows researchers to adapt their methods, their thinking, and their theory-building to their research settings (2). As writing center director Joyce Magnotto Neff argues in “Capturing Complexity: Using Grounded Theory to Study Writing Centers,” grounded theory is particularly valuable for pedagogical research in writing centers because it values description and theory equally; acknowledges the complexity of social interaction; supports collaboration among researcher and participants; and recognizes the value of the researcher’s experiential knowledge (134). Thus, grounded theory honors the collaborative nature of writing centers as well as the value that writing centers place on practitioner knowledge.

Given the collaborative spirit of writing centers, I also employed collaboration as a central methodology in this project by viewing each chapter as a collaboration with my participants. In his article “Analyzing Talk About Writing,” literacy scholar Peter Mortensen argues that “talk about writing tells us much about the community that makes that talk—the people who talk. Our reporting of that talk in a sense continues the conversation” (124). This dissertation is a continuation of the conversations GWC directors and consultants are having about graduate students and their writing, conversations that I was privileged to listen in on during my research. Feminist historiographer Patricia Sullivan explains in “Feminism and Methodology in Composition Studies,” that one advantage to case studies is that they “enable researchers to generate descriptions of composing from the point of view and in the language of the writers they are studying” (57). With this goal in mind, I checked the transcripts against the original recordings to be certain that I retained participants’ precise phrasing when I

quoted them, and I quote my participants liberally and often throughout the body chapters of this project.

Yet, as Mortensen argues these representations of my participants are still “necessarily narrow and selective because they must mold to the narrative form and serve the arguments readers expect to find in published reports of research. Consequently, the value of these presentations is primarily rhetorical. Effective representations of talk about writing make for persuasive arguments about the nature of discourse” (106). By using the data itself to generate theories of GWC consultations and letting my participants speak throughout each chapter’s narrative, I hope I have effectively balanced my representations of my participants with the creation of a persuasive—although necessarily incomplete—argument about GWCs.

Subject Selection

Through internet searches, posts on the writing center listserv, and word of mouth, I identified twenty-eight potential GWC directors to participate in the survey stage of the study. For the purposes of this study, I defined GWCs as university writing centers that offer individual, one-to-one, peer consultations to clientele composed primarily of graduate students across the disciplines. The survey asked respondents to identify any other GWCs they knew of, which helped me identify an additional six potential GWC directors. In total, I sent thirty-four surveys and received twenty-five responses, twenty-one of which identify their centers as “a writing center primarily dedicated to serving graduate students.” Of the remaining four respondents, one indicated plans to start a writing center primarily dedicated to graduate students, one was unsure, and two do not have and do not plan to start a writing center primarily dedicated to

graduate students. Although I continued to learn of new GWCs throughout this project, I stopped including new participants in December 2012 in order to begin working with the survey data. Thus, eight of the thirty-five GWCs I have identified were not given the chance to complete the survey.

Based on survey responses, I selected the three case study sites (UCLA, Penn State, and Liberty University) based on their ability to be exemplary data sites in three areas (tutoring in the disciplines, tutoring with technology, and tutoring multilingual students). I had pre-selected these foci when designing the survey, however the survey results provided quantitative data that allowed me to assess the importance of these themes and helped me determine which sites would provide the richest data. While my data collection at each site was focused on the broader area of inquiry for which I selected the site, I also remained open to new lines of inquiry and additional—or even contradictory—data. For example, when I arrived at Liberty University, I realized that multilingual students comprised only one of the significant student populations served by their center. Returning adult students also helped define their approach to consultations and their status as a campus resource. So, I reframed my data collection (and ultimately that chapter) to include this new finding.

Table 1.1 provides an overview of each site based on the five categories determined by Snively, Freeman, and Prentice as most relevant to understanding the day-to-day operations of GWCs. These categories are further developed in the Program Notes throughout this dissertation, which I explain in the final section of this chapter.

Table 1.1
An Overview of Five Features of Case Study Sites

Case Study Site	Category from Snively, Freeman, and Prentice				
	Location	Services	Staff	Administration	Funding
UCLA Los Angeles, CA	Central Campus Building; Graduate Resource Center	Face-to-face consultations; workshops; boot camps	18 M.A. and Ph.D. students from across the disciplines	Staff Member with a Ph.D. in Slavic Language and Literature	Graduate Student Fee
Penn State University Park, PA	Centrally-located Graduate Building	Face-to-face consultations; online consultations; workshops	2 Ph.D. students from the English department; 1 former M.F.A. student from the English department	Non-tenured Faculty Member with a Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Linguistics, and Literature	Graduate School
Liberty Lynchburg, VA	Central Campus Building; Center for Writing and Languages	Face-to-face consultations; online consultations; workshops	5 M.A. and Ph.D. students from across the disciplines; 1 faculty member	Staff Member working on a Ph.D. in Victorian Literature	Academic Affairs

UCLA's GWC, which I traveled to in September 2012, allowed me to investigate what pedagogical strategies GWC tutors and clients adopt to discuss and improve the content of discipline-specific writing. GWC clients come from many disciplines and consultants must be prepared to read and respond to a variety of genres and to writing that assumes a specialized audience (Waring). However, my survey indicated that in 90% of centers, the majority of their consultants come from Humanities departments. Moreover, many GWCs (76% of those surveyed) also host campus-wide writing

workshops and writing groups that are intended to be helpful to students across many disciplines. Thus, GWCs must employ strategies that allow consultants and clients to talk across their areas of expertise.

As UCLA's survey responses indicated, over 90% of their clients and the majority of their fifteen consultants come from disciplines outside the humanities. Thus, their GWC represented a data-rich site for studying how consultants read and respond to writing in a variety of disciplines. After consulting with the UCLA GWC's coordinator, I chose to observe UCLA's three-day new consultant training during which the coordinator addresses issues of disciplinary expertise.

Penn State's GWC, which I visited in November 2012, allowed me to ask how GWCs use technologies as a means of expanding their services. Penn State's GWC was one of only four respondents that offers distance consultations. However, in response to the question "What else would you like to include about tutoring with technology in your GWC?", one-third of the participants mentioned that they wanted to develop new or more effective distance tutoring techniques, which suggests that investigating these practices could make a larger contribution to the field. Moreover, The Sloan Consortium's study of 2,800 higher education institutions found that "over 6.7 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2011 term" and that 69.1% of "chief academic leaders" agree that "online learning is critical to their long-term strategy" ("Changing"). Writing centers at every level will need to be prepared to meet the needs of these students, and GWCs in particular must also serve students who balance family and/or work and their degree program or who may be traveling for research and fieldwork. Because they are in the third year of piloting digital consultation procedures, selecting

Penn State as a case study site allowed me to observe distance consultation procedures and pedagogies.

Finally, Liberty University's GWC, which I visited in February 2013, allowed me to observe and analyze the practices that consultants use to support multilingual writers. International students comprise over 15% of all graduate students in the U.S. (Bell 1). Survey data indicate that the percentage of these students who use GWCs is significantly higher. Fifty-six percent of the centers surveyed indicated that multilingual writers comprise over 25% of their clients, with eight centers reporting that multilingual students comprise more than half of their clients. While these students pass English proficiency exams prior to beginning their graduate work, many of them are unfamiliar with American academic writing conventions or lack confidence in their writing and speaking skills (Erichsen and Bolliger; Severino; Thonus). GWCs are one resource for international students to hone these skills.

Liberty's GWC director indicated in her survey responses that over 60% of their recurring clients are multilingual students and that they employ multilingual students as consultants. Thus, Liberty was a data-rich site for investigating the role of linguistic differences in GWC consultations. Moreover, Liberty University is a small, private institution with a religious affiliation and thus provides a unique institutional perspective and helps to demonstrate the range of universities that have GWCs.

Data Collection Methods

Survey. I created a survey in Google Forms and piloted the survey with three former Penn State GWC coordinators to determine the clarity and completion time for the survey. I revised the survey based on their responses, and I distributed it via email to

participants in February 2012. The survey, a combination of thirty quantitative and qualitative measures, asked respondents about their GWC's administrators, funding, tutors, and tutoring practices (see Appendix B). The purpose of the survey was to identify GWCs, their clientele, and their general tutoring and administrative practices. The survey also asked respondents questions in three specific areas—tutoring in the disciplines, tutoring with technology, and tutoring multilingual students—to determine data-rich sites for further investigation through case studies. The rationale for these three areas is developed in the following section of this chapter.

Case Studies. At all three sites, I obtained informed consent and then conducted observations of consultations and meetings or—in the case of UCLA—tutoring training activities during which I wrote detailed field notes. I also audio recorded these activities. Following my observations, I conducted and audio recorded thirty-minute, semi-structured interviews with the director of each site and consenting consultants. (See Appendix B for interview scripts.) After assigning pseudonyms to participants⁴, I sent the transcripts from these interviews and observations to Fox Transcribe (now Rev Audio Transcription Services) to be transcribed. At each site, I also collected relevant documents, including consultant schedules, promotional materials, and handouts, and took digital photographs of the physical location and layout of each site. Table 1.2 shows the types and numbers of data collected at each site.

⁴ All consultants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms. The names of GWC directors, coordinators, and other university administrators have not been changed for two reasons. First, these participants would be easily identifiable even with pseudonyms. Second, because one of the goals of this dissertation is to encourage communication and collaboration across GWCs, using administrators' real names may allow others to reach out to them.

Table 1.2
The Numbers and Types of Data Collected at Case Studies

Data Type	Number Collected at Each Institution		
	UCLA	Penn State	Liberty
Interviews with consultants/tutors	5	3	5
Interviews with administrators	1	2	3
Observations of consultations/tutorials	0	4	4
Other observations	21 hours of consultant training	0	2 workshops, 1 class
Documents and Artifacts (training materials, publicity materials, schedules, etc.)	6 (including a three-inch binder of training materials)	10	9

This data collection process was necessarily recursive. As I gathered data at each site, I used them to revise future interview questions and to re-examine previous transcripts and survey responses. I kept a reflective journal (Ortlipp) throughout my three case study visits that allowed me to record and apply these ideas. This journal also allowed me to acknowledge and reflect on my biases as a researcher. For example, as an undergraduate peer tutor and GWC consultant, I was trained to ask the writer to read his or her work aloud. I did not realize, until I observed other consultants silently skimming a text, how much I privileged reading aloud as a writing center strategy. Keeping a journal allowed me to notice this bias and be aware of it as I described and analyzed alternative ways of conducting consultations.

Data Analysis Methods

The methods of coding particular to grounded theory guided my data analysis. Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, foundational grounded theory practitioners and theorists, describe coding as “the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways. It is the central process by which theories are built from data” (57). Using education scholar Sharan Merriam’s *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* as a guide, I performed open and axial coding on all of the interview and observation transcripts. I first open coded transcripts by hand within one week of each case study visit. These codes focused on key terms repeated by participants, participants’ actions and beliefs, and the relationships between consultants and clients. When possible, I used *in vivo* codes, or code names that are “the exact words used by participants” (Creswell 153). At UCLA, for example, both the coordinator and the consultants use the term “toolkit” for their range of strategies, and so I used “toolkit” to code the times consultants talked about their range of approaches to consulting.

After my initial hand coding, I shared randomly selected transcripts from each site with a writing group of dissertating peers who also open coded the data. After we discussed their reactions, I printed out a new copy of the transcripts and coded by hand again with the goal of using these new insights to see patterns or ideas I might have missed the first time. Throughout the open coding process, I continued to write in my research journal about themes that were emerging, ways I was defining individual codes, and categories that I might use later in the coding process.

Once I had two sets of hand-coded transcripts, I compared the two and entered them into Dedoose, a web-based coding software program, during axial coding, which

further refines the categories developed in open coding. Differences in initial codes allowed me to re-examine my codes and the transcripts to consider how I could best represent the data. As I entered each code into Dedoose, I created a memo in the program that defined the code. This process also enhanced my ability to use the constant comparative method to ensure that all excerpts associated with a single code fit the definition of that code or to reframe codes to better account for new information. Dedoose facilitates this process by allowing the user to select a single code and see all of the excerpts associated with each code. Because I could also upload field notes of observations and documents collected from each site to Dedoose, I was also able to triangulate the data that I gather at each site to create a more comprehensive picture and to identify any conflicts or incongruities among the data.

In the final stage, selective coding, I further refined these codes into the core categories that best captured the story of each site. I combined digital and non-digital technologies to help me visualize these categories. I first wrote out all of the codes on sticky notes and spread them across my dining room table and grouped similar codes (fig. 1.1). Then, rather than counting codes⁵, I looked at the word-cloud created by Dedoose (fig. 1.2), which allows users to visualize the frequency of codes to help me determine what themes had been most common at each site. I grouped and regrouped codes into categories until I was satisfied that I had core categories that best represented the site. In a final step before drafting, I arranged these categories into a visual map (fig. 1.3) that

⁵ I share the rationale for not counting codes that Creswell provides in *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. As he explains, “counting conveys a quantitative orientation of magnitude and frequency contrary to qualitative research. In addition, a count conveys that all codes should be given equal emphasis and it disregards that the passages coded may actually represent contradictory views” (152).

Key Terms

Graduate Writing Center

For the purposes of this project, a GWC is defined as a university writing center that meets the following criteria: offers individual consultations to a clientele composed primarily of graduate and professional students; is open to graduate students from all disciplines (i.e., a GWC that only serves law students was excluded); is to some extent administratively separate from the undergraduate writing center (i.e., undergraduate writing centers that also tutor graduate students were excluded). I also limited my study to U.S. GWCs. In large part, I constructed this definition to create a reasonable sample size with clear boundaries for my study. For example, while some UWCs do turn away graduate writers (see Chapter Two), most UWCs on campuses with graduate programs occasionally see graduate student clients. Attempting to include data from all of these centers—or even to identify them—would be impossible. Additionally, this project is interested in centers that have been designed specifically for graduate writers and their needs.

Consultant/Tutor

Throughout my descriptions of GWCs in general, I use the term consultant to refer to the “knowledgeable peer” (Bruffee) who would, in an undergraduate context, correspond to the role of tutor. As Farrell explains, the term “consultant” helps “establish adult, professional relationships with graduate students,” whereas “tutor” might be seen as remedial or infantilizing. Most GWCs, including ULCA and Penn State, and even some UWCs have adopted consultant. However, in Chapter Four, I use the term “tutor” because Liberty University refers to their graduate consultants as tutors.

Writing Support

I use the term “writing support” throughout the dissertation to refer to the broad range of services that GWCs offer graduate students—from collaborating on writing to acting as a sounding board for problems with advisors or committees. I particularly like the term support because it reflects not only the academic benefits that GWCs provide but also the affective benefits that GWCs can offer anxious or reluctant writers (Weillington).

HOCs and LOCs

HOCs and LOCs are common writing center abbreviations that stand for “higher order concerns” and “lower order concerns” and describe the writing issues attended to at each stage of the writing process. According to writing center scholar William Macauley Jr., the terms originated in Donald McAndrew and Thomas Reigstad’s *Tutoring Writing*, but have become a part of the writing center parlance, appearing without definition or explanation in many handbooks, articles, and conversations. HOCs tend to be global or rhetoric concerns, such as argument or structure, while LOCs tend to be local concerns, such as correctness or citation style. Traditionally, writing centers focus first—and encourage writers to focus first—on HOCs and attend to LOCs later in a writing center appointment or later in the writing process.

Other terms (e.g., multilingual writer and returning adult student) are defined throughout the course of the dissertation in the relevant chapters.

Limitations of the Study

The primary goals of this study are to describe the day-to-day practices of GWCs in a way that both provides much-needed data to GWC coordinators and potential GWC

coordinators and that serves as a springboard for future research. Because this study is only the second attempt at a comprehensive study of GWCs—and the first in over five years—it focuses on providing as broad a view as possible of the GWCs in the study, their consultants and clients, and their practices while also zeroing in on specific pedagogical and administrative practices and challenges. This goal, however necessary, also leads to at least four limitations. These limitations, as I discuss in greater depth in Chapter Five, also point to fruitful areas for future research.

First, this dissertation does not offer an assessment of practices or outcomes. My research question focuses on the identification and description of practices in context to theorize the work of GWCs, not on the evaluation of these. As I discussed earlier, so little was known about GWCs and their practices when I started this project that I could not have reasonably evaluated practices without first devoting a project to identifying some of those practices.

Second, and related to the question of outcomes, the perspectives of GWC clients are largely absent from this project. Because of my focus on contextualized practices as well as limits of time for data collection and analysis, I chose to conduct follow-up interviews with consultants, rather than clients, following my observations of appointments. Interviewing clients and analyzing their revisions would provide a productive next step in determining the effectiveness of GWCs and their influence on clients' writing and revision practices.

Third, I was not able to observe a consultation about a dissertation during my case studies, although I did ask consultants what strategies they use in consultations about dissertations. Because dissertations are the pivotal writing project for graduate students, I

would have liked to observe how GWC consultants approach these complex documents. However, as a researcher, I had no control over who made appointments during my visits and which consultants and clients were willing to be observed. It is also possible that the timing of my visits (mid-fall and early winter) did not coincide with the typical writing cycle for dissertators. Dissertations are also part of what Charles Bazerman calls a “genre series,” or “interrelated genres that interact with each other in specific settings” (99). By not focusing on the dissertation, this project shows the range of other genres in the genre series that constitutes graduate work, including response papers, literature reviews, and data-collection instruments, many of which become part of a dissertation project.

Finally, despite the ranges of gender, age, linguistic background, and ethnicity of participants, this project does not always specifically address these identities. Even in my discussion of international students, for example, I retain my focus on the practices of the consultants rather than how writers’ and consultants’ identities shape their interactions and attitudes toward writing. These identities are important to the graduate student experience, the administration of GWCs, and the peer relationships between consultants and writers, and they suggest critical areas for future research.

Overview of Chapters

The following body chapters provide snapshots of three GWCs and their pedagogical and administrative practices. They feature thick descriptions of case studies at individual GWCs, each with a specific focus relevant to that site. Despite these foci, many themes run throughout the chapters, including the role of institutional context, the presence of top/down versus bottom/up administrative structures, the influence of student

population on GWC services, and the significance of professional status—staff, non-tenure-track faculty, etc.—on the perception of GWCs. Chapter Five pulls these threads together and reflects on some of the larger issues raised by the individual case studies.

Brief, focused chapters that I've termed Program Notes appear between each of these major chapters and present an overview of the day-to-day administrative and pedagogical practices of GWC programs. Program Notes draw on survey responses to provide data-rich explorations of five key categories established by Snively, Freeman, and Prentice (Location, Services, Staff, Administration, Funding). For each category, the writers synthesize their own experiences directing GWCs and suggest directions for further research. In my Program Notes, I take up their call for a deeper understanding of each of these topics. These notes contain the information necessary to develop or enhance a GWC by providing aggregate data about the way that GWCs across the country operate.

Chapter Two, "Consultations Across Disciplines: Inexperience and Expertise in UCLA's GWC," asks What pedagogical strategies do GWC consultants adopt to discuss and improve the content of discipline-specific writing? and focuses on the training of consultants from across the disciplines at UCLA. I argue that UCLA's consultants blend conventional and unconventional writing center strategies to address the complex relationships between expertise and inexperience that characterize graduate students' experiences as writers and new members of academic discourse communities. Because the focus of this chapter is on UCLA's three-day consultant training, this chapter also provides an example of readings, activities, and schedules for training.

Chapter Three, “Consultations Across Distance: Electronic Innovation in Penn State’s GWC,” asks “What strategies do GWCs use to conduct digital consultations for distance writers? and focuses on uses of Skype and Google Docs at Penn State University. I argue that consultants adapt face-to-face practices to maintain their pedagogical goals in digital environments but struggle to build a sustainable online consultant model because of unclear institutional goals. Because Penn State’s online consulting program also serves Penn State World Campus, this chapter also features a discussion how a GWC works with other institutional stakeholders.

Chapter Four, “Consultations Across Difference: Constructing Scholarly Identities in Liberty University’s GWC,” asks “What practices do GWC consultants use to support international and returning adult students?” and focuses on consultations at Liberty University’s GWC. I argue that Liberty’s tutors redefine higher- and lower-order concerns to best address the needs of their student population while simultaneously helping their clients develop scholarly identities. Because these clients are often labeled as remedial by their institutions, this chapter also addresses the remedial stigma sometimes attached to GWCs and the writing centers more generally.

“Possibilities: Where GWCs Could Lead Us,” the final chapter, elaborates on the conclusions drawn from previous chapters and suggests their implications for graduate writing specifically and university writing programs more broadly. In doing so, this chapter synthesizes the findings of the three case studies and begins to theorize not only GWC practices but also the ways these practices might inform the teaching of writing more broadly. I also consider potential models for assessing the work of GWCs. Finally, I

discuss further research that might arise from this project for writing centers, writing programs, and the field of rhetoric and composition.

PROGRAM NOTES

Location

Snively, Freeman, and Prentice's discussion of location focuses on centralized centers as opposed to decentralized centers. That is, they weigh the benefits of a single center in a central location, which may be more visible and sustainable, against those of multiple satellite centers in various departments, which may be more attractive to graduate students who view themselves in need of specific disciplinary help. According to my survey participants, current GWCs favor the centralized approach. Only one school mentioned having satellite centers, and those centers were in addition to a larger, more centralized office. Three respondents specifically described their site as a "high-traffic area" on campus. These "high traffic" centers are described as being in the main library or administrative buildings.

Five of the respondents reported that, although their GWC operates separately from their UWC, they are housed in the same building, sometimes in the same space. Snively, Freeman, and Prentice do not consider this possibility, but given that GWCs model themselves after UWCs, they sometimes share administrative staff or have joint staff meetings and tutor training, and are often "start-up" operations cobbling together funding and support, sharing space with a UWC makes sense logistically. However, sharing a location with a UWC might influence the attitudes of graduate students seeking writing support. As Tom Hemmeter and Carolyn Mee found in their study "The Writing Center as Ethnographic Space," "The writing center's location on campus also impacts the interactions that take place" (4). Thus, sharing space with a UWC may influence graduate students' perceptions of the center and their willingness to use it. Farrell

reminds his readers that “Graduate students are adults . . . It is important that tutors establish adult, professional relationships with graduate students” (4). While undergraduates, too, are adults, I think Farrell’s concern for the professionalism of GWCs is an important one. In fact in many GWCs, including Penn State’s and UCLA’s, the tutors are called writing consultants, as opposed to tutors, as they are called in the UWC, in order to foster a professional model of collaboration. Farrell supports this model, noting that in the professional realm, consultants are not associated with failure or remediation. This focus on a professional consultant model is important because graduate students often feel anxious and insecure about their writing. In her study of graduate writers, Laura Micciche writes that, for graduate students, writing problems are often “private, shameful, or an indicator of unfitness for graduate school” (479). Having to seek out help amid first-year composition students may only exacerbate graduate writers’ sense of failure. Those GWCs located within or near UWCs may need to take special care to make sure that the GWC is carefully delineated from the UWC and meets graduate students’ needs for privacy and professional support.

The question of location can also encompass the material spaces GWCs inhabit. While it may be important for GWCs to treat their clients like the developing professionals that they are, my survey indicates that GWCs have not abandoned what Boquet calls the “creature comforts” associated with writing centers: “couches, plants, coffee pots, posters” that “characterize the lab spaces as nonthreatening” (472). I asked respondents, “In one or two sentences, describe the physical space of your GWC.” Respondents mention lounge chairs, a kitchen, a “cozy room,” posters, an “intimate environment,” and bookshelves. These “comforts” are often listed alongside cubicles and

workstations, suggesting an attempt to blend the professionalism of graduate writing and the intimacy associated with peer tutoring. Material considerations have historically been important to writing centers of all kinds, as Amanda Bemer notes in her dissertation *The Rhetoric of Space in the Design of Academic Computer Writing Locations*. Bemer suggests that by choosing design elements that separate centers from traditional classrooms, writing centers rhetorically convey the difference between their model of peer collaboration and the authoritative model of the classroom (114). The survey responses indicate that the respondents are attuned to ability for home-like details, like posters and lounge chairs, to communicate something about their center and its role.

In addition to the rhetorical possibilities of writing center spaces and design, Rebecca Day Babcock and Terese Thonus note that in writing center scholarship, “discussion of physical space has often turned to metaphor” (64). Indeed, common metaphors used to describe GWCs throughout my research center on the idea of safety. Often this metaphor is couched in terms of the GWC being a “safe space,” as it is in Snively’s article, “A Writing Center in a Graduate School of Education: Teachers as Tutors, Still in the Middle.” I return to this metaphor of safety and its connections to space in the following chapter, which details a case study of UCLA’s GWC.

CHAPTER TWO

Consultations Across Disciplines: Expertise and Inexperience in UCLA's GWC

On the final afternoon of the three-day training for new consultants in UCLA's Graduate Writing Center, Mark, a Ph.D. student in neuroscience and one of the center's most senior consultants, arrived in flurry of handouts and computer cords to set up his presentation to the group. Mark and the seven new consultants, graduate students from across the disciplines with little or no writing center background, sat around a large table in the center of a basement conference room. Exposed steel pipes in the ceiling whirred as Mark's PowerPoint, "Scientific Writing," appeared on the screen in the front of the room. A few consultants walked to the cabinets lining the back of the room to pick through the open bags of Oreos and tortilla chips provided by the GWC coordinator, Marilyn Gray. Mark began his presentation with good-natured teasing of the Psychology Ph.D. student about whether her discipline really counted as scientific writing. A fifth-year Chemistry Ph.D. introduced himself, and Mark replied, "Chemistry. No one can argue with that. Fantastic."

The remainder of Mark's presentation matched the rushed energy and blunt humor with which it began. At an excited pace, Mark provided detailed overviews of the format and content requirements for National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Science Foundation (NSF) grant proposals, common scientific genres in the GWC. With enthusiastic gestures and examples ranging from cancer to apple pie, he advised the new consultants about what to look for, from the size of margins on an NIH grant to the ideal content of the required "Specific Aims" section. Recognizing the potential challenge for GWC consultants in determining whether the specific aims are, in fact, specific enough,

Mark gave advice that rarely appears in conventional writing center literature: blame the writer. “You can’t always blame yourself or your lack of expertise in [the field]. You have to be able to blame the other person. . . .If you can’t follow their argument, then they are doing something wrong, and you can be confident in that.”

After the third mention of blame, Gray interrupted Mark to suggest that he “overstated a little bit” by calling it blame. “It turns out that you’re not blaming the writer, so you’re actually asking for clarification.” Throughout the training, Gray explained the myriad ways a GWC must depart from accepted—or what she would call “default”—writing center practice, but she seemed uncomfortable with blame being the take away from the session. Mark responded, “When I say blame them, don’t do it from the clouds. Ask them what they mean by that [part of the document],” not quite willing to relinquish the idea of blame as a potentially useful strategy in the GWC. To Mark, his approach may be unconventional, but it also serves a specific need in the GWC—it allows consultants to confront potential problems in highly specialized graduate writing.

Blaming the writer, as Mark describes it, is just one of the strategies that UCLA consultants use that represent departures from traditional writing center scholarship and allow consultants to adapt to the high-stakes, technical documents that graduate writers bring to the writing center. Despite Mark’s seemingly unconventional attitude toward consulting with graduate writers, his presentation highlights a common problem faced by GWCs in general and by UCLA’s center specifically. Graduate students bring highly specialized genres to their consultations. Both in terms of form and content, executing these documents well requires a level of expertise that both consultants and graduate students sometimes lack. This chapter focuses on my observations of the three-day new

consultant training and hour-long interviews with Gray, two experienced GWC consultants, and one new consultant in September 2012 as well as two follow-up phone interviews with new consultants in April 2013. These data illuminate the tensions between expertise and insecurity among both graduate students and consultants and reveal the strategies that UCLA's GWC consultants are trained to use to deal with these tensions. Because I observed consultant training, this chapter does not include observations of actual consultations with graduate writers. Instead, it provides a detailed look at new consultants' experiences both of learning writing center theory and practicing the application of that theory to graduate texts. Conversations with experienced consultants about the strategies they use in consultations complement these observations. This chapter, then, highlights how new consultants acquire writing center strategies and how experienced consultants report adapting those strategies to meet the needs of graduate writers and accommodate varying levels of expertise and inexperience.

To examine these strategies in depth, I first describe UCLA's GWC and the institutional context that led to its development and its focus on disciplinary writing. Then, I situate these concerns for disciplinary writing within overlapping areas of writing center and writing in the disciplines (WID) scholarship on expertise-building and genre acquisition. The remainder of the chapter describes the role of genre in UCLA's consultant training and the "toolkit" consultants develop to read and respond to a variety of genres and levels of writing expertise.

UCLA's institutional context necessitates a GWC focused on writing across the disciplines. Ultimately, this case study reveals that UCLA consultants blend both conventional and unconventional writing center strategies to address the complicated

relationships between expertise and inexperience at the heart of graduate students' experiences as writers and new members of academic communities. These strategies come from a "toolkit" developed in new-consultant training but also arise organically during consultations to match the experience levels of both consultant and writer.

About UCLA's GWC

UCLA's GWC offers free, fifty-minute, one-to-one peer consultations to graduate students across all disciplines. Students schedule appointments through an online system that allows them to select from available appointment times. Students can also select from among the eighteen graduate writing consultants who come from thirteen different disciplines. The system asks the clients to complete an intake form, which asks students several questions about their graduate program, their experience with the English language, and the document they plan to bring. While consultants can review the form prior to a consultation if they have time, prompts like "Summarize the thesis or main argument of your writing project" and "Describe the audience of your writing project" are also intended to give clients an opportunity to reflect on their project and prepare for the appointment. In addition to these one-to-one consultations, the GWC designs and hosts workshops and dissertation and thesis boot camps and facilitates writing groups.

The center, which is located inside the larger Graduate Student Resource Center (GSRC), is composed of two small offices, which are used for consultations. When the GSRC was remodeled to include separate consultations spaces for the GWC, a writing consultant who was a Ph.D. in architecture created the design plans—a perhaps unexpected perk of having tutors from across the disciplines. Each office (fig. 2.1) looks

sleek and professional with two chairs, two tables (one with a computer), a white board, and a bookshelf of books and resources. Due to space constraints, the coordinator's office is located on another floor of the same building.

The Center is located in the basement of a centrally located campus building, the Student Activities Center (fig. 2.2), which also houses other student-support services, such as The Center for Women and Men. Not only does the central location make the GWC easy to find, its location within the GSRC helps to attract students. To draw graduate students into the resource center—which features a wall full of brochures and posters advertising support and opportunities—the center offers free printing to all graduate students. Thus, students who otherwise might be unaware of the GWC and its services have another reason to stop in, see the space, and find out about consultations, workshops, and other services.



Fig. 2.1. A consultation office in UCLA's Graduate Writing



Fig. 2.2. The centrally located UCLA Student Activities

According to data provided in the survey, which reflects the 2011-2012 school year, the GWC offers approximately fifty-five appointments per week, although the demand varies by academic quarter, and fills approximately 80% of those appointments. A slight majority of their clients are Ph.D. students, and the GWC most frequently consults students from the Social Sciences, Education and Information Studies, and Public Affairs, although they regularly see students from across the disciplines.

In fact, welcoming students from a variety of disciplines is central to the GWC's mission—a mission that is grounded in its unique origins. UCLA's GWC opened in 2007 as the result of a Graduate Students Association (GSA) Referendum. Thus, UCLA's center was initiated from the ground up by graduate students who asked for more writing support. At the time of the referendum, UCLA had an Undergraduate Writing Center, Covell Tutorials, that would not serve graduate students. Christine Wilson, the director of the GSRC, informally tracked these requests for writing support and eventually worked with the graduate student government to create the referendum:

In addition to the quarterly membership fee, each member of the GSA shall be assessed a fee of \$3 which shall fund the Graduate Writing Center. The Graduate Writing Center shall serve the academic and professional writing needs of all members of the GSA, including but not limited to: academic writing (all graduate levels), thesis and dissertation writing, professional presentations and public speaking, grant and fellowship writing, and writing for publication. (Referendum n.p.)

In March 2012, the GSA voted to raise graduate student fees, in large part to continue their support of the GWC (Gordon n.p.). The previous month, *The Daily Bruin*, UCLA's

campus newspaper, reported that the GWC was facing a \$20,000 deficit, which could result in cutting services and staff size (Hitchcock n.p.). While UCLA's GWC receives over \$90,000 in student fees, its overall usage has increased 64% between 2007 and 2011, creating a budget shortfall. Both the consistently increasing use of the GWC and the second successful fee referendum, which was put on a spring 2012 campus-wide ballot, demonstrate the continued investment graduate students have in the GWC.

This graduate-student investment is further solidified by the organizational structure of the center. The original referendum also stipulates the creation of a Graduate Writing Center Oversight Committee (GWCOC), which is the governing body of the GWC. The GWCOC has between fifteen and twenty voting graduate student members. While Wilson and Gray have seats on the committee alongside other faculty and staff members, only the graduate students have a vote to set policies, determine the budget, and evaluate the success of the GWC. Although the GWC is physically housed in the GSRC so that it may benefit from the staff support and space provided to the Resource Center, it belongs to and is governed by UCLA's graduate students. As Wilson explained to the new consultants during their training, this graduate student ownership gives UCLA's GWC a unique focus: "It does mean that there's something very different and special about the writing center. The money for the writing center is directly out of the pockets of graduate students [who] said, 'I vote for this fee. Here's the money. Give me a writing center.'"

UCLA's GWC takes seriously its commitment to graduate students and making sure that they benefit from their investment. Thus, the GWC ensures that its center is prepared for and valuable to students across all disciplines. It attempts to achieve this

goal in several ways. Most explicitly, the GWC offers programming that targets various disciplinary groups. For example, consultants hold workshops by genre, including “Stats Writing,” “Memos and White Papers,” “Qualitative Course Writing,” and “Scientific Writing.” Their Dissertation Boot Camps are also divided into three fields, Humanities and Arts, Sciences and Engineering, and Social Sciences. These workshops and boot camps are not only an attempt to reach out to a variety of departments, but they also show the GWC’s awareness that not all graduate writing is the same—an awareness that is heightened by their responsibility to graduate students across all disciplines.

Perhaps most unique among GWCs is the center’s large and diverse group of consultants. Of the eighteen consultants during the 2012-2013 school year, less than a third were from Humanities disciplines, with only two coming from the English department. Table 2.1 provides information about the participants included in this chapter, including their disciplinary affiliation.

Table 2.1
UCLA Case Study Participants

Name	Role
Marilyn Gray	GWC Coordinator
Mark	Experienced GWC Consultant Science Ph.D. Student
Candace	New GWC Consultant Social Science M.A. Student
Janelle	New GWC Consultant Social Science Ph.D. Student
Rachel	New GWC Consultant Science Ph.D. Student
Debra	Experienced GWC Consultant Social Science Ph.D.
Quan	New GWC Consultant Law Student
Anju	New GWC Consultant Social Science Ph.D. Student
Tiffany	Experienced GWC Consultant Social Science Ph.D. Student

This decision to hire such a diverse staff speaks to the second way the UCLA GWC achieves their cross-disciplinary focus: extensive staff training. Because so few consultants have Humanities—and specifically English—backgrounds, very few of them have previous writing center experience. Thus, they receive training in writing center theory and practice. Moreover, their training focuses heavily on genres across the disciplines that graduate students might bring to appointments. Of the three ten-hour training days prior to the start of fall quarter, a full day is devoted to what is labeled on the schedule as “Understanding Graduate Writing and Genre Acquisition.” Ongoing staff training throughout the year also focuses on specific genres, with consultants often sharing their disciplinary expertise with the group. I return to these consultants and their training later in the chapter, but first I review scholarship from writing center studies and

writing in the disciplines (WID) to provide a background for understanding UCLA's administrative and tutoring practices.

Disciplinary Tutoring, Graduate Writers, and the Importance of Genre

As I analyzed data from UCLA's GWC, the idea of expertise—and the insecurity that accompanies a real or perceived lack of expertise—surfaced again and again both in interviews and in conversations during the training. Most often, these feelings of expertise and insecurity were related to the level of the consultant's familiarity with genres specific to graduate writing in the disciplines. As foundational genre and writing across the curriculum scholar Charles Bazerman explains in "Genre and Cognitive Development: Beyond Writing to Learn," genre always presents both a problem for writers and a solution to that problem: "Taking up the challenge of a genre casts you into the problem space and the typified structures and practices of the genre provide the means of solution" (291).

The argument of genre as both a problem and a solution structures this literature review. I first explore how the importance of disciplinary genres has created a challenge for writing centers that serve writers across the disciplines. This challenge is exemplified in the long-standing scholarly debate over discipline-specific tutoring. I then show how genres also present challenges to graduate writers as they try to write their way into their academic discourse communities. I then bring these two problems together to argue that a focus on genre provides a potential solution for both writing centers and graduate writers. Genre allows writing centers to transcend the disciplinary tutor debate and also makes them well-positioned to contribute to a solution for graduate writers not only by helping

writers become more aware of genres but by creating relationships in which writers can rehearse their developing expertise. Ultimately, literature on genre provides an important framework for understanding the insecurity of graduate writers and GWC consultants and the rationale behind the practices that UCLA employs to accommodate that insecurity.

Peer Tutoring in the Disciplines

Undergraduate writing center scholarship has long questioned the role of disciplinary knowledge in peer tutorials. In his foundational work on collaborative learning, “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind,’” Kenneth Bruffee suggests peer conversations can help raise students’ awareness of the social, communal nature of writing. “Collaborative learning,” he argues, “provides the kind of social context, the kind of community in which normal discourse occurs: a community of knowledgeable peers” (644). Just who these peers should be and about what they should be knowledgeable is a source of a tension. Bruffee suggests that tutors bring “sensitivity to the needs and feelings of their peers and knowledge of the conventions of discourse and of standard written English” (644). For Bruffee, then, a knowledgeable peer is one who understands academic discourse broadly and—of equal importance—understands the academic and emotional challenges faced by peers trying to identify and create academic discourse.

Others, however, argue that tutors with discipline-specific knowledge are more valuable to students (Chen; Haring-Smith; Kiedaisch and Dinitz; Shamoan and Burns; Waring). For example, in “A Critique of Pure Tutoring,” Linda Shamoan and Deborah Burns argue that the social-constructionist view that Bruffee takes of writing suggests the need for discipline-specific, directive tutoring. In other words, if writing is socially

constructed, it cannot be a-disciplinary or assume that writing process strategies are necessarily transferable (176). They suggest, for example, that when a tutor “redrafts problematic portions of a text for a student, the changes usually strengthen the disciplinary argument and improve the connection to current conversation in the discipline” (185). This approach to the “knowledgeable peer” suggests the value of disciplinary expertise in improving students’ ability to join disciplinary discourse communities. Much of the scholarship about discipline-specific peer tutoring arises from what are sometimes called Writing Fellows Programs or Curriculum-Based Peer Tutoring (Haring-Smith, Soven). In these programs, such as the one that Tori Haring-Smith directs at Brown University, peer tutors are selected from specific disciplines to tutor students taking courses in that discipline. Sometimes these students are even assigned to a particular course or faculty member for the semester.

Finding peer tutors across multiple disciplines may not prove feasible, and, as some writing scholars like Susan Hubbuch argue, it may also not be desirable. In her article, “A Tutor Needs to Know the Subject Matter to Help a Student with a Paper: Agree, Disagree, Not Sure,” Hubbuch argues that while a knowledgeable tutor may know how to ask the “right questions,” an “ignorant tutor” provides greater advantages to students in the long run. A tutor without discipline-specific knowledge, she argues, “must have the student spell out for him all of the student’s immediate premises; he must ask for the student’s definition of key terms; he needs to have the connections the student in making between parts of the argument explicitly stated” (27). Thus, a generalist peer tutor is genuinely non-directive and necessarily encourages students to take responsibility for articulating their own arguments and the arguments and conventions valued by their

disciplines. The value of non-directive peer tutoring is pervasive in writing center scholarship (North, Brooks). What Hubbuch's article does not explore, however, is the insecurity that both tutor and student might feel when in unfamiliar disciplinary territory, a theme that emerges more clearly in literature about graduate writing in the disciplines.

Genre and the Graduate Writer

The ability to learn discipline-specific genres and how to employ and adapt them contributes to graduate writers' success, both academically and professionally, because, as North American genre theorists suggest, genres are rhetorical actions that demonstrate membership to a particular community (Miller). Throughout this literature review, I adopt Christine Tardy's definition of genre in "A Genre System View of the Funding of Academic Research," in which she combines Carolyn Miller's emphasis on genre as social action with John Swales's emphasis on discourse communities to define genre as "a social action that is shaped by, and in turn shapes, a social community that utilizes the genre as a means of communication" ("Genre" 9). This view of genre places it at the center of belonging to and being able to participate and intervene in a scholarly discourse community, which appropriately represents the tasks—and high stakes—faced by graduate writers.

Many studies of graduate writers focus on their ability to understand and employ the language and genres of their disciplines. In their longitudinal study on doctoral success, higher education researchers Anthony Paré, Doreen Starke-Meyerring, and Lynn McAlpine conceive of the academic department as a workplace in which novices—graduate students—go through apprenticeships to become experts (182). Indeed, much of the scholarship on graduate students as writers positions them as newcomers working to

initiate themselves into disciplinary discourse communities and develop the necessary writing expertise (Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman; Prior; Tardy *Building*). Carol Berkenkotter, Thomas Huckin, and John Ackerman argue in their foundational study of graduate writing, “Social Context and Socially Constructed Texts: The Initiation of a Graduate Student into a Writing Research Community,” that “graduate students are initiated into the research community through the reading and writing they do. . . . A major part of this initiation process is learning how to use appropriate written linguistic conventions for communicating through disciplinary forums” (213). In their study of the introductions to research papers written by “Nate,” a new Ph.D. student in Carnegie Mellon’s Rhetoric program, Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman observed Nate’s written scholarly identity progress from an “isolated newcomer” to a more “comfortable” writer, able to demonstrate intertextual knowledge and “speak in the discourse of his subspecialty” (229). Nate’s development into a comfortable writer spanned the course of one year, and his awareness of this process was no doubt heightened by his participation in the study, which included reflective reports and interviews.

For many graduate writers, moving away from the isolated newcomer role is a much greater challenge. This challenge is exacerbated because disciplinary conventions are opaque not only to graduate students but to advanced scholars as well (Bazerman “Cognitive;” Russell). David Russell argues that “disciplines never acquired a conscious knowledge of the rhetorical conventions they used daily and expected their students to use, for these conventions were so bound up with the activity of the discipline and were acquired so subtly in the learning of the discipline itself that they were rarely thought of as writing instruction” (17). Disciplinary conventions, thus, are central to graduate

students' success and professionalization yet rarely a part of graduate students' formal training.⁶

The genre of the dissertation proposal exemplifies both the importance and the invisibility of these disciplinary conventions. In “Entering the Conversation: Graduate Thesis Proposals as Genre,” Irene Clark calls the proposal “anxiety-provoking” for many graduate students (“Entering” 141). She suggests that a genre approach, “presenting the proposal in terms of rhetorical purpose, form, and textual features,” would help alleviate this anxiety and provide graduate students with a clearer path to writing the proposal more effectively (“Entering” 145-46). Clark acknowledges, however, that graduate students often lack access to this type of instruction. In fact, the dissertation proposal is an example of what John Swales calls “occluded genres,” or genres that “support the research publication process but are not themselves part of the research record” (“Occluded” 45). That is, there are few—if any—published examples of occluded genres for writers to use as models. As Swales argues, occluded genres present a special challenge to graduate students, who “may have particular difficulties in matching the expectations of their targeted audiences” (“Occluded” 46). While the dissertation proposal is not included in Swales’s original list of occluded genres, he discusses them briefly in *Research Genres: Exploration and Applications*, noting that they vary across institutions and disciplines in terms of degree of comprehensiveness, formality, and timing (*Research* 101). These variations, of course, contribute to the occluded nature of the proposal and make it even more difficult to ascertain its generic conventions.

⁶ For more on the historical reasons for and implications of this lack of writing instruction at the graduate level, see my discussion of Russell’s work in Chapter One.

Clark's explanation of graduate students' typical responses to writing the proposal exemplifies the problematic intersections between genre—particularly occluded genres—and expertise for graduate students. She suggests that “many students begin the process of writing a proposal without a clear idea of its generic expectations—that is, what it is intended to do, what it is supposed to look like, and what the established members of the discourse community are expecting it to be. To figure all of this out with a minimum of assistance appears to be the goal” (“Entering” 144). The reason that graduate students eschew assistance, I suggest, is precisely because of the power of genre. While graduate students may not be aware of precise generic patterns, they are aware of the power genre holds to reveal who belongs in a particular discourse community. Clark suggests that proposals ask graduate students to pretend to “be an expert” (“Entering” 145), but as interviews in the following section show, graduate students are painfully aware that they are merely pretending. This tension between knowing that there are conventions that have social power but being unable to determine those conventions creates the kind of anxiety Clark identifies. Graduate students are in a double bind in which an awareness of genre as a means to membership keeps them from asking questions that reveal they are not fully members while asking those questions—of both people and texts—is the only way to gain access to genres and prove membership.

Genre Acquisition and the Graduate Writing Center

One potential solution to support both writing center consultants and graduate writers as they work with discipline-specific writing is to focus on genre acquisition, or what genre studies scholar Amy Devitt in *Writing Genres* calls “critical genre awareness.” This approach, which teaches writers to recognize the rhetorical features and

ideologies of genres, Devitt argues, “may enable writers to learn newly encountered genres when they are immersed in a context for which they need those genres” (192). In other words, by understanding how to interpret the rhetorical and social features of a genre, critical genre awareness allows writers to more readily recognize and apply these features when they are faced with new genres. In the context of a writing center, critical genre awareness provides a way for consultants to approach the unfamiliar genres that writers bring to consultations. Consultants can then share this approach with writers, so that a session need not focus only on disciplinary content or general issues of mechanics, but can address a way for writers to approach and learn genres more successfully.

Critical genre awareness also helps writers and consultants think of genres not as forms but as, in the words of Miller, social actions. In her seminal article “Genre as Social Action,” Miller defines genre as “more than a formal entity; it becomes pragmatic, fully rhetorical, a point of connection between intention and effect, an aspect of social action” (153). Genre, for Miller and other North American genre theorists, is rhetorical action that connects the individual with a community. In fact, she argues that “genres serve as keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community” (165). Helping writers to understand genre and generic patterns as ways that they can intervene in various discourse communities gives writers an adaptable framework for approaching writing tasks. This stance toward genre is attractive to writing centers dealing with disciplinary diversity because it aligns so clearly with the nearly ubiquitous writing center maxim to create better writers and not better writing.

Moreover, this expansion of the definition of genre encourages a focus on the process of creating and delivering genres, which supports the process-based approach

valued by writing centers. In “Observing Genres in Action: Towards a Research Methodology,” Anthony Paré and Graham Smart include the “composing process involved in creating texts” in their definition of genre. Their definition encourages writers to consider how those in their disciplinary communities collect information, draft and revise writing, and produce texts. Writing centers provide a model for this collaborative, social understanding of the writing process and can help writers identify and practice the various stages of the writing process that contribute to the genres in their discipline—even without specific knowledge of the intricacies of every genre that appears in the writing center.

Understanding genre as social action is particularly important in a graduate context (Ding, Prior, Swales). As Mary Soliday argues in *Everyday Genres: Writing Assignments Across the Disciplines*, genre returns us to the question of expertise: “Genre study persuades us to consider related questions about the nature of rhetorical situations and the nature of expertise in writing. From genre study, we inquire what constitutes a situation, the extent to which writing expertise stretches across situations, and how we think people acquire expertise in more than one situation” (4). Graduate students are in the process of becoming experts in their fields and are expected to display that expertise, and genre provides a means for understanding what constitutes expertise in a given situation. A genre-based approach, as Huiling Ding argues in her study of graduate students’ NIH grant writing, “demystifies” the writing process “by making every step visible, learnable, and accomplishable” (23). The non-directive questioning that characterizes writing center practice makes writing centers well-poised to help writers dissect the rhetorical and social features of genres. As my later analysis of UCLA’s GWC

practices demonstrates, consultants can make learning new genres a manageable task by modeling questions that writers can ask of texts and by showing writers how to use texts as models for understanding generic conventions.

To be able to employ the generic knowledge that they might gain from models, writers must also have the rhetorical skills to understand a genre's context and use for a particular audience. Those who study expertise building and genre acquisition agree that disciplinary expertise is negotiated, rhetorical, and social (Artemeva; Bawarshi and Reiff; Geisler; Norgaard; Freedman; Tardy *Building*). Mya Poe, Neal Lerner, and Jennifer Craig argue in *Learning to Communicate in Science and Engineering* that one of the most important skills for writers moving from novice to expert is their ability to “develop flexible rhetorical repertoires and be able to apply elements of previous communication experiences to new ones” (186). Writing centers can help writers identify and develop these repertoires. A consultation can include, for example, not just what parts go into a lab report but how a writer approaches a lab report, from considerations of audience and tone to the mechanics of passive voice and pronoun choice. This broad understanding of genre allows writing centers to help graduate students develop the rhetorical and writing process skills that are not explicitly addressed in a graduate curriculum while simultaneously putting those skills in service of disciplinary competency. Writing centers, then, need not teach genre forms explicitly, which takes the pressure off of consultants who may feel the need to be experts in various genres.

Teaching explicit generic forms, in fact, may not be effective or even possible. Aviva Freedman, genre expert, in “Do As I Say: The Relationship Between Teaching and Learning New Genres,” argues that it is impossible to teach genre explicitly because a

static form cannot account for the complexity and fluidity of genres (198). Merely understanding the form a genre takes does not prepare writers to participate in the creation and deployment of that genre in their disciplinary community. For example, in her longitudinal study of multilingual graduate writers, *Building Genre Knowledge*, Christine Tardy argues that even if writers have a formal knowledge of genres, they may not feel as though they have the authority to contribute to their discipline or understand how to employ those genres in particular rhetorical contexts. To move from novice to expert, then, graduate students need more than a mastery of the generic forms relevant to their discipline. They need a combination of rhetorical and generic knowledge honed within the context of mentoring relationships.

Indeed, a relationship between a more experienced writer and an expert is central to the apprenticeship model that scholars use to understand graduate work. Poe, Lerner, and Craig define these relationships as “a person-to-person engagement between a novice and an expert (of one sort or another) in which the novice’s activities are commented on and shaped by the more experienced mentor” (179). Mentors provide a real audience for whom writers can rehearse their growing understanding of their field. These relationships, according to Tardy’s study, allow writers to focus on “not just what content to transmit to their readers but how to transmit that content in a persuasive way” (“Story” 336). In other words, mentoring relationships help writers blend generic and rhetorical knowledge.

Writing centers represent one site where these relationships can take place because consultants provide a real audience with whom graduate writers can explore and articulate the way knowledge is constructed and valued in their fields. Consultants can

also ask questions that help writers explore these values. More than a one-sided mentorship, however, writing center relationships often provide opportunities for fluid movement between expert and novice. The consultant might have expertise in the genre of the literature review for example, while the writer might have expertise in content-based knowledge and the expectations of a reader. They share their expertise with one another to co-construct a literature review that brings together a recognizable form, appropriate content, and rhetorical awareness of audience and purpose. Writing program administrator Carrie Leverenz, in “Graduate Students in the Writing Center: Confronting the Cult of (Non)Expertise,” calls these exchanges “rehearsals of expertise” that provide writers a comfortable way to practice their roles as experts (57). In other words, writing centers are sites where both consultants and writers can learn to ask questions about genres and disciplinary conventions that enhance their ability to understand the rhetorical and social features of new genres in the future.

UCLA’s GWC provides one site to examine these intersections of genre and expertise, not only for graduate student writers but for graduate writing consultants as well. As the next section shows, UCLA’s GWC is a place where students can ask the questions that give them access to genres and can also develop the writing and rhetorical skills that move them toward demonstrating expertise in those genres. Throughout this process, the consultant employs a range of strategies that negotiate the varying levels of expertise and inexperience of both participants. Ultimately, UCLA’s GWC training is focused on helping consultants develop a “toolkit” of strategies that promote transparent access to genre for both consultant and writer.

Expertise and Inexperience: Graduate Writers as Graduate Consultants

The tension between expertise and inexperience—as well as the resulting anxiety created by this tension—was a consistent theme throughout my interviews with both new and experienced consultants and my observations of training exercises. As Leverenz explains, “When graduate students come to the writing center, everyone’s expertise is at stake: the graduate students’ expertise in a particular discipline [and] the tutor’s expertise in writing and tutoring” (50). The graduate writing consultants I spoke with were keenly aware of the potential role of expertise, and they experienced the insecurity associated with a lack of expertise on two levels: first, as graduate writers and second, as graduate writing consultants talking with writers from other disciplines.

For example, my interview with new consultant Candace reveals the extent to which, as a graduate student herself, she is aware of the expectations of disciplinary expertise. Her own experiences as a master’s student in an education-focused field speak to the kinds of anxieties that graduate writers might bring to a GWC consultation. In fact, it was Candace’s own inexperience with an unfamiliar writing task that first introduced her to the UCLA GWC. After being accepted to present a poster at a conference, a new writing and speaking genre for her, she met regularly with a writing consultant to work on the text for the poster. Based on her productive sessions, Candace decided to apply to be a consultant. She also believed she could benefit from the training offered to consultants and the ability to read more graduate writing:

I saw the three day training, and I thought, “I want the training. I hope they hire me.” Not because I’m behind the right ball in terms of teaching writing per se, but [because] graduate school writing has been challenging

for me. I'm writing in a different way than I wrote for my first master's degree [with] a different level of expectations and less formal support.

Thus, Candace is aware both of the difference in writing expectations in her new field and of the lack of support available from her department. Seeking the services of the GWC—and now becoming a consultant—both represent ways for her to try to develop the writing expertise she feels she lacks.

Candace repeatedly refers to this perceived lack of expertise as “imposter syndrome.” During our interview, she suggested that many graduate students feel like imposters in their fields and that they're “very anxious” about their abilities to write and keep up with disciplinary expectations. Speaking from her own experience, Candace says

I don't feel like my department understands how many different levels of writing experience we possess. Even though I'm entering this as someone who has a master's degree and who has taught writing, I've never written a research proposal before. I've never done a research study before. Never written an abstract. Never picked keywords.

Candace's experience echoes the arguments of Carter and Clark who present the need for both general writing strategies and local, genre-based strategies. In other words, even though Candace has general writing strategies, she is not familiar enough with genres in her field to apply them confidently. Thus, she feels like an imposter.

Clark refers to the syndrome that Candace identified as “the necessity of pretending to be an expert” and suggests that when graduate students do not know how to meet these expectations of expertise, they feel that “they shouldn't have been admitted to the program” (“Entering” 144-145). It is precisely because the consultants at UCLA's

GWC are graduate writers themselves that the GWC is acutely aware of this “imposter syndrome.” The consultation strategies they use, as I explain in the following section, are highly attuned to this issue.

Before I turn to strategies, however, it is important to note that experienced consultants are not immune to anxiety about inexperience. While many of the consultants—particularly those who presented on genres in their field—consider themselves to have a level of expertise in general writing strategies and within their own fields, they still experience the tension between that expertise and their inexperience with unfamiliar genres. Janelle, for example, an experienced consultant and PhD student in Psychology was a writing tutor at her undergraduate institution. She considers herself a good writer and helpful consultant: “It [writing] is a skill I have that I can translate into something useful for someone else, like many of them have skills that they will be translating into something useful for me. Like all the doctors.” Janelle considers herself expert enough in writing that she can use her skills to help her peers, much like a doctor is expert enough in medicine to treat a variety of patients.

Of course, Gray does not expect her consultants to be experts in their consultations. She explicitly said the contrary during training: “We’re not expecting you to be experts in the appointments.” In fact, Gray suggests that positioning themselves as such might undermine the peer-based philosophy of writing centers: “The collaborative model here is actually something that has become the default starting point for writing center practice. . . . We can’t train everyone to know the details of every discourse community. So part of the collaborative dynamic is that you’re not asserting yourself as the expert.” Despite these explanations, however, the consultants seem to feel a link

between expertise and helpfulness, much in the way that Janelle expresses. The three tutors I interviewed and Gray all listed “helping others” as one of the most significant reasons that they enjoy working in the GWC. Developing a level of expertise in both general and genre-specific writing strategies is one way for consultants to feel like they are able to be helpful.

Janelle, despite her confidence in her writing skills, still experienced insecurity about her helpfulness as a tutor when confronted with dissertation projects. “I was really, really, intimidated about that at first.” Because dissertations are a genre specific to graduate writing, many consultants are unfamiliar with them when they begin tutoring. Particularly if GWCs want to hire consultants who can provide continuity and stay on the staff for several years, consultants, like Janelle, might be too early in their programs to have experience with dissertations. Janelle goes on to admit that she “didn’t want to tell anyone I’m just a second year [Ph.D. student]. I kept it to myself, and they didn’t know.” Her unwillingness to admit her inexperience suggests that she thinks it might jeopardize the perceived quality of the appointment. For example, her clients may have then assumed she could only focus on mechanics and resisted her genre- or content-based advice (Chen; Waring). Thus, not only do consulting strategies have to be devised to accommodate inexperience and anxiety on the part of the writer, but they must also accommodate these factors on the part of the consultant.

The anxiety created by feelings of inexperience among new consultants was most visible during my observation of Mark’s session on NIH and NSF grant proposals. The following exchange between Mark and a new consultant, Psychology Ph.D. student Rachel, occurred while Mark was trying to help new consultants devise strategies for

helping writers eliminate jargon. On the screen, he showed a paragraph that begins “Focal Adhesion Kinase (FAK) is a non-receptor tyrosine kinase localized to matrix adhesions and becomes activated following engagement of $\beta 1$ and αv integrins” and continues in the same jargon-heavy way.

Rachel: I think everything you’re saying makes complete sense in theory, but in actual practice....Yeah, the language, I just get so overwhelmed by it that as a counselor or as a consultant, I can’t really tell what’s wrong with it, you know, so...

Mark: But you have a feeling something is wrong with it, right?

Rachel: I don’t have a feeling.

Mark: Well, do you understand the sentence?

Rachel: I don’t understand it, but I think I don’t understand it because I’m not familiar with the jargon there.

Mark: You’re too nice of a person. [Laughter.]

As Rachel’s insecurity about assessing the writing demonstrates, her inexperience with disciplinary content is interfering with her ability to apply her more general writing knowledge to the paragraph. Ultimately, she fears that she would let this paragraph go undiscussed in a consultation because she could not pinpoint—or even recognize—its problems. In part, Rachel’s insecurity would lessen with more exposure to this particular discipline. But, even the differences between neuroscience and molecular biology might be stark enough that experience with one would not translate to Rachel feeling comfortable with the other.

To help Rachel and the other consultants build more confidence about approaching these kinds of texts, Mark takes a genre-based approach. He explains the genre in terms of its intended action: to present a research project with a tangible outcome worthy of funding to an audience of scientists across several fields. He presents the consultants with an accepted pattern for the genre (Specific Aims Summary, Significance and Innovation, Approach) and provides other generic expectations, such as stating a clear hypothesis and relating each claim to it and not seeming to “fish” for data by using words like “explore, investigate and observe.” In other words, Mark is sharing with them the specific markers that make a NIH or NSF grant proposal recognizable to experts. These are markers, he suggests, that consultants can look for and show graduate writers how to look for.

Mark then combines this genre-based approach with a writing-process approach that draws on other writing principles familiar to the consultants. For example, he suggests that clear transitions help writers achieve the generic convention of relating each point back to the hypothesis. He also suggests techniques like shortening the distance between the subject and the verb and moving from old information to new information in order to make claims clear to scientists from a variety of fields. By reminding consultants of these general writing guidelines and showing how and why they are effective in the specific genre of NIH and NSF grant proposals, Mark gives new consultants a way to build expertise in the genre, even if they are not experts in the specific disciplines. As Ding argues in her study of graduate grant writing, “the usual separation between the rhetorical and stylistic aspect of writing and the scientific merit of the actual written product is artificial, unproductive, and counterintuitive for students” (47). Tardy similarly

found that successful grant proposals combined strong stylistic features with “good science” (“Genre System” 11). While the GWC cannot provide experts in content, Mark’s approach encourages consultants to consider indicators of both scientific merit and stylistic skill as they approach these documents.

Developing a Toolkit: UCLA’s Strategies for Tutoring in the Disciplines

As Mark’s advice to the new consultants indicates, it is important to have a range of strategies to draw on during a consultation—from identifying patterns or asking writers to identify patterns in genres to modeling ways to bring together subject and verb. Throughout my interviews and observations, Gray and experienced tutors referred to these strategies as their “toolkit.” As experienced consultant and Applied Linguistics Ph.D. Debra explained to the new consultants, a key aspect of a consultation is “just knowing what your toolkit is. For this student and these circumstances, I’m going to pick this out of my toolkit. It’s a matter of the range of approaches you could use.” Guided by this notion of a toolkit, I coded the transcripts of observations and interviews for mention of various “tools” that belong in the kit. In the remainder of this section, I provide examples of these tools and their relationship to the disciplinary diversity that is at the heart of their development.

First, however, it is important to acknowledge that these tools arise from the particular orientation to genre that I outlined in the literature review, North American genre theory, which focuses on genres as social, performative, dynamic (Artemeva; Bazerman; Bawarshi and Reiff; Freedman and Medway; Miller). Genre plays an explicit role in the consultant training at UCLA’s GWC. Prior to beginning their training,

consultants are asked to read about genre, including Clark's "Addressing Genre in the Writing Center" and excerpts from Miller's "Genre as Social Action" and Anne Beaufort's *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*. Upon their arrival at the training, the new consultants also receive a thick binder, which includes tabs dedicated to several disciplines and common genres, such as dissertation proposals and grant and fellowship applications. Thus, even prior to beginning their training, the consultants are asked to think about their future work as consultants in terms of disciplinary conventions and rhetorical and social power of genres. In fact, while specific mentions of genre theory were only introduced by Gray, mentions of genre more generally and questions and comments about specific genres appeared in interviews and observations nearly equally among Gray (28% of the total mentions), experienced consultants (37%), and new consultants (35%). The concept of genre pervades the way UCLA's GWC staff talks about their work.

In addition to foundational figures like Miller and Bazerman, North American genre theory also draws on Bakhtin's theories of genre and language. As Gray explained when she introduced herself to the group, her interest in genre grew partly out of her graduate work in Russian literature, particularly her focus on Bakhtin. While Gray's dissertation did not focus on Bakhtin's theories of genre, she explains that her knowledge of his work helped her find her way when she began working at UCLA's GWC. Because she is not formally trained in composition, she read widely and found herself drawn to Bakhtin and the work of other social constructionists: "When I started reading about social constructionism, I got it because Bakhtin is very much in line with those types of theorists. I have gravitated towards explaining and understanding what we do at the

Graduate Writing Center through the frame of, for lack of a better term, genre acquisition.” In other words, Gray sees the GWC as a site that allows for an explicit awareness and acquisition of genre.

Because of his focus on the social nature of what he calls “utterances,” Bakhtin does, in fact, speak directly to the work of UCLA’s GWC. These utterances are both deeply contextual and dialogic, meaning that they are always co-constructed and dependent on reception and response. According to Bakhtin, “This is why the unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others’ individual utterances” (89). Of course, this interaction happens not only continuously, as Bakhtin suggests, but often unconsciously. One role of UCLA’s GWC is to make these interactions more conscious and intentional. By focusing on genre acquisition in consultant training—and thus enabling consultants to focus on genre acquisition during consultations with writers—the GWC invites writers to consider their utterances, in the form of writing projects, within an explicit interaction with a fellow graduate writer.

Text-Based Tools

I coded text-based tools as those strategies that focus directly on the text brought by the writer and that most often aim to help students resolve local problems in the text like sentence structure, clarity of argument and example, and discipline-appropriate phrasing and structure. The text-based tools most commonly described in observations and interviews include reading aloud, identifying problem patterns, and editing or proofreading. Mark’s suggestions of helping writers revise sentences to move from old to new information or to bring the subject and verb closer together also qualify as text-based

tools. When Janelle described a typical consultation during our interview, she explained that she often skims the text silently first and makes a note of potential problems. Then, she'll return to those problem areas: "Sometimes I'll read sentences out loud and then transition it to them [the student]." That is, Janelle takes a minimalist approach of reading the text aloud and then letting the student decide what the problem is and how it might be fixed.

This type of text-based tool is among the most common in writing centers. Gray consistently refers to these tools as "default" writing center strategies. She suggests that these default practices, such as reading aloud, come from the undergraduate focus in writing center scholarship. For example, Gray has the new consultants read Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood's introduction to the *St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, in which the authors divide the tutorial into pre-textual, textual, and post-textual stages. During the textual stage, they recognize that in the minimalist model—a pervasive model in undergraduate tutoring—"students read their texts aloud; the tutor comments. As commentators, minimalist tutors assist students in solving their own problems" (17). As Murphy and Sherwood acknowledge, however, minimalist tutoring is not always desirable or even possible.

Accordingly, not all of the text-based strategies in the UCLA GWC toolkit are minimalist. In fact, much of the text-based work centers on proofreading and editing. Despite the long-standing position in the writing center field that a center is not a proofreading service or, in the oft-cited words of Stephen North "a fix-it shop," the need for proofreading cannot be ignored, especially in a graduate context. As Gray explained to new consultants, a greater willingness to "deal with" grammar is one of the things that

sets the GWC apart from a UWC: “It's just that to serve our audience, we have to accommodate correct grammar because we're in the university environment. And the people who are writing want to know how to write better; they want to know how to write according to the norms of academic English.” The consultant training still focused on helping clients with higher order concerns, such as argument and structure, first, but it allowed room for focusing on grammar as well. Janelle explains that grammar help is a common request in appointments, especially for non-native English speakers. “If they say, ‘Oh, I really need help with my grammar,’ I'll say, ‘I can help you with that.’ And then also maybe check and make sure it's all logical and structured well, stuff like the higher order stuff we're supposed to do first.” Ultimately, these text-based tools allow consultants the flexibility to help clients with textual issues, whether those issues are more global, such as the clarity of topic sentences, or more localized, such as a run-on sentence or a misused idiom.

Discussion-Based Tools

Discussion-based tools, often discussed and suggested alongside text-based tools, were coded as tools that focused on discussion between the consultant and the writer about general aspects of the text. As opposed to text-based tools, which often examined particular sentences or paragraphs, discussion-based tools rarely reference specific aspects in the text and instead focus on the text's broader themes or goals. They may also focus on the text's relationship to a larger project such as a thesis or dissertation. Examples of discussion-based tools include asking the writer to summarize the text or larger project, asking questions about the rhetorical context of the project, and conversations about general writing strategies.

The value of discussion-based tools became most apparent following a role-playing activity in which new consultants performed mock consultations on one another's papers. Each new consultant was paired with another new consultant from a different discipline. The pair then took turns switching between consultant and writer in two thirty-minute mock sessions, slightly less time than the standard fifty-minute UCLA GWC sessions. For many of the new consultants, this exercise was their first opportunity to practice reading and responding to a paper from outside their own discipline. Quan, a Law student, and Anju, a Ph.D. student in a social sciences field focused on education, worked together during the exercise and expressed frustration during the group debrief. As Quan explained, "Neither one of us got to the textual stage. I don't see how. I tried to read more, but there were a lot of questions I had to ask. Because of the differences in discipline, much of the time was spent just describing [the project]." Several of the new consultants voiced the same concern that they were only able to discuss the paper and the project in general terms: audience, purpose, genre expectations, and argument. Even when pairs turned more directly to the text, as Candace did with her partner, the tools they turned to were more discussion-based. Candace, for example, asked her partner to explain the connections between each paragraph as a way of assessing the overall structure without reading the text itself.

Writing center practitioners who rely on reading aloud and delving into thesis statements and topic sentences may find this distance from the text off-putting; however, the conditions of the GWC make these discussion-based tools necessary. Writers come without assignment sheets and with documents that may go far beyond the five-page assignments typically seen in UWCs. Moreover, the disciplinary specificity of texts can

make it difficult, as Quan explained, to focus on the text itself. Beyond being necessary, these discussion-based tools are also valuable to writers. During the debriefing session, Anju said that despite Quan's frustration, the session was helpful. "That process for me did help me think about what I did need to bring more focus to. So, that's what I took away from my experience." Gray reinforced Anju's experience and helped the new consultants see the potential successes in treating the text more holistically by using discussion-based tools: "You may end up treating the text through discussion of the text more than actual reading of the text. . . . Getting the person to talk through the paper, that often gets the person to clarify things for themselves. The exercise of talking through the paper can still be helpful to the writer."

In essence, these discussion-based tools provide strategies for consultants who may find disciplinary or generic conventions disorienting. They can use discussion to encourage the writer to think more about the rhetorical context of the project while simultaneously learning more about the writer's discipline for future consultations. As Hubbuch suggests, tutors familiar with specific disciplinary conventions help writers by "guiding that student to ask questions of his/her subject that are appropriate to the field and by helping the student develop answers to such questions that are in line with the accepted methodologies of that field" (25). They are creating opportunities for writers to rehearse their expertise. In other words, tutors with disciplinary expertise know the right questions to ask. As the UCLA consultants gain more experience and continue their professional development that introduces them to a variety of genres, their discussion-based toolkit is likely to grow and improve.

Extending the Toolkit: Expertise-Based Tools

Toolkits, however thoughtfully designed, rarely contain all of the tools necessary to complete a task. My follow-up interviews with two new consultants near the end of their first year working the GWC suggest that their toolkit was incomplete at first and evolved over the course of the year. As Candace explained, “The training and the reality of doing consultant visits is not always a good match” because each consultation is a unique blend of the consultant’s and writer’s strengths. Candace reported that, after a year, “there’s a routine I have for different kinds of consultations—for different people with different needs.” In other words, she amended her toolkit on the job, and the tools she uses depend on the needs of each client. These varying needs often arise from differences in expertise. My interviews with experienced consultants confirmed that the more formal—and somewhat traditional—discussion and text-focused tools could not fully account for the relationships between expertise and inexperience that consultants confront during appointments. In these situations, consultants employ experience-based tools that often arise more organically from the context of the appointment and the relationship between consultant, writer, and genre. As compositionist Howard Tinberg argues, “when students become tutors of their peers’ writing, they, too, must acknowledge the expertise that they bring to the exchange and visualize their own behavior as demonstrating a critical response for inexperienced writers” (68). Experience-based tools exemplify the kind of critical response that Tinberg describes in the context of not just inexperienced writers, but inexperienced consultants as well. I coded this third set of tools as those strategies intended to deal directly with the tensions between expertise and inexperience previously described. Discussion of these tools

followed conversations about inexperience—either on the part of the writer or the consultant—and focus on ways to create feelings of expertise that balance feelings of inexperience. Expertise-based tools include Mark’s notion of blaming the writer, managing the writer’s expectations for the session, modeling, and discussion of specific conventions for typical graduate genres, such as literature reviews. Because the notion of expertise is fluid and also moves between rhetorical expertise and discipline-specific expertise, these tools are complex to categorize. Table 2.2, which provides the organization for the remainder of this chapter, attempts to capture how these tools were discussed in terms of expertise during the training. While their actual use is likely much less fixed, this matrix is intended to be a heuristic to display the various possibilities for addressing expertise and inexperience within a tutorial.

Table 2.2
Expertise Based Tools

	Consultant Expertise	Consultant Inexperience
Writer Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Genre-specific tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Manage expectations ○ Blame the writer ○ Refer the writer
Writer Inexperience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Model texts ○ Hide consultant expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Janelle’s “sci-fi” tool ○ Rely on discussion-based or text-based tools

Writer Expertise-Consultant Expertise

Throughout the training, there was little discussion of situations in which both the consultant and the writer might be experts, perhaps in part because the new consultants did not yet feel like expert consultants. However, a presentation during the training on writing literature reviews gives insight into how an expert-expert consultation might

work. Tiffany, an advanced Ph.D. in the social sciences, explained an approach to literature reviews that asks the writer to develop a Venn diagram of “concepts” that relate to the writer’s project. The overlapping sections represent the focus of the literature review, with the concepts at the center being the most important. A highly genre-specific approach like this might capitalize on both the genre-expertise of the consultant and the content-knowledge expertise of the writer. As Tiffany explained, “the literature review is familiar territory. It’s common ground. It’s difficult, but it’s common ground.” In other words, the literature review is a common enough genre that consultants can feel like experts in its conventions and help writers understand those conventions. Then, the writer can use his/her content-area expertise to meet the structural needs of the genre that the Venn diagram exercise makes clear.

Writer Expertise-Consultant Inexperience

When the writer feels like an expert in his or her discipline but that discipline is unfamiliar to the consultant, the consultant may feel inexperienced or insecure. For example, the writer might ask specific questions of genres or disciplinary conventions that the consultant cannot answer. The tools that address this situation seem focused on making the consultant feel more comfortable in his or her ability to still help the writer. For example, Mark’s suggestion to “blame the writer” empowers the consultant to still help the writer even when that consultant is inexperienced. Rather than use the inexperience as an excuse to gloss over confusing concepts or unclear prose, the tool of “blaming” the writer actually uses the consultant’s inexperience as an excuse to get the knowledgeable writer to do more rhetorical work. As Hubbuch suggests, when a tutor admits a lack of understanding, it can “raise issues that the student must make decisions

about, based on their conception of the purpose, context, and audience of the specific paper they are writing” (29). By encouraging a consultant to say, “I don’t understand your point here,” the tool of blame gets the writer to rearticulate and refine his or her ideas.

Experienced consultant Debra also recommends managing expectations for the consultation, particularly if the consultant is worried about a lack of experience. For example, new consultants voiced that they needed more time to read an unfamiliar text in order to really understand it but felt awkward taking that much time to silently read a document. Debra responded, “The main thing I usually do, if I’m doing anything in the session, I’m just honest with them about what I’m doing. So, I just say, ‘I’m going to skim for five or ten [minutes] and it might be kinda weird since you’re just sitting here, but I want to understand what your text is about.’ Then you don’t have to feel anxious as it’s taking you more and more time.” Similarly, Janelle admits that she is “up front” with writers when she is unfamiliar with their discipline in order to put limits on the kind of help they expect. In her article “An Alternative Approach to Bridging Disciplinary Divides,” Catherine Savini calls this making “transparency” part of a consultation. She suggests that “discussions about genre and discipline require that tutors reveal their lack of expertise” even though it may be uncomfortable (3). By being transparent about their lack of experience and the time they need to become more familiar with a text, UCLA’s consultants are managing the kind of help writers can expect and may also be encouraging writers to be more proactive about explaining their disciplinary and generic expectations. If writers still feel like they want more specific disciplinary writing help,

consultants are also encouraged to refer them to other consultants in the writer's field—another possible advantage of hiring students from across the disciplines.

Writer Inexperience-Consultant Expertise

A consultant with expertise in a particular genre or discipline can be more directive in their approach by providing model texts for writers who may feel inexperienced or unaware of disciplinary conventions. Shamoan and Burns argue that “at its best, directive tutoring provides a sheltered, protected time and space within the discipline for these intermediate and advanced students to make the shift between general strategies to domain strategies” (182). In other words, more directive tools like modeling help writers develop specific strategies for their disciplines and see themselves as a part of their “domain community” (Shamoan and Burns 183). In UCLA's GWC, models may come from provided handouts, articles, online resources, or the consultant's own modeling of how to revise a portion of the text.

In these situations, the consultants are drawing on two kinds of expertise. First, they have enough disciplinary awareness or expertise to match a student's writing with an external model. Second, they are using expertise they have developed as graduate writers in terms of how to apply models. As the new consultants discussed their past writing experiences and development as writers during a training exercise, nearly all of them mentioned looking at examples and trying to apply those examples to their own work. They are employing, in Devitt's terms, critical genre awareness, which allows them to examine models for their rhetorical purposes and applications to new and existing tasks. Gray synthesized these experiences to help the consultants see modeling as a tool in the toolkit:

One of the things that you brought up is how you have looked at models and how you have been really attentive to what you read and how you've been learning to write by looking at models. And that's the kind of coaching that we actually do a lot of in the writing center. It's really—we're helping people learn things, but more importantly, we're helping people learn to teach themselves things. So all those strategies you've used on your own, feel free to show people how to do it. Pull up an article and walk through it and look at the sections. Help people to approach samples with that eye to treating it as a model.

By drawing on their awareness of models and their expertise using them, consultants can help less experienced writers learn how to use models in their own writing and build their expertise at recognizing conventions in their disciplines.

While modeling may be a more traditional tool than many of the other expertise-based tools, the ways consultants report employing this tool grows out of the expertise/inexperience balance in the appointment. Creating or providing models also gives consultants an alternative to being too hands on if they are content experts in a writer's field. While consultants with disciplinary expertise can be valuable in terms of asking field- or genre-specific questions of a writer, they still attempt to maintain a collaborative, rather than authoritative, stance. This stance can be difficult to achieve if a less expert writer perceives that a consultant is an expert in their shared field. In these cases, Debra admits that she often hides or downplays her expertise. "If somebody comes in with a linguistics paper, and I would know everything they're talking about, and I would know who they're citing and all that stuff, I don't think it's fair for me to give them

a much different appointment. So...sometimes I would have to hide that I knew something.” Instead of correcting a student or providing directive answers to a problem, Debra relies on other tools like asking questions or providing models—strategies that still rely on her expertise but allow her to treat students the same regardless of their disciplines.

Writer Inexperience-Consultant Inexperience

In the final situation, where both consultant and writer lack expertise, the available tools are less clear. Indeed, Judith Powers argues that writing center strategies generally assume that “someone—either the writer or the tutor—knows how to solve a particular writing problem” (14). Thus, there are few models for addressing a lack of expertise on the part of both the consultant and the writer. So in many cases, the consultant might rely on another set of tools, such as the text-based reading aloud or the discussion-based asking the student to summarize. Janelle, however, has an interesting approach to these situations where she cannot rely on a writer to give her the necessary background to understand a text.

Sometimes I just, especially with hard science ones, I try to treat it a little bit like a science fiction book. [Laughs.] There are things that I'm not going to understand, and that's okay. I'm just going to plug in some foreign word, and it'll take the place of a noun or whatever it needs to take the place of. And we'll go from there.

Janelle attempts to rely on the experience she has as a reader, and she maintains an attitude of flexibility. Rather than letting a lack of expertise derail the session, she

approaches the text with an open mind that both she and the writer can still develop some understanding from the session.

Together, these four categories of expertise-based tools recognize the role that both general and discipline-specific writing expertise plays in graduate education. The variety of tools in this category also accounts for the fluid and dynamic nature of expertise, thus recognizing that graduate students are a diverse population of writers with a variety of needs. The “toolkit” as a whole is meant to prepare consultants to meet these needs with flexibility and confidence, even when they lack experience with particular disciplines or genres.

Unfortunately, as I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the limitation of this case study is that I was unable to examine how these tools are employed in actual consultations. Because the training happened prior to the start of UCLA’s fall quarter, there were no consultations for me to observe. These descriptions and analyses are based on an ideal presented to prepare new consultants and experienced consultants’ reports of their previous appointments. In the reality of a consultation, I am confident that these categories are far more fluid than I am able to present here. Moreover, there are surely consultations that fail to help writers. Despite this limitation, however, the toolkit presented and practiced during UCLA’s GWC training—as well as the acknowledgement that some tools develop more organically with experience—provides a general model for considering how to approach the challenges of training GWC consultants⁷ and supporting graduate writers with various levels of expertise across disciplines.

⁷ For more on the challenges of designing a writing center training specifically for graduate students, see LeCluyse and Mendelsohn’s “Training as Invention: *Topoi* for Graduate Writing Consultants,” which describes a rhetorical approach to training graduate students to work in a UWC.

Conclusion: A Safe Space for Graduate Writers

In UCLA's GWC, consultants build their toolkit through their initial training and collect additional tools during required professional development and as they gain experience as consultants. All of these tools are shaped both by and for their GWC's particular context. Because their institutional position and funding necessitates a focus on writing in the disciplines, the toolkit must be able to help consultants adapt to a variety of genres, disciplinary conventions, and students' writing backgrounds. Consultants adapt discussion- and text-based tools from "default" undergraduate writing center practices, but they also develop new (and sometimes contradictory) practices, like "blaming" the writer or hiding their own expertise to account for the complex relationships between expertise and insecurity at the heart of graduate writing.

One the implications of this toolkit is the ability to create a "safe space" for graduate writers and consultants to gain expertise in rhetorical and genre-specific writing strategies. The idea of the GWC as a safe space surfaced throughout my interviews and observations at UCLA. From Wilson at the administrative level to new consultants who desire a safe space to practice and learn new writing skills, a range of participants in the study referred to the GWC as a "safe space" or used associated metaphors, such as the GWC as "safety net" or "life preserver." As others (Clark "Entering;" Prior; Russell) have suggested, graduate students' anxiety and insecurity often arises from difficulty with writing tasks and uncertainty about generic and disciplinary conventions. To ask questions about these challenges within one's discipline can seem intimidating. Thus, the GWC positions itself as a place where graduate writers can ask questions, gain writing

experience, and collaborate with fellow graduate students. They need not feel like imposters because they are working with peers who face the same challenges.

Stepping into a writing center and being “blamed” for unclear prose might not seem safe upon first thought, but GWCs can at least provide safer—if not entirely safe—places for writers to hone their expertise. Hearing from a peer that an argument is unclear, for example, is much lower stakes than hearing it from an advisor or a fellowship selection committee. GWCs, then, are situated between the isolation of the novice graduate writer and full participation as an expert in a professional discourse community. They can act as a stepping stone between the novice and expert where writers receive feedback and rehearse their participation before fully positioning themselves as experts in their field. In this sense, the GWC does provide a safety net for students who need feedback as they develop their disciplinary identities.

Future research might also consider the role of GWCs as safe places to challenge the status quo of academic writing genres. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway explain in “Locating Genre Studies: Antecedents and Prospects,” that, for all of its emphasis on social construction, social action, and dynamism, rhetorical genre studies is rarely critical of the status quo and tends to the descriptive rather than the transformative” (11). Genre studies, then, can sometimes reify academic writing genres and styles. For example, in *Engaged Writers, Dynamic Disciplines: Research on the Academic Writing Life*, Chris Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki argue that traditional academic writing is characterized by “disciplines and persistent inquiry, control of sensation and emotion, and an imagined reader who is likewise rational and informed” (8). This perception, they argue, limits the

ability to privilege non-Western forms of rationality or alternative voices in academic writing.

As a space where burgeoning scholars learn to critically analyze genres, their actions, and their ideologies, GWCs could become sites where these scholars also consider ways to adapt or subvert these genres. As Devitt argues, one of the advantages to taking a critical genre awareness approach is that writers can then “move to considering alternative ways of serving [their] purposes. Considering alternatives helps make visible both the choices possible within a genre and the ideology behind the expected forms” (199). GWCs might become safe spaces not only to master traditional genres, but also to envision “alternative discourses,” which include personal writing, advocacy, methods outside one’s discipline, or new media composing (Thaiss and Zawacki 12). These alternatives embody new ideologies and values and might make space for valuing new academic voices—the voices of the non-Western scholar, the activist, or the digital humanist. For example, explaining research to a consultant from another discipline might inspire a writer to consider how to revise a project to reach a popular audience or create opportunities for community education. As extra-disciplinary, extra-curricular spaces, GWCs could become safe places to experiment with what it means to be an academic writer in a way that prepares graduate writers to both reproduce and challenge the status quo. The next two chapters take up this theme of working within and challenging the status quo, not in terms of genre, but in terms of digital technologies and alternative academic voices.

PROGRAM NOTES

Services

Despite being physically small centers, the GWCs represented in my survey offer an impressive number of appointments. Snively, Freeman, and Prentice noted that all of their centers provided one-to-one face-to-face consultations as did 100% of the respondents to my survey, by far the most commonly offered service. When respondents provided data about the appointments they offer and fill, I did not ask them to differentiate between face-to-face and online appointments. Additionally, not all survey respondents provided data on the number of appointments they offer. For example, one respondent indicated that appointments are initiated by student contact, so the number of appointments offered varies widely to meet demand. However, the eighteen respondents who did provide data on appointment numbers indicate that those GWCs offer an average of forty-six appointments a week. Perhaps more significantly, fourteen of the eighteen who responded to that question also indicated that they routinely fill over 75% of their appointments with six respondents filling 100% of their weekly appointments. All but one of the sixteen respondents indicated filling at least two-thirds of their appointments. The GWC that reported filling only one-third of its sixty available appointments had been open less than three months at the time of the survey.

Year-end reports from two GWCs support the finding that GWCs consistently experience high demand. During the fall 2010 semester, the two full-time and one part-time graduate student consultants at Penn State's GWC completed 368 appointments with 137 graduate student clients. Despite this large number of consultations, nearly 200 students indicated on the GWC's website that they could not find an open appointment

(Belk). It is tempting to think that these high numbers may reflect the reputation and client base that Penn State's GWC has developed since opening in 1999. However, the Graduate Writing Studio at California State University, Fresno experiences similarly high demand despite only being open since the fall of 2010. In the spring of 2011, they booked 348 appointments and consistently had a waitlist for the twenty-seven appointments they offered each week. By the spring of 2012, the Graduate Writing Studio offered forty-two appointments and reported filling 100% of them.

Taken together, this data suggest that GWCs are fulfilling an otherwise unmet need at their institutions. The ability for GWCs to consistently fill available appointments—and in the case of CSU Fresno increase their available appointments by half and still fill them—indicates both demand for and satisfaction with their services.

In addition to face-to-face appointments, the GWCs represented in my survey most frequently reported offering handouts (85%) and online resources (85%), writing workshops focused on academic writing (75%), presentations to graduate-level courses (55%), and writing workshops focused on dissertation writing (55%). These more public services represent attempts by GWCs to position themselves as visible campus resources for graduate writers and meet the needs of those writers who might want an introduction to graduate writing genres or might shy away from one-to-one conversations about writing. Snively, Freeman, and Prentice also suggest that facilitating writing groups is both a good use of consultant time and helpful to graduate students who can “benefit greatly from the mutual feedback and camaraderie such groups provide” (160). These groups may also benefit writers who find one-to-one meetings intimidating. However,

only six respondents indicated that they run writing groups, making it one of the least frequently offered services.

Given space and budget constraints as well as the fact that many graduate students complete their research away from campus, I expected to find that most GWCs also provided one-to-one synchronous online tutoring or email tutoring. While approximately half of the centers offer these services, only 40% of respondents use web-based communication software (i.e., Skype or Google Chat) in their centers, and even fewer use distance tutoring software (15%) or video conferencing (10%). Taking advantage of digital technology to reach a larger client base while keeping costs low may be a way for many GWCs to expand their services, an idea that I will explore in depth in the following chapter, a case study of Penn State's GWC.

CHAPTER THREE

Consultations Across Distances: Electronic Adaptation and Innovation in Penn State's GWC

Prior to the opening of the Penn State GWC in the spring semester of 1999, Director Jon Olson sent a memo to various university stakeholders detailing the need for the center and requesting resources. Among these resources, Olson specifies the desired processing speed, RAM, and CD-ROM speed of the requested laptop computer. To justify these requests, Olson notes that “These levels of speed, power, and memory will enable writer and consultant to discuss on-screen writing efficiently and to find Web or CD-ROM research sources quickly” (Olson 4). While, over a decade later, it may seem amusing to consider waiting for a CD-ROM to load during a writing center appointment, the level of detail in these technology requests suggests the realization by Olson and the GWC’s graduate student coordinator that technology would play a central role in the new center.

In fact, the \$2,564 proposed technology budget supported two key objectives for the nascent GWC. Olson lists “Use computer technology from the start so that writers can discuss writing on disk” as an “immediate” goal of the GWC (2). In the following section of the memo, “Long-term” goals, Olson includes “Develop capabilities for online consultations in order to reach place-bound writers such as graduate students on other Penn State campuses” (2). The GWC annual reports produced by graduate student coordinators between 1999 and 2012 demonstrate both the commitment to and challenges of fulfilling this long-term goal of offering consultations to distance writers. From the shifts from Zip drives to Dropbox and asynchronous email consultations to synchronous video chatting, these reports allude, of course, to rapid changes in technology. But the

reports, in conjunction with the perspectives of current consultants, clients and administrators, also suggest the challenges of adapting not just to changing technologies but changing institutional goals for online consultations.

Examining the role of technology in Penn State's GWC, and specifically the development of their distance consultation practices, reveals the potential for GWCs to be sites of innovation. According to their 2009 study of 266 institutions, Stephen Neaderhiser and Joanna Wolfe found that over 90% of online writing center consultations take place asynchronously via email and fewer than 0.2% of consultations use "media-rich, synchronous technologies," such as real-time screen sharing (61). Beginning in 2009, Penn State's GWC has developed synchronous online consulting practices that rely on a combination of Google's document-sharing capabilities and Skype video conferencing. Thus, their GWC represents an innovative edge of the field because of this experimentation with new and unconventional technologies to explore and potentially enhance distance consultation experiences.

Both GWCs and distance consulting—sometimes called online writing instruction or OWI—can be rich contexts for exploration and innovation. Together, they provide both an appropriate and a challenging pairing for analyzing the innovation of consultation practices. As OWI expert Beth Hewett argues in her 2010 book *The Online Writing Conference: A Guide for Teachers and Tutors*, "Professional development opportunities for OWI are irregular; currently, there is no set of standards or best practices upon which to call" (xv). As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, GWCs face a similar lack of standardization and accepted best practices. So, while consultants in both online writing conferences and GWCs can call upon the pedagogical and administrative practices

developed in UWCs and other sites of one-to-one teaching, they must also experiment to develop ad hoc strategies and administrative structures for dealing with the unique needs of their clients. However, as this case study shows, fitting these ad hoc strategies and structures into institutional contexts that will sustain them can be challenging.

This chapter analyzes the relationships between writing center pedagogies, online consultation strategies, and institutional contexts in Penn State's GWC. To best account for the shifting nature of both technology and institutional demands, I examine both the center's history and its present. In addition to analyzing an archive of founding documents and annual reports, this chapter includes data from my fall 2012 observations of face-to-face and online consultations at Penn State's GWC as well as my interviews with consultants and administrators. Over the course of three weeks in October and November of 2012, I observed two face-to-face consultations and two online consultations. I also conducted interviews with all three of the current graduate-student consultants; Jon Olson, the director of the GWC; and Richard Brungard, the Penn State World Campus administrator who acts as a liaison between World Campus and the GWC. Table 3.1 provides additional information about the participants included in this chapter. My own experiences as a Penn State GWC consultant and coordinator during the 2010-2011 academic year also influence and enrich both my perspective as a researcher and my approach to the data.⁸

⁸ My interpretations of data are colored by my experiences conducting face-to-face and online consultations in Penn State's GWC. After being part of the team that worked to standardized Skype and Google Doc consultations, I believe in their efficacy. However, I listened to and observed consultants with an open mind and am now—as a researcher and a writing center practitioner—better aware of the benefits and weaknesses of this combination of technologies in Penn State's context.

Table 3.1
Penn State Case Study Participants

Name	Role
Jon Olson	GWC Director
Richard Brungard	Penn State World Camps administrator
Susan	GWC Consultant English Ph.D. Student
Jonah	GWC Consultant English Ph.D. Student
Kim	GWC Online Consultant Former MFA Student
Xiao	GWC Client Counselor Education Ph.D. Student
Mike	GWC Client World Campus, Public Administration M.A. Student

To provide an understanding of the pedagogical and institutional goals for distance consultations at Penn State's GWC, I first provide a brief overview of the GWC's day-to-day operations. Then, I review the larger scholarly concerns about online writing centers, digital pedagogies, and the role of institutional contexts in the sustainability of online writing programs. The remainder of the chapter describes the current distance consultation practices at Penn State within the larger administrative, pedagogical, and institutional goals of the center. I first examine the stable pedagogical goals that unite consultations, even across experimental platforms. Then, I describe the innovative strategies an online consultant uses to meet these pedagogical goals. Finally, I examine how technological and institutional miscommunication can limit the success of the distance consultations.

Ultimately, I argue that Penn State's GWC's approach to distance consultations is shaped by institutional contexts that both enhance and constrain the ability to integrate conventional and innovative practices into everyday operations. This case study reveals

that Penn State's consultants are able to revise face-to-face practices, like modeling and encouraging drafting, to maintain their pedagogical goals while adapting to the affordances and limitations of digital technologies. As the consultants suggest, however, fully integrating digital tutoring into their current GWC model may take additional innovation on the part of consultants and administrators.

About Penn State's GWC

As early as 1996, Penn State's English department collaborated with the Graduate School and other departments to offer writing and research support for graduate students through a Graduate Communication Enhancement Program, which included courses in the English and Communications departments, workshops, and tutorials. While the program itself only lasted a few years, it created an opportunity for the GWC to open in January of 1999. The GWC retained the Enhancement Program's tradition of offering workshops, and currently offers four three-hour workshops each semester on topics like "Overcoming Writer's Block," "Writing Literature Reviews," and "The Rhetoric of Academic Writing." The GWC's primary service, however, is offering free, fifty-minute, one-to-one peer consultations to graduate students across all disciplines.

Students, who are limited to one appointment per week, schedule appointments through an online system that allows them to select from the approximately thirty on-campus appointments offered each week. During the 2012 school year, the GWC added a separate online scheduling system for the approximately fifteen distance consultation appointments available each week. When students schedule an appointment, they also fill out a brief survey about their field, degree status, and English language experience.

Following face-to-face appointments, students also fill out post-survey evaluations, which ask students to respond to statements on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Statements include “My consultant was friendly and courteous” and “My consultant helped me to see how I could improve my writing project, rather than just ‘fixing’ it herself/himself.” As this statement indicates, the GWC favors a non-directive, process-based approach to peer tutoring in which the consultant treats the writing and writer holistically and offers writing strategies as opposed to editing or proofreading a document.

The GWC is located in a large, repurposed closet in Penn State’s Kern Building, which also houses the Graduate School, the primary funding source for the GWC. The building is a hub for student activity—particularly for graduate students—because of its central location across from the main library and the café at the center of the building (fig. 3.1). The center itself is decorated with plants, posters, and framed photographs of international locations and contains a bookshelf, a table with a printer, and a large table and desk. The table has a dual-monitor computer and two office chairs and is the primary location for face-to-face consultations (fig. 3.2). The desk has a computer and is primarily used for administrative duties. Both computers, however, have webcams and are used for distance consultations.

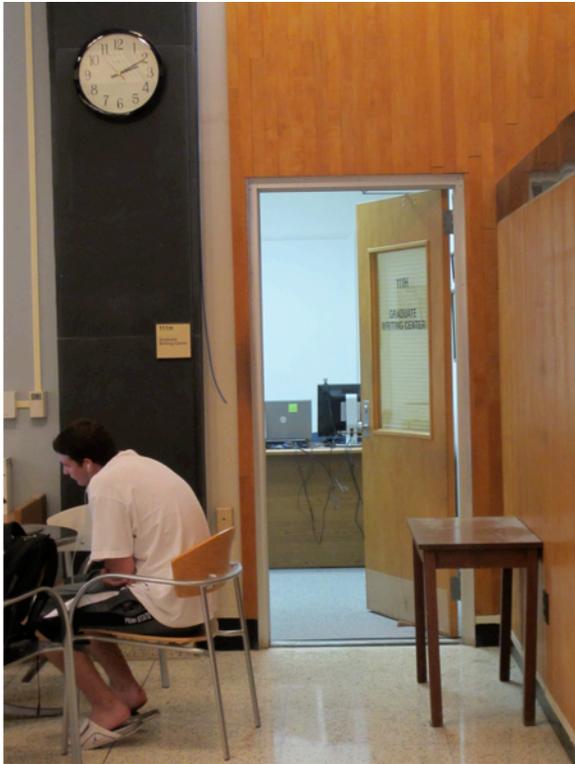


Fig. 3.1. The entrance to the Penn State Graduate Writing Center, which is located in the centrally located Kern Building, which also houses the Graduate School and a popular café.



Fig. 3.2. The Penn State GWC. Face-to-face consultations are conducted at the corner table. Both the computer on the table and the computer on the desk are outfitted with webcams for distance consultations.

Graduate consultants' administrative duties are a particularly important part of Olson's vision as the GWC's director. When he arrived at Penn State in 1997, he noticed a dearth of writing program administration opportunities for graduate students: "I came with a desire to help our rhetoric and composition grad[uate] students get meaningful experience in writing program administration. I see writing centers as a type of a writing program." So, in addition to providing peer writing support for graduate students in all disciplines, another part of the GWC's mission is to provide administrative experience to

English department graduate students.⁹ To achieve this goal, the center is staffed by two graduate students, a Coordinator and an Assistant Coordinator, who serve as both the consultants and the administrators of the GWC for one academic year. These coordinator/consultants receive their usual graduate student stipend as compensation for their work. In the original job descriptions for these positions, administrative duties include planning and conducting workshops, maintaining records, writing annual reports, completing professional development, and selecting and training new tutors.¹⁰ Olson acts as a mentor to these students as they fulfill their roles.

During the fall semester of 2011, Penn State's GWC grew for the first time since 2005 and hired a third full-time consultant. This consultant, whose graduate assistantship is paid for by Penn State World Campus, was hired to help the center develop and grow online distance consultations. During my interviews and observations at Penn State's GWC, the coordinators explained the challenges of integrating a third consultant and a new method of consulting into their existing structure, which was further complicated by adding World Campus as a formal stakeholder in the center's operations. I return to these pedagogical and administrative challenges and the way that both graduate students and administrators have approached them later in the chapter. First, I situate these local concerns within the larger scholarly conversation about tutoring and teaching in online environments. I have punctuated this literature review with vignettes that explore the

⁹ To read more about graduate students as writing program administrators, see my discussion of the IWCA Position Statement on Graduate Student Writing Center Administration in Program Note: Staff & Administration.

¹⁰ GWC training at Penn State is informal and typically consists of a meeting between outgoing and incoming consultants. Because both groups of consultants have the opportunity to work in the GWC over the summer, there are also opportunities for new consultants to observe experienced consultants and learn on the job during the slower summer months. Additionally prior to becoming a GWC consultant, students must have tutored in the undergraduate writing center, Penn State Learning, at Penn State.

history of Penn State's GWC and focus on the changing role of technology and institutional contexts in their online consultations. These vignettes rely on annual reports from the GWC as well as a compilation of the reports from 1999-2006, "A Brief History of the Graduate Writing Center at The Pennsylvania State University, University Park."

Global and Local Approaches to Tutoring with Technology

In the following literature review, I draw from scholarship in writing center studies, rhetoric and technology, and writing program administration to articulate three goals that circulate in the literature about the integration of writing instruction and digital technologies: supporting pedagogical goals, balancing pedagogical goals with a critical awareness of the affordances and limitations of new technologies, and sustaining digital writing initiatives. These conversations extend beyond the boundaries of the writing center to classrooms, writing programs, and digital spaces, but they all speak to the questions raised by integrating online resources into a traditionally face-to-face writing center. Situating the history of Penn State's GWC within this scholarship allows me to further illuminate both the larger concerns of the field of rhetoric and composition related to online writing and the local ways that one writing center both exemplifies and addresses those concerns. As digital rhetorician Michael Day argues in "The Administrator as Technorhetorician: Sustainable Technological Ecologies in Writing Programs," writing program decision makers interested in integrating writing, rhetoric, and technology "must be able to listen to and act upon theoretical and anecdotal knowledge at both local and global levels" (130). In this hybrid section, I attempt to

juxtapose both global and local knowledge in a way that provides a richer and more detailed picture of emerging pedagogies and technologies than either could alone.

Penn State provides a valuable local context for these global concerns in part because the GWC has had a consistent commitment to reaching out to what Olson calls “place-bound writers” in his 1998 memo. Hewett argues that “online tutoring often is likened to an occasionally necessary but substandard method for reaching students who cannot get to the brick-and-mortar writing center” (xvi). However, for Penn State, developing online consultations as one of only two long-term goals suggests the realization that online consultations could be an integral—and even equal—part of the GWC’s mission. Even before the surge in online degree options that has characterized the last few years in higher education, graduate students sometimes needed to work from a distance—commuting from nearby towns, tending to family obligations, or traveling to perform research, fieldwork, or, in the case of fields like Engineering and Applied Mathematics, internships. Penn State University’s system of Commonwealth campuses (often called “branch campuses” in GWC documents) and their degree-granting online campus, World Campus, also creates potential needs for distance consultations. These students can receive Penn State graduate degrees by attending courses outside Penn State’s main campus, where the GWC is located. Thus, the Penn State GWC, from the beginning, foresaw these needs and wanted to develop the technological infrastructure to support them.

Moving Writing Center Pedagogy Online: Anxiety and Experimentation

Since the advent of online writing labs (OWLs) in the early 1990s, scholars have worried about the ability for online interactions—particularly asynchronous

interactions—to replicate the benefits of a face-to-face learning experience (Palmquist 403-404). In “Preserving the Rhetorical Nature of Tutoring When Going Online,” writing center scholar Linda Eastmond Bell sums up many of these concerns, arguing that “online mediums often omit a writer’s presence or at least alter the connections between author, audience, and text, minimizing the importance of the writer’s learning process” (329). She worries that without these connections, online tutors are too tempted to become editors, focusing on the writing rather than the writer (329-330). Bell, like many writing center scholars (Castner, Carino, Pemberton) fear that something is lost when a tutorial moves online. This fear contributes to the view that online conferences are “necessary but substandard” (Hewett xvi), a view that relegates online tutoring to a mere supplement to the real work of the writing center.

As online composing and distance learning become increasingly common parts of the educational experience, however, writing centers cannot view online tutorials as mere supplements. Instead, they must take a proactive and innovative approach to integrating technologies into their services and to investigating their advantages and constraints. Even Bell recognizes that the ever-changing technological landscape holds possibilities for online conferences, and argues that “it is through experimentation that writing centers will discover the previously unknown pathways for transmitting their services online” (333). This spirit of experimentation becomes an important theme in scholarship about online tutoring and teaching. For example, in “Sustaining Community and Technological Ecologies: What Writing Centers Can Teach Us,” writing center directors Jeanne Smith and Jay Sloan argue that because writing centers value collaboration and social networks, they are good places to experiment with technologies. That is, rather than seeing

technological values and collaborative values at odds, Smith and Sloan suggest that the collaborative spirit of writing centers makes them places where writers and tutors can work together to teach and learn about the possibilities of new technologies.

Penn State Distance Consultations 1999-2004

Perhaps eager to launch a distance consulting program in order to meet the GWC's stated goals and use the computer and printer provided by the Graduate School during the 1999-2000 school year, the 2000-2001 graduate-student coordinator of the GWC developed a relationship with a faculty member in Counselor Education at a commonwealth campus. Together, they developed an asynchronous email consultation program and synchronous telephone consultation program to "meet the needs of Masters students" in a graduate program in chemical dependency at three Penn State Commonwealth campuses ("Brief History" 5). As a result, there were "77 email and telephone appointments held with place-bound writers" during the 2000 fall semester ("Brief History" 5). These appointments represent over one-third of the GWC's total appointments that fall, which indicates that this institutional relationship provided a promising way to consistently serve distance writers while allowing consultants to experiment with email consultations and develop the administrative and pedagogical practices that might allow the GWC to extend its distance offerings to other academic programs in the future.

While it is impossible to reconstruct pedagogical approaches from these documents, which predominately report administrative practices and data, Penn State's GWC was part of a growing number of writing centers—mostly undergraduate—experimenting with email consultations during this time period. For example, as the title of David Coogan's 1995 article, "E-mail Tutoring, a New Way to Do Work," suggests,

email tutoring was, in fact, considered new in the mid- to late-1990s. A significant and still-familiar collection of essays on online writing center tutorials, *Taking Flight with OWLs: Examining Electronic Writing Center Work*, was published in 2000. The dates of these publications indicate the swelling interest in delivering electronic consultations—a conversation in which Penn State’s GWC consultants participated. During the 2002-2003 academic year, for example, the graduate student coordinator “presented some research on distance education (in particular the benefits and problems of online teaching, with reference to online tutoring) at the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication Conference” (“Brief History” 8). While they did not record their strategies for online consultations, this conference presentation indicates an interest in and attention to the pedagogical approaches to these early online consultations in the GWC and the awareness of some of the challenges, or “problems,” outlined in writing center scholarship at the time.

Balancing Pedagogical Goals and New Technologies

While championing the potential for writing centers and other online instructional programs to be sites of technological experimentation, scholars also argue that tutors and instructors must keep their pedagogical goals clear. This attitude, which places pedagogy first, is a way of ensuring that innovation does not erode the principles that guide best practices in teaching and tutoring. As Smith and Sloan argue, “We should never accommodate our writing centers—or our most valued best practices—to any particular tool for the sake of the tool itself” (263). Smith and Sloan’s emphasis on preserving best practices is echoed more broadly in composition research. For example, in “The Hybrid

Academy: Building and Sustaining a Technological Culture of Use,” Beth Brunk-Chavez and Shawn Miller describe their role in the development of hybrid composition courses, which take place both in physical classrooms and online. They argue for the importance of developing pedagogy first and then integrating technology into those existing pedagogical goals. This privileging of pedagogy addresses some of the concerns about what might be “missing” in online tutorials by trying to replicate pedagogical goals and practices as closely as possible.

The risk in taking this view too far and trying to replicate pedagogical strategies regardless of platform, however, is that the technology becomes an invisible entity in the background of a tutorial. A strictly pedagogy-first attitude would assume that technologies are neutral and that any practices and pedagogies can be simply mapped onto any technologies. As Langdon Winner reminds us in *The Whale and the Reactor*, however, technologies have politics, in that they embody specific forms of power and authority. That is, “technologies are not merely aids to human activity, but also powerful forces acting to reshape that activity and its meaning” (6). In terms of writing center consultations, then, technologies do not just aid tutorials—they change them. Digital composition scholar Amber Buck’s “The Invisible Interface: MS Word in the Writing Center” provides excellent examples of the ways that Microsoft Word is not a neutral technology but instead changes the ways that tutors and writers experience texts through features like grammar check and a scrolling interface. In other words, her study demonstrates the ways that tutoring a paper on paper is not simply replicated when tutoring a paper on a computer screen, thus reinforcing the need to do more than simply replicate pedagogical strategies.

Recognizing that technology changes tutorials does not necessarily return us to the fear that technology creates a void or diminishes the tutorial. Instead, it asks us to consider how to make technology visible and how to extend experimentation from platforms to pedagogies. One of the ways that writing center scholarship has taken up this challenge is in research on training tutors to work online. In their article “Developing Sound Tutor Training for Online Writing Centers: Creating Productive Peer Reviewers,” Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch and Sam Racine argue that writing center tutors trained to conduct face-to-face tutorials are not prepared for online environments. Instead, they argue that “online tutors need training specific to online writing spaces” that will help them develop new pedagogical strategies to account for the differences in medium (246). They suggest, for example, developing new procedures for online commenting and developing a “dialogue” with writers (253). As their suggestions for training show, writing centers can maintain their commitment to process-based pedagogies and collaborative learning in online environments, but they must be willing to experiment with new pedagogical and administrative practices to make the benefits and limitations of online tutoring more visible.

Penn State Distance Consultations 2005-2009

In 2005, the GWC received money to hire a second graduate-student consultant/assistant coordinator, and during the 2005-2006 academic year, the two coordinators reached out to Penn State’s World Campus and developed an institutional relationship that continues to play a large role in their approach to distance consultations. As part of a technological expansion that included a “computer upgrade” and an online scheduling system, the coordinators “made special arrangements to use the office

telephone and computer to conduct ‘long-distance’ client sessions with World Campus students” (“Brief History 11”). During the first semester of that partnership, the GWC conducted sixteen distance appointments with World Campus students and another eight appointments with University Park students who were “out of town or unable to come to Kern Building” (“Brief History” 11). Over the next few years, the GWC offered small numbers of distance consultations, gradually moving away from telephone consultations to focus solely on asynchronous email exchanges.

By 2009, however, the GWC became more critical of the limitations of asynchronous technology and the inability to put their process-based pedagogy first when consulting via email. The Fall 2009 report’s recommendations include improving the pedagogical quality of the distance consultations the GWC is able to offer. Toward the end of the semester, the Graduate School provided the center with a webcam, and consultants experimented with synchronous video consultations over Skype for the first time. During these consultations, clients emailed their documents to the consultant, and then they discussed the writing on video. The report recommends that future consultants continue to develop this practice and consider “using online tools to better facilitate distance tutoring: using Google Documents in conjunction with our current use of Skype might allow for a richer, more detailed session” (Weiss 8). This recommendation suggests that—even when serving a relatively small number of students—the consultants were considering what strategies would best match the pedagogical goals they had for distance consultations. Experimenting with new technologies was one way to move toward meeting those pedagogical goals.

Sustaining Digital Writing Initiatives

The most recent scholarship on teaching and tutoring with technology has extended the conversation beyond the classroom or the tutorial itself to consider the contexts that surround these pedagogical environments. As rhetorician Stuart Selber argues in his introduction to *Rhetorics and Technologies: New Directions in Writing and Communication*, “technological contexts are, in a very real sense, overdetermined: multiple forces and factors shape the directions and priorities of technological projects. In other words, there is no one-to-one correspondence between technology and change, innovation, or social transformation” (4). Thus, technological adaptations in distance tutoring are more complex than simply what happens during a tutorial. In their article “Infrastructure and Composing: The *When* of New-Media Writing,” which focuses on necessary infrastructures for composing new media projects, Dánielle Nicole DeVoss, Ellen Cushman, and Jeffrey Grabill cast this complexity as a question of “when” as opposed to “what.” For example, they call attention to the moments when the tasks of composing—or in the case of writing centers, the tasks of online tutoring—are not compatible with “existing standards, practices, and values” (35). In these moments, they argue, “infrastructure breaks down, revealing the need to meet the demands of new meaning-making practices” (35). In other words, the technological innovations developed in classrooms or in writing centers are not isolated from university infrastructural factors, such as the availability of technical support, expectations of educational outcomes, and the availability and cost of equipment.

Scholars have recently turned to the metaphor of sustainability to explore how to best account for the complex relationships between digital initiatives and their

institutional contexts. In their introduction to the edited collection *Technological Ecologies and Sustainability*, Dickie Selfe, DeVoss, and Heidi McKee explain that thinking about technological initiatives and their institutions as ecological systems helps to address questions not only of how to sustain these initiatives within their institutional environments, but “how to create computer-supported teaching and learning environments that are directly and visibly informed by humanistic values and, thus, are *worth sustaining*” (2, emphasis in original). This deployment of the sustainability metaphor suggests that all the factors touched on by this literature review—pedagogical goals, visible technology, and institutional infrastructure—must align to make online tutoring initiatives both successful and ongoing.

Penn State Distance Consultations and the Problem of Sustainability

Despite their commitment to offering distance consultations while creating pedagogically sound conditions for doing so, Penn State’s GWC has struggled to sustain these consultations. The initial 2000 relationship with Counselor Education ended abruptly in the spring of 2001 when the program was discontinued. Data for the following years—while they only sometimes include numbers of distance consultations—show a marked decline in email and telephone consultations: eleven during the 2002-2003 academic year, and three during the 2004-2005 academic year. So, while the GWC was able to continue to provide some distance consultations, they represented a small percentage of their overall services.

The 2005 relationship the GWC forged with World Campus seemed promising, however, data for distance consultations are inconsistent from 2005 to 2009 and reflect two challenges to creating a sustainable distance consultation program faced by Penn

State's GWC: frequent coordinator turnover and high on-campus student demand.

Because Penn State's GWC relies on graduate students as coordinators who run the day-to-day operations of the center, the activities of the center often reflect the interests and priorities of consultants. These graduate students usually stay in the GWC for one academic year (two semesters and the summer) and then move on to fulfill other degree requirements and teaching responsibilities. As coordinators with experience in rhetoric and composition bring their own scholarly and pedagogical interests to the GWC, the original long-term goal of providing distance consultations may be replaced by new goals or more pressing needs, like developing the free graduate writing workshops that began during the 2005-2006 academic year or serving the increasing numbers of international-student clients. The goals of one coordinator are not necessarily taken up by the next. Thus, a robust distance consultation program requires a coordinator interested in developing and growing the program in a way that future coordinators are willing and able to sustain.

By 2009, the GWC faced another challenge that affected the ability to offer distance consultations: demand from on-campus students exceeded the available number of appointments each week. During the spring of 2009, with the help of a technology consultant, the GWC added a button to the online scheduling system that allowed potential clients to indicate when they could not find an appointment because all available time slots were filled. According to the Fall 2009 report, "the GWC lost at least eighty-four potential clients to a booked schedule" (Weiss 5). During that semester, the GWC held only twelve email consultations with five World Campus clients. These clients scheduled through the online system, just like on-campus clients. The low

number, the report suggests, indicates that not enough World Campus students know of the GWC's services (Weiss 7). Yet, the report makes no mention of trying to increase this number and recommends, in fact, not adding any additional publicity or outreach because the center is already unable to meet demand. The World Campus also declined to offer publicity for the services in 2010, due to the already high demand for GWC appointments: "World Campus decided that they 'did not want to promote a service that students may not be able to use because appointment times were filled'" (Belk 7). Limited to two consultants who each offer between fourteen and sixteen fifty-minute appointments each week, the GWC could not expand its current distance offerings without changing its operating structure. As these examples illustrate, there is a complex relationship between a desire for pedagogical and programmatic innovation that meets students' needs and the institutional contexts that can sustain or limit that innovation.

Taken together, these global scholarly concerns and local vignettes highlight the intersections between pedagogical goals, institutional contexts, and the affordances and limitations of technologies. In "The Local as a Means Rather than an End: Writing Centers and Institutional Relationships," Nicholas Mariello, William Macauley, Jr. and Robert Koch, Jr. distill this complex issue into two deceptively simple questions: "What are writing centers responsible for? And who are they responsible to?" (1). As the authors acknowledge, "These are seemingly simple questions but questions whose answers vary from institution to institution, highlighting the local nature of the center itself" (1). The descriptions and analyses in the following sections show how Penn State's GWC answers these questions in the context of distance tutoring. Ultimately, this case study reveals the

GWC's search for what both administrators and tutors at Penn State repeatedly call "integration," their local term for this larger concern of sustainability. As the following sections highlight, participants express their desire to integrate pedagogy, innovation, administration, and institutional expectations to create an engaging and stable platform for tutoring across distances.

Pedagogy First: Graduate Student Ownership in Person and Online

When I began my observations at Penn State, the GWC was in its third year of using a combination of Skype and Google Docs¹¹ to conduct synchronous video and audio distance consultations. Experimentation with these platforms began when, at the end of the 2009-2010 school year, the Graduate School provided the center with a webcam, and consultants experimented with synchronous video consultations over Skype for the first time. During these consultations, clients emailed their documents to the consultant, and then they discussed the writing on video. The following year, consultants included Google Docs in these sessions to be able to share text synchronously as well. By the start of the 2011-2012 school year, the GWC had established a Skype/Google Docs routine for online consultations and had grown to include a third tutor, funded by World Campus, to primarily focus on these consultations. In this section, I discuss how Penn State's GWC consultants use digital technologies to accomplish their pedagogical goals. I first describe the logistics of scheduling and initiating a distance consultation with Skype and Google Docs, a topic relevant to those who also hope to experiment with these platforms in their centers. Then, I draw on interviews with consultants to describe and analyze the pedagogical goals that they have for the GWC across platforms. Finally, I

¹¹ Google Docs is now housed under the larger name Google Drive, which is a file-sharing platform available to Google users and often used with Gmail, Google's email client.

provide examples of the ways these pedagogical goals are enacted in distance consultations and the strategies the consultant uses to maintain the writer's ownership of both the writing and the consultation itself.

Scheduling and Initiating Distance Consultations

While many writing center directors and consultants are likely very familiar with Skype and Google Docs, part of the Google Apps suite, the ways to integrate these technologies into a writing center may be less familiar. In fact, the previously mentioned Neaderhiser and Wolfe finding that fewer than 0.2% of consultations use real-time technologies suggests that few centers are experimenting with ways to bring these already familiar technologies into their consultations. As writing center director Jackie Grutsch McKinney writes in her "Geek in the Center" column in *Writing Lab Newsletter*, "there is no arguing that AVT [audio-video-textual] tutorials will look more like face-to-face (f2f) tutorials. Many writing center professionals, for this reason, might prefer AVT over asynchronous tutoring, yet find themselves with one stubborn question: *How do we do that?*" (11).¹² In the brief description that follows, I attempt to answer how the Penn State GWC "does that" with Skype and Google Docs in order to provide a starting point for others wishing to experiment with these technologies and to provide context for understanding the consultations that I later analyze.

Prior to hiring a third consultant primarily dedicated to distance consultations, clients found out about Skype sessions through the GWC website and scheduled through the same online system as face-to-face clients. They would then email the consultant to

¹² This "Geek in the Center" column also provides an assessment of other AVT conferencing options, including Wimba, which works with the course management system Blackboard, and subscription services like Adobe Connect.

request a Skype session. During the 2012-2013 school year, however, the GWC developed a separate online scheduling system for distance consultations that clients can access through a link on both the GWC and the World Campus websites. When scheduling an appointment, clients are instructed to download Skype, which is free on the Skype website, and encouraged to create a Google Document of their text, which only requires copying and pasting an existing text into Google's word processing platform. The website also provides clients with the GWC's Skype username.

At the start of the fifty-minute session, the client logs on to Skype and "calls" the GWC by selecting the GWC's username and pushing a green phone icon. The consultant answers the call and begins the session, often by asking the client to share a Google Doc version of his or her text. During an appointment, the writer can see and hear the consultant via webcam.¹³ In most cases, the writer also has a webcam (most laptops are now equipped with one), which allows the consultant to see the writer as well. The appointment then proceeds much like a face-to-face consultation. The consultant and graduate student discuss the writing, often beginning by reading aloud, and when the writer makes changes to the paper in Google Docs, the consultant can see and respond to those changes in real time. At the end of the session, the client "hangs up" the call and has a saved version of the Google Doc to refer to while making revisions.

There are three potential benefits to using a combination of Skype and Google Docs to deliver online consultations. First, as the previous description indicates, it allows consultants to replicate face-to-face appointments when both parties have access to a

¹³ Typically, the GWC only schedules one appointment at a time and currently—as I will discuss in greater detail later in the chapter—the distance consultant does not hold consultations in the GWC office. Thus, there is no noise interference during Skype consultations. Centers with multiple appointments at once could use headphones or headsets with microphones to cut down on background noise.

webcam.¹⁴ Second, both Skype and Google Docs are free programs when both parties have a (free) Skype account. The Penn State GWC, like many writing centers, has a limited budget, so free software was an important requirement when considering how to deliver tutorials. Third, the programs are familiar to both the consultants and the graduate students. For example, many of Penn State's clients are international students who already use Skype to communicate with friends and family overseas. These last two benefits—free and familiar—make Skype and Google Docs what Daniel Anderson calls “low-bridge technologies,” or free applications that require only entry-level skills. Anderson argues that the “entry-level nature of low-bridge technologies ameliorates difficulties that can shut down flow, but the challenge of composing with unfamiliar forms opens pathways to creativity and motivation” (44). Thus, low-bridge technologies like Skype and Google Docs are productive for delivering online consultations because—when they work correctly—they do not disrupt the flow of the appointment and may also encourage consultant and writer creativity by facilitating conversation and collaboration in a digital environment, a benefit I discuss in depth later in the section “Similar Pedagogies, New Strategies.” Of course, the largest downside of these technologies is that they do not always work correctly, which can disrupt a consultation and confuse writers, as I demonstrate in the section “Can You Hear Me Now?”

Establishing Pedagogical Goals Across Platforms

Pedagogy is consistently at the heart of Penn State's GWC's discussions of distance consultants in annual reports and published materials. For example, after the first

¹⁴ Not everyone agrees that replicating the face-to-face nature of consultations is necessary or even desirable. For a synthesis of various critiques of video conferencing, including its potential to be distracting or convey class and status information about participants, see Wolfe and Griffin, p. 64.

year of Skype consultations, the 2009-2010 coordinator recommended in his annual report that future consultants continue to develop this practice and consider “using online tools to better facilitate distance tutoring: using Google Documents in conjunction with our current use of Skype might allow for a richer, more detailed session” (Weiss 8). This recommendation suggests that—even when serving a relatively small number of students—the consultants were considering what strategies would best match their pedagogical goals.

The current pedagogical goals of the GWC, as articulated by the director and coordinators, were remarkably consistent across the interviews: graduate writers and graduate consultants are knowledgeable peers. Kenneth Bruffee, in “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind,’” argues that collaborative learning, like the interactions we find in a writing center, “provides the kind of social context, the kind of community in which normal discourse occurs: a community of knowledgeable peers” (644). Penn State’s consultants all suggested that they strive to create this community by valuing the knowledge clients bring to appointments and letting the writers set the agenda for the session. All participants mentioned valuing the peer-to-peer relationship between consultant and writer, which they capitalize on to encourage writers to “take ownership” over their work and over the direction of the consultation.

Kim, Jonah, and Susan, the consultants I interviewed, all contrasted this authentic peer experience to the experience of tutoring in the undergraduate writing center as graduate students. As Kim explains, “Because they [undergraduate writers] are younger...they saw me in some ways as an authority figure rather than a peer. Even though I tried to be a peer...you know, I didn’t put the pen on the paper and all that kind

of stuff, it was more, ‘Okay, well, before we get to dealing with whether or not you use commas effectively, let’s talk about the purpose of using commas.’” Kim’s experience as a graduate student tutor in an undergraduate writing center is echoed in writing center scholarship. For example, Thomas Conroy and Neal Lerner’s “Graduate Students as Writing Tutors: Role Conflict and the Nature of Professionalization,” argues that when tutoring undergraduates, graduate students must mediate between the role of peer the writing center atmosphere asks them to assume and the role of professor conferred by their status. In other words, undergraduates are likely to see graduate students as authorities, rather than peers, because graduate students are advanced writers and often teachers. Similarly, in “‘Little Teachers,’ Big Students: Graduate Students as Tutors and the Future of Writing Center Theory,” although Connie Snyder Mick ultimately argues that graduate students can bring a peer stance to an undergraduate writing center, she recognizes that “graduate student tutors may actually perpetuate the distance between tutor and tutee that peer collaboration theory seeks to erase by embracing and emphasizing their burgeoning alignment with institutional authority” (37). Thus, both graduate and undergraduate students are aware of their potential inequalities in terms of expertise and institutional hierarchy.

This dynamic can work differently in a GWC, where tutors and tutees are more likely to find genuine peer relationships based in their shared experiences as graduate students. Kim explains that “with graduate students, I think I’m less willing to do it [dictate the direction of the session]. It’s my understanding and respect for the fact that these people [graduate students] are the experts on their own work.” Jonah echoes Kim’s stance, explaining that “You feel like this is their [graduate students’] session that they’ve

chosen to come to, as opposed to with the undergrad writing center where it feels a little like teaching to some extent.” As opposed to an undergraduate writing center, where students often perceive them as teachers, both Kim and Jonah see their GWC clients as peers who bring knowledge of their own subject matter and their own writing skills and challenges. Thus, they allow the graduate students to dictate the goals for each session. Graduate writers are often prepared to set the agenda for a session because they are so familiar with their own writing. As Susan describes, “I had a student come in at three, and she had this long literature review. She already marked which paragraph she wanted to go to first. A lot of the time, they’re really well prepared like that.”

However, sometimes privileging the ability for graduate students to be true peers and set an agenda for a session means rejecting other pedagogical values that are typically associated with writing centers. Kim, Jonah, and Susan all reported that many students come in asking for specific help with grammar and editing. Despite the Penn State GWC distinguishing itself from a proofreading center, as many writing centers do, because of their strong commitment to valuing the knowledge and self-determination of their fellow graduate students, the consultants are willing to do more work with grammar than they might in an undergraduate writing center. Jonah defends this approach, saying that he defers to the wishes of the writer: “I guess because I think it was their choice to come here and that they have a system of values that is different from my system of values and what I want out of this session or what I would want if I were coming here.” In other words, he honors what they value in their writing—whether that value is correctness or a traditional higher order concern. Whether working face-to-face or in digital environments, the consultants all agreed that their primary role was to act as a peer

by collaborating with the writer, valuing the writer's goals, and sharing expertise to solve problems.

Maintaining Pedagogical Goals Online

This willingness to attend to lower-order concerns at the request of the writer might seem especially alarming when translated to a digital medium, as a primary concern for those who are skeptical of online consultations is an increased focus on the text, as opposed to the writer. As Bell writes, “when time and space elements are altered online, defaulting to a text-focused tutorial is understandably common” (330). However, just because GWC consultants and clients are willing to focus on the text itself—and even its stylistic and mechanical features—they are not necessarily abandoning the rich interactions between peer writers that scholars use to characterize face-to-face sessions. In fact, Kim describes this dual need to defer to the client while still providing pedagogically sound writing support as a productive “tension” in GWCs.

Kim's Skype and Google Docs session with Mike, a World Campus Master's student in Public Administration, exemplifies her ability to let Mike's expertise about his own writing needs dictate the session while simultaneously accomplishing more than proofreading.¹⁵ I argue that this exchange shows that allowing the client to set an agenda and maintain an equal level of authority in the session encourages the client to further take control of his own writing. Further, I suggest that Mike enhances this control through his use of the annotation features in Google Docs.

¹⁵ Throughout the data, I coded any questions or statements that were open-ended and did not require a specific “correct” answer as “non-directive.” Alternatively, I coded as “directive” any questions or statements that suggested a single, specific answer to a question or correction to the text.

Because it was Mike's first time using the GWC, Kim begins by explaining her goal to let Mike take ownership over the session: "What we intend to do here is, we're very student-led because you're obviously the expert on your own work at the graduate school level. You can dictate to me what kind of help you want." Kim goes on to suggest that often people read their work aloud and then says, "I guess I'll start by asking you what you're here for or what kinds of things you particularly wanted to focus on today." Throughout her introduction to the consultation, Kim is clear that she is not a teacher who will tell Mike what is wrong with his writing but a peer who will listen to Mike's concerns and provide direction.

Mike reveals that he wants to work on stylistic features of the paper, a "briefing paper" on a specific policy, and mentions things like "sentence structure," "run-on sentences," "wordiness," and "making sure it makes sense" as his primary concerns. Kim suggests he read the first section aloud, and when he is finished asks, "Okay. What did you notice anywhere about your sentences or your structure here?" Rather than begin by pointing out problems, Kim uses a non-directive question and assumes that Mike can identify sentences that are causing the discomfort with his writing that led him to the GWC. Mike responds, "It seemed like the first paragraph...I don't know if I'm being too repetitive or not...if there's a way to consolidate some of those into a way that I'm not seen as repetitive." Kim agrees that the paragraph sounds repetitive and suggests that it's because of Mike's reliance on similar sentence structures. She then verbally models a way to combine sentences while Rob uses the comment feature in Google Doc to make a note to "combine last two sentences." The next few sections proceed in a similar way. Mike reads aloud, and then Kim asks a non-directive question, which allows Mike to

identify for himself what bothers him. She then builds on Mike's answer to her question by providing more directive suggestions to improve or correct the problems that Mike identifies, often helping him choose between two alternative ways of wording or punctuating a sentence. Thus, Kim moves between non-directive and directive strategies while privileging the writing issues that Mike identifies as important to address.

Later in the session, however, Mike becomes more comfortable with this pattern and a greater level of peer collaboration emerges. As the following exchange demonstrates, Kim is no longer the sole expert on how to improve Mike's writing.

Mike: [After reading a paragraph.] Let me see..."a process cannot be done online." Let me read this again.

Kim: Okay.

Mike: "Printing a form and mailing it." I think I can just get rid of that.

Kim: I think you definitely could, yes. A lot of it is redundant unless...yes, I think that you could get rid of it actually. You're right.

Mike: Yes, I think so too. Okay, good.

In this exchange, not only does Mike take ownership over the pace of the session ("Let me read this again."), he also provides his own solution that he and Kim then agree is the best course of action. The remainder of the session moves between their previous pattern of Kim offering suggestions and this new pattern of Mike self-editing by adding words, changing sentence structures, and suggesting new phrases to enhance clarity.

Kim and Mike achieve a collaboration in which each of them contributes knowledge and ideas to improve both the briefing paper and Mike's ability to make observations and choices about his own writing. Their conversation never moved beyond

style and mechanics, and most of the changes Mike made were sentence-level changes. However, that does not mean the consultation was not successful. Mike's willingness to move from setting the agenda for the appointment—and Kim's encouragement that he continue to do so several times within the fifty-minute session—translated into a willingness to contribute to the appointment by making changes to his own writing and taking ownership of solving the problems he identified. Thus, in this consultation, Kim demonstrates the value of deferring to the writer's text-based goals, even in an online environment.

Similar Pedagogies, New Strategies

The previous section demonstrates the ability for a consultant to achieve the pedagogical goals of the GWC in a digital environment. In fact, the transcript itself does not read much differently than a transcript of a face-to-face consultation in the GWC might. However, in order to provide the “richer, more detailed” session that the coordinators imagined when they first suggested using Skype and Google Docs, consultants have to develop new strategies particular to digital environments. This section explores the ways that Kim, rather than allowing technology to become an invisible part of the session, makes the affordances and limitations of the technology visible through her consulting strategies. Specifically, I analyze how three practices look different in a digital environment: modeling, orienting reader and writer to the text, and drafting during the consultation.

Modeling

As I discussed in Chapter Two, modeling can play an important role in GWCs as a way to help graduate writers become more familiar with genres in their fields. In a face-to-face appointment, sharing a model with a client is as easy as pulling a book off a shelf or navigating to a website together. For example, Susan describes helping students search online to find past abstracts for conferences and looking up “CVs from economics professors at Penn State to get a sense of the genre” for a graduate student preparing for a job search during recent face-to-face appointments. During these appointments, both consultant and writer can look at the models together and discuss their features before applying them to the writer’s project.

However, this kind of modeling can be difficult in a Skype and Google Docs session, so modeling successfully takes an awareness of the limitations of online consulting and innovation on the part of the consultant. Already, consultant and client are toggling between at least two screens—one for the Skype and one for the document.¹⁶ Pulling up a third window to look at a model would further crowd the computer screen. Moreover, it would involve either the client or writer searching independently for a model, sharing the link with the other, and then each person would have to look at the model separately—a clunky and time-consuming process. Rather than go to this trouble in her sessions, Kim recommends sources that her clients can use after the session, such as the APA guide, or helps them come up with specific questions about genre to ask a professor or advisor.

¹⁶ When I conducted Skype consultations, I made the video window small at the top, right-hand side of the screen, so that I could see the video and the Google Document simultaneously. Even with this arrangement, however, the screen becomes crowded.

As an alternative to looking for external models, I also observed Kim use two different modeling techniques during her appointments. First, as I mentioned in the previous section, she often verbally models new sentence structures or clearer wording for clients. For example, she uses phrases like “You could just say,” or “Do you mean something like,” to signal to the client that she is providing a possible model for revising the text. Second, Kim uses models within the text itself to give writers something to replicate. In her consultation with Mike, for example, in response to a question about wordiness, she said “One way to fix that would be to say something like you did in the sentence, ‘The areas that are examined are service delivery, democratic responses,’ et cetera.” Kim finds a model within Mike’s text that allows her to provide an example without requiring them to move away from the Google Doc window. Certainly this is a strategy that a face-to-face consultant might also employ; however it becomes more important in a digital environment.

Orienting

While successfully modeling clear wording and sentence structures often means realizing the limitations of an online environment, orienting reader and writer to the text means making the affordances of the online tools more visible. During a face-to-face session, the consultant and the writer share the physical experience of a text, whether it is on paper or on a screen. Both participants can see, for example, when the writer turns the page, points to a problematic phrase, or flips back to a previous section. None of these cues is visible during a Skype and Google Doc writing center session. It can also be difficult for the writer and consultant to orient themselves within a text that scrolls continuously as opposed to having distinct pages. To compensate for these challenges,

Kim has developed a vocabulary that helps both consultant and writer make sure that they are spatially oriented to the text throughout the session.¹⁷

Sometimes these orientation strategies are direct and non-technical. For example, in her session with Mike, Kim verbally directed him to “that third sentence.” Similarly, in a distance session with Xiao, a doctoral student in counselor education, Kim relied on numbered items in Xiao’s document—a Likert scale survey—to clarify which parts of the text they were discussing. The writer also read aloud the number of each question prior to reading the question, indicating that she too realized the importance of keeping both participants oriented to their place in the text. While these strategies may seem simple, employing them consistently played an important role in both of these consultations by helping the consultant and the writer focus on the same portion of the text.

Because counting sentences is not always quick or effective, Kim also calls writers’ attention to the tools in Google Docs that can help both consultant and writer signal where they are in the text. For example, very early in her appointment with Mike, Kim says, “I think this paragraph in particular, these sentences that I just highlighted...Can you see where I’m highlighting?” In Google Docs, each viewer has a different cursor and highlighter color, which allows quick identification of each reader’s location in the text. By calling Mike’s attention to this highlighting feature, Kim teaches him that it can be seen by both participants and used as a way to help orient one another to the text. Rob picks up on this technique and later in the session directs Kim to “where the cursor is now.” He also takes advantage of the ability for Kim to see real-time changes to the text and asks her to reread a section “just right above there where I’m

¹⁷ To read about the importance of space, especially when writing comments, in asynchronous consultations, see Hewett pp. 125-133, “Where to Comment.”

typing now.” By showing writers how to take advantage of the affordances of Google Docs early in the session, Kim teaches them to make those tools—and thus their location in the text—visible throughout the appointment. These tools can also enhance the control the writer has during the consultation, as they did for Mike, by helping the writer direct the consultant to specific parts of the text.

Drafting

Perhaps the most significant difference I observed between a face-to-face appointment and an online appointment was the writer’s willingness and ability to draft during the consultation. Here, it’s helpful to return to Anderson’s conceptualization of low-bridge technologies and his suggestion that these technologies may encourage creativity: “experimenting with unfamiliar technologies can facilitate a sense of creativity that can lead to motivation” (44). While Google Docs relies on a typical word processing interface, it may be just different enough from writers’ usual composing environments to create a new experience of writing and drafting. This new composing environment marks an important—and perhaps beneficial—difference between face-to-face and online consultations in the GWC. As David Coogan argues in “Towards a Rhetoric of On-Line Tutoring,” “So often writing center tutorials have nothing to do with the act of writing. Students read aloud, make conversation, do some editing or planning, but rarely compose or communicate in writing” (3). In online environments however, writing can be a much more central part of the consultation. When students come to the GWC in person, they most often bring a printed copy of their work—even if it’s a fifty-page dissertation chapter. They write revisions over the existing text, a text that often seems somewhat final and inflexible because of its immutable state as a printed document. In turn, the

revisions we discuss can seem daunting. In contrast, over Google Docs, writers are free to make changes in the moment and see how those changes affect their writing. Moreover, Google Docs keeps an easily-accessible and color-coded record of changes made to a document and allows users to revert to previous versions; therefore, students can make changes and experiment without fear of losing track of their original writing. This feature also serves as a visual record of the *process* of writing, something that may be reassuring to graduate writers who often think polished prose should come naturally to aspiring academics.

In both of the online appointments I observed, the writers took time to draft new sentences and passages based on their discussions with Kim. Often, Kim offered options, and the writer would spend time drafting a new sentence that incorporated one of her suggestions. At first, Mike was hesitant to spend time changing the text and just left comments in the margins about changes he hoped to make. But, as the appointment progressed, he altered sentences and wrote new passages as Kim waited. This finding corroborates what Wolfe and Griffin found in their 2012 study of undergraduate online conferences: “Online environments saw a decrease in the number of notes participants took about planned changes to the text and an increase in the quantity of new text generated during the session” (83). In these moments of increased drafting, the distance in distance consultations can be valuable. That is, writers can take advantage of the physical distance and slip into a more natural writing mode without feeling like the consultant is left waiting. The writer can simply ignore the Skype window for a while in a way that it’s difficult to ignore a person sitting a foot away during a face-to-face session.

The ability to rewrite text in the moment also allowed Kim to further encourage writers to take ownership of their own text. During her appointment, Xiao would often change her text as she read aloud or try out one of Kim's suggestions and then delete it or modify it in favor of her own. For example, Xiao's original sentence read, "I think that I am or I will be performing an important role in the society, whether the role is big or small." Kim, drawing on previous conversations they had about article use, suggested that Xiao replace "the" with "my" in front of society. Xiao replies, "All right. Okay," and then revises the sentence to include "my." After a brief pause, she deletes "my" and leaves the sentence without the article or the pronoun in front of society. Several times throughout the appointment, Xiao experimented with Kim's suggestions and decided to what extent she would incorporate them. The ability for Xiao to see her revisions in real time allowed her to see her text as fluid, so that she felt comfortable trying, accepting, and rejecting different revision strategies. It is also possible that, again, the physical distance in these cases makes students more likely to try and reject changes because the consultant seems less physically present. In other words, it might be easier to reject the advice of someone who is not physically there.

Together, these three examples demonstrate that while Skype and Google Docs consultations can replicate the best aspects of face-to-face consulting pedagogy, this alternative form of delivery also allows for new types of interactions and writing strategies that encourage consultants and writers to acknowledge the flexibility of writing technologies and the importance of experimentation as part of revision. They also suggest that physical distance itself has potential advantages in terms of making students more comfortable taking time to draft or trying and rejecting a consultant's advice. As Mark

Mabrito argues in his synthesis of early studies of e-mail consultations, “The e-mail tutorial may prove to be less threatening to high-apprehensive writers because it is an environment characterized by a psychological distance....Such an environment might reduce these writers’ feelings of anxiety toward the evaluation process and make them more willing to participate in the process as writers” (146). My observations suggest that synchronous online consultations may have the same benefits of psychological distance as asynchronous consultations while simultaneously allowing for greater interaction and peer-to-peer connection. Ultimately, because Kim is aware of both her pedagogical goals and the limitations and affordances of synchronous technology, she can create new strategies for consultations and encourage writers to take advantage of the online composing environment.

Can You Hear Me Now?: Online and Institutional Miscommunication

Despite the promising features of distance consultations, this alternative mode of offering consultations also poses challenges. Some of these challenges—like technological glitches—are expected when experimenting with new technologies. Others, like miscommunication among institutional stakeholders, are less visible and more difficult to troubleshoot. In this section, I first describe the technological challenges I observed during online distance consultations, the strategies the consultant used to solve them, and the ways they potentially limit the efficacy of distance consultations. Then, I return to the notion of sustainability and integration first introduced in the literature review to describe the institutional miscommunications that the PSU GWC has faced because of the divergent goals of various stakeholders. While, as I will show,

technological miscommunications are often easy to overcome, institutional miscommunications are both more difficult to recognize and more difficult to resolve.

Online Miscommunication

The consultation between Kim and Xiao began as what might seem like a nightmare scenario for those considering synchronous distance consultations. After both Kim and Xiao logged on through Skype, their conversation halted:

Kim: What did you want to work on today?

Xiao: Actually...hello?

Kim: Hi.

Xiao: Just...can you give me a second?

Kim: Sure.

Xiao: I'm just trying to upload it on Google Docs, but it's not working. I don't know why. I'm working on a scale development on sense of purpose.

Kim: Let's figure out a way for you to get that to me. It won't share with the Graduate Writing Center email account?

Xiao: What do you mean? Do you want me to send the file via email?

Kim: The Google Doc won't work with the [email address]?

Xiao: I mean I cannot open the page.

Kim: Oh I see.

[...]

Xiao: I think I have like some kind of Internet connection fault. Hello?

Kim: I'm here. Are you sending it to my Gmail or to the Graduate Writing Center?

Xiao: Oh, the PSU one?

This exchange went on for the first twelve minutes and twenty-four seconds of the consultation before Xiao was finally able to share the document via Google Docs. Once she shared her document, they had a productive session; however over one-fifth of their time was spent discussing the technology and the protocol for the appointment instead of the writing. In fact, several times within these twelve minutes, Kim tried to steer the conversation toward Xiao's writing by asking her generally about the assignment and her writing goals, but Xiao was hesitant to move on without sharing her draft appropriately.

As their conversation shows, it is impossible to pinpoint a single problem with the start of their session. On one level, there are clear technological problems: the sound cuts out, evidenced by the repetition of "hello?," and the Google Doc will not load, perhaps due to a slow internet connection. Layered on top of these technological problems, however, are problems of human miscommunication. For example, Xiao does not know which email address to add to Google or where to send her document because the consultant has both an individual university email address and a generic Gmail address linked to the GWC. Thus, it is not just technology that can fail; consultants and writers can fail to use the technology appropriately if clear protocols are not in place. As Hewett argues, this is a particular challenge for synchronous tutorials because "these settings require more coordination" (38). She recommends clarifying a range of information for writers, from "who is expected to initiate the interaction" to "how long one should wait if either party is late" (38). While the PSU GWC covers some of this information on their website, these problems of miscommunication still occur, as Kim estimates, in "one out of every two sessions." Kim's strategies for dealing with these problems include

providing the writer with quick alternatives, like just emailing her a document, and encouraging the writer to discuss global issues while they wait for a specific document to load. Being a quick problem solver and having a flexible attitude toward the session allowed Kim to keep the session moving forward despite these problems.

Reflecting on the consultation, Kim believed the miscommunications did not affect their discussion of Xiao's writing; instead she believed the visibility of the technology created a barrier to their overall interaction and ability to form a peer relationship. She said that the technological problems had thrown a "wrench in the session" because they prevented an early focus on the writer and her goals. Kim attempts to create a human connection with the writers she works with, but because there was so much focus on the technology and their miscommunications, Kim believes that "the student today was not particularly receptive to that." In other words, the visibility of technology can be an advantage when the tools work and allow writers to enhance their writing and revising processes. However, when technology becomes visible in a negative way, it reminds writers of the barrier between consulter and writer, and, in Kim's words, makes it difficult to "get that human element of contact unless you really force it." Because their study also revealed a significant amount of time spent problem solving, Wolfe and Griffin suggest that longer session times might be helpful for online consultations. Experimenting with solutions like adding time to sessions as well as honing troubleshooting strategies and clearly communicating the protocols for online consultations are an important aspect of developing a sustainable and effective distance consultation program.

Institutional Miscommunication

Developing a sustainable distance consultation program takes more than technological troubleshooting and good log-in instructions. As digital rhetorician James Porter puts it in “Sustaining a Research Center: Building the Research and Outreach Profile for a Writing Program,” “sustainability requires a group effort.” As the history presented above demonstrates, Penn State’s GWC has been working with World Campus off and on since 2005 to develop a “group effort” strong enough to sustain a distance consulting program that benefits both stakeholders. In 2011, World Campus formally contributed to this effort by funding a third consultant for the GWC, which they believed would attract and support more of their online students. From the beginning, World Campus was supportive of the GWC’s use of Skype and Google Docs, so the collaboration required no additional training or software. In other words, it seemed as though the GWC merely needed to hire a third consultant and integrate her into the existing distance system. Ultimately, however, this idea of “integration” became a sticking point for administrators and consultants alike.

Discussions of student demand for GWC services most clearly demonstrate the misunderstandings that characterize the relationship between World Campus and the GWC. Both the GWC and the World Campus imagined clear advantages for their partnership. For Olson, it was a way to grow the GWC. He says the third consultant was necessary “because we need more peer consultants in the writing center. There is far more demand than supply, and we’re growing too slowly.” For Brungard, a World Campus Academic Support Research Coordinator and World Campus liaison to the GWC, the online consultations provide flexible support for distance writers and meet his

goal of providing “support resources for [online] students similar to what resident instruction students would receive.” These goals, however, are not as compatible as they seem. While the demand for the GWC from residential students exceeds what the two consultants could provide, the demand from World Campus students remains low. In fact, Kim only fills two or three of her sixteen or more available appointments each week. Jonah, the graduate student coordinator, estimated that over 300 distance appointments have gone unfilled. This lack of demand indicates that no one’s goals are being met. Brungard admits that “if we have very little tutoring, it’s kind of hard to justify spending the money for that.” At the same time, those unused hours are not alleviating the demand for GWC services by residential students.

World Campus and the GWC view the reasons for this problem very differently. Brungard believes that graduate students may not think they need help with their writing. “I know that tutoring in general is one of those things that the usage is a little underwhelming, even though it’s one of those things that when people are looking at programs and institutions they want to see that there is support available.” In other words, for Brungard the availability of a tutoring program may be more important than its actual usage. This idea, however, conflicts with the reality of the GWC, where demand far exceeds available appointments. For Olson and the consultants, a lack of outreach on the part of World Campus is the largest contributor to the lack of demand. As Kim explains, “I think to some extent it’s a question of word of mouth, right? I mean, part of why the in-person [GWC] fills up so well is that people go tell their friend.” World Campus students, she suggests, lack this network. Despite attempting to publicize the GWC

through their website and course management systems, World Campus has not found a way to replicate the success of word-of-mouth outreach.

Research indicates that distance writing centers often struggle to fill appointments at first but can be successful with more targeted outreach. For example, in her article “Writing Across the Web: Connecting the Writing Center to Nursing Distance Learners,” Ann N. Amicucci discusses her writing center initiative to provide online writing support for distance nursing students. Despite their target population of 600 students, “the tutor held 21 sessions during the semester” (67). Amicucci increased her communication with these students, emailing them periodically and giving them opportunities to ask questions online. Following this increased communication, the number of appointments per semester more than doubled, “making the writing center a permanent and necessary part of the education that Nursing offered its students.” Increased demand can lead to a more sustainable partnership between stakeholders. However, it is unlikely that World Campus is aware of or has easy access to this research. Writing centers are not a primary focus of their work or experience, which may account for the divergent ideas about appropriate outreach strategies and outcomes.

The question of which students can fill the available online appointments also points to another source of miscommunication between the GWC and World Campus. Initially, both stakeholders understood that unused World Campus appointments would be offered to residential students. In practice, though, perhaps because of the very low demand from World Campus students, the GWC consultants seem hesitant to advise residential students to take those appointments. Suzanne explained that “we wanted to find out whether we could officially send University Park students to the World Campus

hours....We still haven't gotten the official okay from World Campus yet, so we haven't really been advertising that widely." Jonah was equally hesitant about the possibility of advertising online appointments to on-campus writers, but sees it as an important way to make sure that "at least some of those hours are being used." Without a more formalized agreement from both parties, no one's goals for the partnership are being satisfied.

All of the administrators and consultants I interviewed see this miscommunication as a problem of "integration." Each participant used that term to describe the difficulty in the partnership. For the administrators, the distance consulting is not fully integrated into the outreach, assessment, and daily operations of the GWC. The consultants view the primary problem as the lack of integration among consultants. The third consultant, who lives in Philadelphia and completes her distance consultations from a distance, is not well integrated into the center and thus not sharing the administrative responsibilities that other consultants have. Of course, one of the benefits of distance writing center appointments are that they provide flexibility for both clients and consultants; however, in the early stages of the program, the physical distance may be too difficult to bridge. These problems are what Porter would define as problems of sustainability. As opposed to mere survivability, Porter defines sustainability as "developing a self-supporting system that grows but that does not waste, deplete, exploit, or result in net loss" (n.p.) Currently, the collaboration between World Campus and the GWC is not sustainable. World Campus feels financially exploited because they are funding so many unused appointments. The GWC feels that potential appointments are being wasted by going unfilled by residential students. There is an overall feeling of loss in terms of the

integrated focus and mission of the GWC to serve a variety of writers and provide valuable administrative experiences to all of its consultants.

Ultimately, these problems may point to the difficulty of moving from an experimental, ad hoc system that the GWC developed over more than a decade to a more formalized system. Perhaps because of their success with experimenting with new partnerships and platforms in the past, the GWC is willing to experiment with a more formal World Campus partnership. However, neither stakeholder formalized their expectations or goals. Thus, despite the GWC's success in developing innovative distance consulting strategies that align with their pedagogical goals, the distance consultation program itself is not well integrated into either the GWC or the World Campus. While stronger communication about goals, responsibilities and outcomes certainly would enhance the partnership, the experimental spirit of the GWC may also provide new possibilities for the future of the distance consultation collaboration.

Conclusion: Inventing the Ideal GWC and Making Room for Innovation

As I argued in the beginning of this chapter, GWCs and online writing instruction are productive companions because both lack formalized best practices and thus can encourage experimental approaches to problem solving. The administrators and consultants at Penn State's GWC have several innovative ideas for improving the GWC. Taking advantage of this innovative spirit and the lack of clear models for both GWCs and online writing consultations may provide both solutions to the challenges the GWC and World Campus face as well as new ways to expand and improve the GWC's current practices.

Throughout their interviews Olson, Jonah, Suzanne, and Kim talked about the ideas they have for creating their “ideal” GWC. Some of the ideas are practical; for example, Olson would like the GWC to have a single funding source. Some of the ideas, however, demonstrate the ways that—because of the lack of clear models for GWCs—they are willing to experiment with new structures to solve problems. Currently, for example, the GWC operates on the fairly typical UWC model of fifty-minute one-to-one sessions. Both Jonah and Suzanne suggested that offering varying lengths of appointments would solve the problem of demand exceeding available hours and allow them to offer a greater variety of support to graduate students. As Jonah explains, “I think that maybe graduate writing centers would benefit from thinking a little bit more about the length and sort of breadth of assignments that graduate students are writing” and adjust appointments accordingly. He suggests offering longer appointments for longer documents and then having open hours, during which graduate students could stop by to get help with quick questions. Suzanne agrees, suggesting that graduate students often come for help with citation style that takes only ten to fifteen minutes, and then the remainder of the appointment goes unused. This willingness to experiment with the structure—and ultimately the purpose—of GWC appointments demonstrates an awareness of the ways a GWC could better meet the needs of graduate students. As the Penn State GWC’s pedagogical philosophy demonstrates, they believe graduate students are aware of the help they need. Sometimes, that help means being able to ask a peer a question about citation that may seem too basic to ask an advisor. Offering different kinds of appointments to cater to the varying kinds of support that graduate students need provides an example of the kind of student-centered innovation that could happen in

GWCs. Given the Penn State GWC's current use of technology, they could also find ways to integrate synchronous online chatting or asynchronous discussion boards to quickly answers questions for graduate students.

The consultants also have ideas to improve distance consulting. Kim suggests providing online training for online consultants: "It's interesting to think about. Would you do a training that was itself online? ... I would definitely force people to do practice sessions online." While this seems like a simple solution, it demonstrates the way writing centers often think of the consultant as local and the writer as coming from a distance. An online training would put the consultant in the role of distance writer and, as Kim suggests in her interview, help them develop strategies particular to an online environment. Jonah also provides a way of rethinking the place-bound and distance relationship in order to give consultants more flexibility. In order to take advantage of Kim's hours and her location in Philadelphia, Jonah suggests bringing residential students into the GWC to use the GWC computer and webcam to Skype with Kim. This solution would give residential students better access to Kim's hours, solve some technical problems, and bring those students into the physical GWC where they can access books and resources.

Beyond day-to-day operations, the GWC could be a site for innovative research. In their article "Usability Research in the Writing Lab: Sustaining Discourse and Pedagogy," Michael Salve, Jingfang Ren, H. Allen Brizee, and Tammy Conard-Salvo argue that "writing labs and writing centers have the potential to support research and professionalization, expanding the role to become a center not just for revision but for scholarly study of writing, technology integration, and research innovation" (55). Two

populations in particular that GWCs are well positioned to study are distance graduate writers with disabilities and international distance graduate writers. As Brungard explains, many of the World Campus graduate students choose to complete degrees online “because they’re not able to take resident instruction courses because of their disability.” In her article, “Access for All: The Role of Dis/ability in Multiliteracy Centers,” Allison Hitt agrees that multiliteracy and disability studies are a productive pairing, particularly as “we continue to see advances in technologies, changes in educational practices, and increases in disability diagnoses” (n.p.) GWCs like Penn State’s that show a willingness to experiment with technologies could contribute to the literature about online writing instruction and accessibility issues by being intentional about adapting their technologies and tutoring practices to the needs of graduate writers with disabilities.

Similarly, research suggests that distance international graduate writers often feel isolated during their degree programs (Smith and Shwalb; Erichsen and Bolliger). For example, instructional technology experts Elizabeth Erichsen and Doris Bolliger found that while online writing environments can feel safer for international students because they have time to craft responses, they also feel that they lack peer interaction and are “missing out on what they came abroad for—a cultural experience” (320). GWCs, which as Chapter Five shows serve large numbers of international students, could be an important site of peer interaction for online international students and could easily contribute to the research on the role of peer relationships in online international student success. As these examples demonstrate, GWCs are already sites where important practices—experimenting with technology and supporting varied populations of

students—converge. These convergences create opportunities for GWCs to develop administrative and pedagogical strategies that could become sites of research and valuable scholarship.

Like many other writing programs, GWCs are often focused on the day-to-day realities of budgets, appointments, and outreach. But as the administrators and consultants at Penn State's GWC demonstrate, with no standard practices for these day-to-day operations, there is room for experimentation and innovative thinking. As GWCs continue to gain momentum, finding a way to harness this innovation—both in terms of technology and more broadly—will allow GWCs to develop practices to meet the needs of their clients and become sites of scholarly inquiry. Embracing innovative thinking may also help GWCs become more integral to their campus environments. Olson explains, "I wish that [the GWC] was a little bit more parallel to other sorts of things, like we have in the undergraduate level. We have writing classes, and we have a writing center, and they can work together. One isn't ancillary to the other. I see them as parallel. I'd like to see the graduate writing center doing that kind of thing also. But that's a dream. An ideal." Ultimately, this chapter shows that the ability for GWCs to embrace an ideal and remain open to experimentation means that the ideal has the opportunity to become real. The following chapter also considers the tensions between the ideal and the real by investigating the Liberty University GWC's relationship to the reality of institutional benchmarks and writing center scholarship that promotes idealized policies toward linguistic diversity.

PROGRAM NOTES

Staff and Administration

As Snively, Freeman, and Prentice indicate, GWCs have two often-connected staffing issues: consultants and administrators (161). Sometimes, particularly in the case of smaller centers, these positions are held and/or shared by the same people. For example, at Penn State's GWC, one of the graduate student consultants also serves as Coordinator of the GWC and devotes some of his/her tutoring hours to administrative duties. Though these positions are often difficult to separate, I discuss them separately here to draw attention to the different roles and responsibilities of positions in each category. The first section, Staff, will describe survey responses related to hiring and training GWC consultants. The following section, Administration, will focus on administrators.

Staff

Survey responses indicate that the GWCs represented in my study have anywhere from one to fifteen tutors. In most cases, these tutors are graduate students, although one university that consists primarily of graduate programs and offers only a B.A. Completion Program for undergraduates only employs professional tutors. Staff members and non-tenure line faculty members sometimes tutor as well, especially in smaller centers. Graduate student tutors come primarily from English departments. In response to the question "From what disciplines do the majority of your GWC's tutors come?" eighteen GWCs (86%) selected English. Other popular disciplines from which to draw tutors include other humanities disciplines (48%) and social sciences disciplines (37%). Because only a small percentage of clients come from English and other Humanities

disciplines, tutors are often tutoring outside their areas of expertise, a topic that I explored in depth in Chapter Two.

While Chapter Two describes a specific a tutor-training program in great detail, many GWCs indicated that their staff receives little formal training. Nine of the twenty respondents wrote that they provide either no training for their tutors or rely on their tutors' previous experience working as tutors in UWCs. Other tutor-training strategies listed include shadowing or observing current tutors, conducting practice tutorials, asking current tutors to observe new tutors, and holding in-service meetings prior to or throughout the semester. In response to questions about training tutors in specific areas (writing in the disciplines, multilingual writing, and tutoring with technology), those who did offer training sometimes listed readings from collections written for UWCs: *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* and *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors*, for example. While these collections undoubtedly provide valued theoretical and practical advice for all tutors, reliance on UWC texts for training indicates a lack of specific theoretical and pedagogical support for the work of GWC tutors.

Administration

A 2000-2001 survey conducted by the Writing Centers Research Project found that 58% of the 194 writing center directors they surveyed held “non-tenurable faculty or staff” positions (Ervin 1). In GWCs, that number is much closer to 100%. None of the twenty-one GWCs that responded to my survey is coordinated by a tenure-line faculty member. The majority, eleven centers, have staff members in administrative roles. Graduate students, non-tenure-line faculty members, or a combination of the two coordinate the remaining centers.

While the lack of professional status of GWC directors reflects a trend in the writing center community more broadly, it also reflects the gendered nature of writing center work. Of the twenty-one respondents to my survey, who all indicated they served in some administrative capacity, sixteen (64%) are women. In “Women’s Work: The Feminizing of Composition,” Sue Ellen Holbrook characterizes feminized professions in four ways: they are staffed by high numbers of female workers, service-oriented, low paying, and devalued (202). Especially after the establishment of open admissions, when more women were hired to teach the increasing number of freshman writing courses, composition became associated with women’s work and seen as less intellectually rigorous than rhetorical and literary scholarship (210). Within composition, writing centers’ association with nurturing writers, providing a service to universities, and experience-based inquiry, were also gendered feminine and devalued. According to Carol Mattingly and Paula Gillespie in “Centered Women: Performing Gender and Power in the Writing Center,” by non-critically embracing collaboration and nurturing, writing centers can obscure power relations and confirm patriarchal stereotypes of female tutors and teachers (172). However, Mattingly and Gillespie also note that—precisely because most directors, tutors, and tutees are women—writing centers have a unique opportunity to “share power with women...and to model relationships that allow the fostering of agency for both women and men” (174).

The power that graduate students, staff members, and non-tenure-line faculty members often lack—often because they are feminized regardless of their gender—leaves GWCs in a vulnerable position. As writing center scholars Gary Olson and Evelyn Ashton-Jones argue in “Writing Center Directors: The Search for Professional Status,”

“The future of the writing center and the integrity of the larger writing program are directly linked to the professional status accorded their directors” (52). While Olson and Ashton-Jones’s work is focused on undergraduate writing centers, their warning has proven historically true for GWCs as well, particularly those with graduate student administrators who only make a temporary commitment to GWCs. For example, University of Texas’s writing center was coordinated by a series of graduate students and eventually closed when a new dean took over their graduate school and their GWC “got lost in the shuffle” (Snively, Freeman, and Prentice 157). Snively, Freeman, and Prentice explain that “graduate student administrators are cheap labor and can provide great energy to a new GWC; however, as the Texas case shows, graduate students are temporary employees who cannot ensure continuity, and who may lack the administrative clout needed to sustain a program” (161).

Hiring graduate students as administrators poses challenges not only to the GWC but to the students as well, a topic that received much attention from the International Writing Center Association (IWCA) in the late 1990s and early 2000s and culminated in the 2002 *IWCA Position Statement on Graduate Student Writing Center Administration*. This statement, modeled on Jeanne Simpson’s 1985 statement, addresses the need for training, institutional and departmental support, and appropriate working conditions for graduate student administrators. For example, the statement emphasizes that administrative responsibilities should not inhibit timely progress to degree completion and that graduate students’ positions should be substantively administrative, not just clerical. Melissa Nicolas’s edited collection, *(E)Merging Identities: Graduate Students in the Writing Center* takes up the issues following the 2002 statement and includes

reflections on both the challenges—power differentials and unclear responsibilities—and benefits—valuable job experience and clarity about one’s own writing process—to graduate students posed by writing program administration. The following chapter explores the tensions between writing center philosophies and institutional benchmarks, tensions that are especially difficult to navigate for those who lack the administrative clout—staff members and graduate students—to negotiate institutional expectations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Consultations Across Difference: Constructing Scholarly Identity in Liberty University's GWC

After a morning of meetings and teaching undergraduate courses, Tess Stockslager, Associate Dean of the Center for Writing and Languages and Director of the Graduate Writing Center at Liberty University, sits in her office, her door open to the GWC. Visitors are likely surprised by the wall behind her; it's the only one in the office painted a lively deep green. The green wall also features her Master's degree in English from Liberty, where she also received her Bachelor's degree. It isn't unusual—Stockslager and her colleagues explained—for Liberty graduates to stay at the university in faculty and staff positions; as an Evangelical Christian university, Liberty seeks out employees who share what Stockslager and others call a “worldview,” a faith-based approach to life and academics cultivated at Liberty. But, like the green wall behind her, Stockslager's office may surprise visitors by disrupting any stereotypes they have about the notably conservative, religious institution. A *Harry Potter* quote hangs on a bulletin board beside her desk. Scholarly monographs on Victorian Literature, the subject of her ongoing Ph.D. studies at Indiana University Pennsylvania, line the bookshelves along the wall. And the birds that she collects—figurines, sketches, notecards—surround her.

The scenes outside Stockslager's office also disrupt preconceived ideas about GWCs and their clients. Liberty's GWC never sees the stereotypical graduate student client: the Physics Ph.D. candidate struggling to translate her highly technical findings to a more general audience. In fact, Liberty does not offer graduate degrees in the science and engineering fields that often challenge graduate writing tutors. Instead, Liberty's

GWC serves primarily international¹⁸ and returning adult students,¹⁹ writers who complicate understandings of who graduate students are, what they need, and how writing center pedagogy can best support them. For example, writing center pedagogy often resists focusing on “lower order concerns” like grammar or correcting students’ usage mistakes or at least encourages consultants to leave them to the end of an appointment. Yet, as Stockslager explains, those tasks have become a fundamental part of her GWC’s work:

I think originally we all felt a little bit guilty about doing grammar, but we were all doing it anyway. I’ve come to realize, and I think the tutors have too, that it’s okay. Some of our students, that’s what they need. It’s not wrong to talk about grammar or even to spend the whole session talking about grammar.

¹⁸ There is no agreed-upon term in composition studies that best represents the range of multilingual writers. In this chapter, I use the term “international student” to refer to the multilingual writers at Liberty University because the vast majority of Liberty’s multilingual writers are, in fact, international students—students who have been educated outside the U.S. and have come to the U.S. for education (in this case, for graduate students) before, in most cases, returning home (Leki). I use the term multilingual writers when I write about the broader population of writers that includes international students, resident ESL students etc., as I do in the literature review. Others, whose scholarship I draw from in this chapter, refer to these writers as ESL students, non-native-English-speaking students, multilingual students, and L2 writers. For more on the distinctions among these terms and their benefits and drawbacks, see Leki; Spack; and Roberge, Siegal, and Harklau. When I refer to international students and returning adult students together, I often group them under the category of “nontraditional students.” This is not to suggest that international students and adult students are somehow outsiders; in fact, in many institutions they are traditional students. Instead, it is to suggest that they are nontraditional in terms of the “default” student typically presented in writing center or composition scholarship.

¹⁹ There is little agreement in education upon which learners count as adult students. For example, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy studies Americans age sixteen and older (“NAAL Factsheet”), the American Council on Education defines adult learners as those over the age of twenty-five (“Adult Learners”), and the National Center for Education Statistics employs a set of criteria to define adult learners, including that the learner does not enter postsecondary education immediately upon graduation or the learner works full time (“Fast Facts”).

Moreover, there are also no standard terms in composition studies for returning adult learners. While many scholars just refer to these writers as adults, I choose to refer to them as returning adult students for two reasons. First, all graduate students are adult students. Second, I want to emphasize that this particular population of students at Liberty has left school for many years before returning to the academy for graduate school. Others, whose scholarship I draw from in this chapter, refer to these students as non-traditional students and adult students.

This notion of “grammar guilt” often lurks in the subtext of undergraduate writing center discussions—and sometimes confessions—about tutoring non-traditional students and multilingual learners. Some scholars have taken on this guilt more directly. Susan Blau and John Hall confirm the prevalence of guilt in their article “Guilt-Free Tutoring: Rethinking How We Tutor Non-Native-English-Speaking Students,” observing that “going against practice—especially in tutorials with NNES students—seems to be the cause of guilt and frustration in our center and in others” (34). Several first-hand tutoring accounts confess to these feelings of guilt or conflict. For example, in *Facing the Center: Toward an Identity Politics of One-to-One Mentoring*, writing center scholar Harry Denny describes a student who asks a tutor for help fixing her “broken English.” Denny admits that “Attempting to select the proper response to her writing makes me feel deeply conflicted because her desire to conform is understandable, a strategic response to a vexing moment” (130). The unique professional needs of graduate students—needs I elaborate on in later sections of this chapter—further complicate the role of grammar guilt and the range of pedagogical strategies in writing center conferences.

Liberty’s student population requires Stockslager and her staff to rethink not only their pedagogical practices but also the role of their GWC within the broader institutional context. And while international and returning adult students may not fit the graduate student stereotype, these students are very common in GWCs. According to the Graduate Writing Center Survey that I administered, multilingual students comprise the majority of the clients in one-third of GWCs. The survey did not ask about returning adult students, and there is generally little data about these students in graduate education. However, the Council of Graduate Schools found that “between 1987 and 2007, the number of graduate

students 40 years of age and over increased 87%” (2). Moreover, they estimate that about 3.4 million students 35 years of age and over will enroll in all levels of higher education by 2018 (2). Thus, these populations of graduate students—and the ways GWCs can best meet their needs as writers and developing scholars—deserve attention.

In this chapter, I describe and analyze the ways Liberty’s graduate writing tutors and administrators identify and attempt to meet the needs of international and returning adult student writers and how those practices affect the institutional position of Liberty’s GWC. In fact, the role of international and returning adult students in shaping the GWC’s founding, practices, and administration was a recurring theme during my winter 2013 interviews with tutors and administrators and observations of consultations. Over three days in February 2013, I conducted interviews with three administrators, five tutors, and two clients. I observed four consultations: two with international students and two with returning adult students. Table 4.1 provides information about the participants included in this chapter. I also attended two workshops hosted by the GWC, the required writing course for graduate students, and participated in informal conversations with administrators and tutors.

Table 4.1
Liberty University Case Study Participants

Name/Pseudonym	Role
Tess Stockslager	GWC Director
Jim	GWC Tutor Graduate Writing Course Instructor
Eric	GWC Tutor M.A. Student, English
Brittany	GWC Tutor M.A. Student, Counseling
Michael	GWC Tutor International Student, Seminary
Christine	GWC Client Returning Adult Student, Seminary
Kwan	Korean Liaison to the GWC International Ph.D. Student, Counseling
Marlena	GWC Client International M.A. Student, Counseling
Katie	GWC Client Returning Adult M.A. Student, Communication Studies
Sun	GWC Client International M.A. Student, Counseling
Debbie	GWC Administrative Assistant Liberty graduate

To explore the intersections of graduate writing, international and returning student needs, and writing center practice, I first describe Liberty’s GWC and the institutional features that account for its student population and the development of the GWC. Then, I situate these intersecting concerns within scholarship about multilingual writers and adult learners and the debates over best practices for tutoring these students. The remainder of the chapter describes and analyzes the practices that GWC tutors use to address the expressed needs of clients while also meeting the larger pedagogical goals of the writing center.

Because of their student population, Liberty’s GWC appointments often focus on what may seem “remedial,” even in the context of an undergraduate tutorial. Ultimately

however, I argue that this case demonstrates the ways tutors use strategies that allow them to address these seemingly lower-order concerns like grammar or word choice while simultaneously helping graduate students develop independent scholarly identities—a goal far from remedial. Simultaneously, this case study reveals the importance of the institution’s perception of a writing center, and I consider how Stockslager and other administrators are developing strategies to dispel the remedial stigma of the center and alter its role on campus.

About Liberty’s GWC

Unlike UCLA’s student-initiated GWC and Penn State’s GWC, which grew organically out of other institutional programs for graduate students, Liberty University’s GWC began as a response to a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation requirement.²⁰ According to the “Quality Enhancement Plan” (QEP), which outlines Liberty’s response to SACS, a university-wide assessment found that “on average, Liberty’s first year residential graduate students needed writing skills training in areas including (but not limited to) organization structure, clarity of content, and grammatical or mechanical errors” (5). Moreover, a survey distributed to graduate faculty found that the majority of faculty members “were unsatisfied with respect to the scholarly and discipline-specific syntactical writing skills of their students” (7). With these problems in mind, the university outlined a five-year plan for improving graduate writing,

²⁰ For more on the relationship between writing centers and accreditation, see Bickford and Reinhart, “Applying Accreditation Standards to Help Define a Writing Center’s Programming and its On-Campus Relationships.”

which included required graduate-level writing courses, professional development for graduate faculty, and a graduate writing center.

The GWC, which opened in 2006, offers free, hour-long appointments to students from across Liberty's residential master's and doctoral programs.²¹ Students schedule appointments via phone or email with the GWC's full-time administrative assistant.

According to data provided in the survey, which reflects the 2011-2012 school year, the GWC offers approximately 150 appointments per week, and although the demand varies by time of year, fills approximately 65% of those appointments. The majority of their clients—over 75%—are master's students, in part because Liberty offers significantly more residential master's degrees than doctoral degrees. Most clients come from fields like counseling, ministry, and business. Like their clients, the five GWC tutors come from a variety of fields; in fact, only one tutor is from the English department.

The GWC recently relocated to share a space with the Undergraduate Writing Center, Online Writing Center, and Foreign Language Lab, forming the Center for Writing and Languages, part of the larger Center for Academic Support and Advising, which now funds the GWC. As a result of the consolidation, the GWC moved to DeMoss Hall (fig. 4.1), a large, multi-purpose building at the center of campus. The building, which includes classrooms, and the library, is a central location for all of Liberty's students. The Center for Writing and Languages (fig. 4.2) is located down a quiet hallway outside a popular campus café. The GWC (fig. 4.3) occupies a large room to the right of the main lobby and undergraduate tutoring area of the center and has several tables and

²¹ Because Liberty offers several online degrees—including the majority of its doctoral degrees—Liberty also maintains a robust online writing center available to non-residential students. This online center operates separately from the GWC and has its own director, Shelah Simpson, and seventeen tutors who are also non-residential graduate students. The online center primarily offers asynchronous tutoring through Microsoft SharePoint.

chairs, a couch, and a single red wall decorated with maps. Along the back of the room are administrative offices and a small kitchenette. The GWC itself has no computers; students bring their own laptops to appointments. A computer station is located at the back of the Center for Writing and Language's main room where clients can fill out electronic evaluations after their appointments.



Fig. 4.1. The DeMoss Building, a centrally-located academic building, which houses the Center for Writing and Languages.



Fig. 4.2. The entrance to the Center for Writing and Languages, which includes the Undergraduate Writing Center, the administrative offices for the Online Writing Center, the Foreign Language Lab, and the Graduate Writing Center.



Fig. 4.3. The Liberty GWC. Along the red wall are tables and chairs where tutors hold appointments. The center opens to the main lobby and Undergraduate Writing Center. The computer station, used for post-appointment evaluations, is along the back wall.

The move has been beneficial in terms of providing more space and support for the GWC, but it has also come with costs. While some (Farrell; Snively, Freeman and Prentice) would argue that the GWC's proximity to the UWC might further its remedial

stigma on campus, Stockslager believes that most graduate students do not even realize that both centers share the space. The convenience of the location and proximity to parking and the library, she argues, outweigh the potential association with undergraduate writing. However, she believes that becoming part of the Center for Academic Support and Advising contributes to the perception of the GWC as remedial, particularly among faculty. As Stockslager explains, “I think we’re having to work a lot harder for people to realize this center is for everybody.” The perception among faculty and graduate students is that Liberty’s GWC serves international students and those who have writing “problems.” Liberty, then, demonstrates the presence of the remedial stigma in GWCs, a presence that is, as I explore further in the literature review, prevalent in the history of UWCs.

Liberty’s focus on conservative ministry and counseling contributes to the international and adult populations at the university and, thus, in the writing center. Over two-thirds of the GWC’s returning clients are international students. Many of these students are from South Korea, which has “linguistic and rhetorical traditions markedly different than those of the U.S.” (Jordan and Kedrowicz n.p.). Kwan, a doctoral student in counseling from South Korea, works informally with the writing center as a liaison to South Korean students. He explains that many South Korean students come to Liberty to study theology or seminary because of the large American missionary presence in South Korea: “The first American missionaries had a very conservative theology, and there was so many Koreans who want to study conservative theology. Liberty is one of the most conservative universities in America. That’s the reason why many Korean students want to come here.” Recognizing the needs of this large group of students, Liberty’s GWC

uses Kwan as a liaison who translates for Korean students during appointments and helps both clients and tutors become more attuned to differing norms between American and Korean academic cultures. The GWC also employs international students as tutors, including Michael who is a Master of Divinity student from South Korea. Many of the tutors—international and native to the U.S.—see themselves as cultural informants who help initiate international students to American academic and social customs. This role as cultural ambassador is commonly addressed in writing center literature about tutoring non-native speakers (Myers; Harris; Thonus), in part because relationships among students, tutors, and instructors carry different meanings in different cultures. For example, because of their cultural reverence for teachers, Kwan explains that it often takes several sessions for Korean students to understand tutors as their peers.

In addition to attracting international students, degrees in counseling and ministry are also popular for returning adult students, who account for another significant portion of Liberty's GWC clients. As Emily Heady, who is now the Dean of the College of General Studies but drafted part of the QEP and served as the first director of the GWC explains, the QEP was written with these students in mind. Many of these students are returning to academia after years of working in fields that might not require much writing. "They might be really smart people and good thinkers but not good writers....And I know when I was in grad school, I kind of had to learn to write all over again, but my starting point was very different than these students' starting points." To meet these students at their starting point the GWC offers workshops like "APA Formatting," "Common Grammar Mistakes," and "Academic Style," which reflect the needs of these students to be reintroduced to academic writing and academic literacy

practices. Workshops like these, however, may also contribute to the remedial stigma of the center.

Despite the QEP's insistence that "while the GWC will certainly serve the needs of ESL, development, and less advanced writers, its tutors will also be available to more advanced writers who wish to polish their skills," an association with remediation has been an ongoing struggle for the Liberty GWC. The typical needs for graduate students to learn new genres and become part of new discourse communities are layered with inexperience in academic writing, with new technologies, or with the English language. As a result, the GWC spends many of its consultations helping students with academic literacy, such as research strategies, and language issues, such as grammar and word choice. Stockslager and the GWC's tutors have grown to see meeting these needs as an integral part of their work in helping graduate students become confident, independent writers and scholars—a goal that I address more specifically in later sections. The perception outside the GWC, however, is that these consultations and workshops are meant to remediate weak writers. This perception reflects what Denny refers to as the "othering" of L2 writers—a practice that also transfers to returning adult writers. He defines othering as a practice "either explicit or lurking just under the surface. *They* are a problem that requires solving, an irritant and frustration that resists resolution" (119). Thus, Liberty's GWC has the complex challenge of meeting the needs of international students and returning adult students without "othering" them. Simultaneously, they hope to counter the very perceptions that contribute to othering and keep native-speaking or traditional students from using the center.

The QEP itself, while integral in establishing a resource for graduate writers, is not blameless in the center's remedial perception. Both in terms of language and execution, the plan contributes to an institutional view of what it terms "developmental writers" as others who need to be remediated and establishes the GWC as the frontline for that remediation. Thus, in contrast to UCLA's student-generated center, Liberty's GWC originated from a top-down mandate that, in part, focused on remediating writers. For example, the QEP describes the GWC as a site that can "bear some of the burden the QEP imposes on faculty members' time" (35). The burden, as the paragraph explains, is to "diagnose," "ferret out," and "fix" student errors and problems (35). Thus, the QEP represents a struggle between the importance of "creating a culture of professional writing" for graduate students that is supported through a variety of resources and the perceived need to "fix" students who do not meet the assumed standards of professional writing. Liberty's GWC is at the heart of this struggle.

Despite these challenges, however, the GWC resists seeing their work—or their students—as remedial. Instead, they employ pedagogical strategies that go beyond treating students as "remedial" or "problem" populations to encourage students to see themselves as scholarly writers. The GWC is also developing administrative strategies to try to extend their services to other writers and change the perception of graduate writing support at their institution. The Christian mission of the university also creates a sense for Stockslager and her tutors that the work they do is more than just correcting papers. As Stockslager explained, a international student client once helped her see that she was doing missionary work by helping him prepare to go back to his county and be a minister. "That's something I hope my tutors see," she explained. "There's that concept that

everything we do is [ministry]. Even though it doesn't look like ministry, it still is. That's cool, and I think it gives our tutors a sense of the importance of what they're doing." The strategies that the Liberty tutors use, particularly listening strategies based in ministry and counseling, help tutors move beyond a single piece of writing to capture this larger scholarly and spiritual purpose.

I return to describing and analyzing these strategies later in the chapter. First, I review literature that demonstrates the ways Liberty and its GWC are not alone in experiencing the tensions among institutional and academic standards, writing center pedagogies, and non-traditional student populations.

Remediation, Resistance, and Writers' Realities

Liberty's GWC is caught in a tension between institutional demands that inform standards for student writing and the ideals of writing center practice and the field of composition studies more broadly. In the sections that follow, I first recount the historical connection between writing centers and remediation and consider ways to rethink remediation. I then explore the tensions between institutional standards and progressive pedagogies as they apply to writing programs broadly and undergraduate writing centers specifically. Then, I draw on the limited research about multilingual graduate writers to argue that this tension is even more pronounced for graduate students and GWCs. Finally, I consider how these tensions might also apply to returning adult graduate writers, a population of students about whom there is very little scholarship in composition studies. Together, these conversations illuminate the ways Liberty's GWC is pulled between the gatekeeping nature of the QEP, the university, and the academic

community more broadly and the pedagogical goals of writing centers and composition programs. I argue that the strategies that Liberty tutors use to inhabit a middle point between these two poles thus make an important contribution to considering how to best support non-traditional graduate student writers.

Remediation and the Writing Center

While some works (Lerner *Idea*; Carino “Early”) have extended the history of writing centers, many locate the origin of the modern writing center at the start of the open admissions movement. The rise of the writing center alongside the rise of open admissions created a remedial expectation for many centers. As writing center scholar Elizabeth Boquet argues in “‘Our Little Secret’: A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions,” the implementation of open admissions in the 1970s resulted in “increasing enrollment, larger minority populations, and declining (according to the public) literacy skills” (472). Institutional expectations stated that writing centers should remediate these underprepared students—students with “composition conditions,” as they were called in University of North Carolina’s writing lab (Boquet 468). This historical association has caused many writing centers to try to distance themselves from remedial or “play down work done with underprepared students” (Carino “Reading”). In “Insider as Outsider: Participant Observation as Writing Center Research,” Neal Lerner describes his impressions of writing center literature’s relationship to remediation: “I was particularly struck by the historical struggle of writing centers to escape the stigma of remediation. Writing centers have aligned themselves with the attention to the processes of invention, drafting and revision, and to the development of students’ knowledge and control of these processes” (61). He notes, however, that writing centers accomplish this

alignment by defining themselves against practices like remediation, skill building, and editing (62). Writing centers, like Liberty's GWC, want to be seen as more than a service for "remedial" writers. However, the desire to embrace a broader range of writers, Lerner and Carino argue, sometimes results in writing centers limiting their association with these students.

The process-based view that writing centers take of writing, however, challenges the usefulness of remediation as a category. Indeed, as David Russell argues in *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History*, "if one sees writing (and rhetoric) as deeply embedded in the differentiated practices of disciplines, not as a single elementary skill, one must reconceive in profound ways the process of learning to write" (15). In other words, writers need not be remediated in the "basic" skill of writing but supported as they develop the complex discourse practices of academic writing. As the previous chapters in this dissertation have demonstrated, all graduate writers require some level of this introduction to professional academic writing in their disciplines.

Remediation, then, becomes not a specific practice but a perception, a way to label particular writers. Reconceptualizing remediation as a politicized category, rather than a practice, encourages a new perspective on the relationship between writing centers—and GWCs in particular—and remediation. In "Rethinking Remediation," Glenda Hull and Mike Rose ask "What are the social and institutional processes whereby students . . . are defined as deficient or remedial or substandard?" If as Russell, Paul Prior, Irene Clark and others argue, all graduate writers must learn the conventions and genres of expert writers in their disciplines, why are all graduate writers not labeled remedial? Romy Clark and Roz Ivanic answer this question in *The Politics of Writing* by

pointing out that “writing represents a special kind of cultural capital” that provides access to discourses of power. They argue that “the insistence on ‘correctness’ in spelling, punctuation and sentence structure has a disciplinary, normative, and discriminatory role” (187). Labeling writers as remedial identifies them as being outside the discourses of power and insisting that they be remediated serves the normative goals of correctness outlined by Clark and Ivanic.

These normative goals are particularly visible in professional academic writing, especially for international scholars (Canagarajah *Geopolitics*; Lillis and Curry “Professional;” Lillis and Curry “Multilingual;” Tardy “Genre”). According to Theresa Lillis and Mary Jane Curry in “Professional Academic Writing by Multilingual Scholars,” 74% of scholarly periodicals are published in English. They argue that this “premium on English publishing influences important areas of scholars’ academic lives, such as opportunities for promotion and research grants” (“Professional” 4). While Chris Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki argue that the range of acceptable Englishes is growing as more international scholars publish their work (11), academic writing still places a premium on standard academic English. Thus, both institutions and individual writers are motivated to perfect graduate writers’ writing practices to insure their academic and professional success. The value of standard academic English creates, as Clark and Ivanic describe, a tension between “on the one hand, enabling learner writers to access the powerful forms of language and writing so that they develop the cultural capital that is perceived as necessary for success in education and in the world beyond the school or university, and, on the other hand, opening up for them the possibility of challenging

those prescriptions” (189). As the remainder of this chapter demonstrates, this tension is felt acutely in writing centers in general and in Liberty’s GWC specifically.

Writing and Resisting Standard English

A great deal has been written about the need to transform composition classrooms and writing programs to better account for the linguistic diversity among students and the tension that Clark and Ivanic describe. As second language writing scholar Paul Kei Matsuda explains in “The Myth of Linguistic Homogeneity in U.S. College Composition,” there is a “tacit and widespread acceptance of the dominant image of composition students as native speakers of a privileged variety of English” (82). As a result, he argues, this privileged English becomes reified and other forms of language use are excluded, denigrated, and ignored. To counter this privileging of standard English, many scholars advocate for pushing against the linguistic norms of the academy. For example, compositionists Bruce Horner and John Trimbur, in “English Only and U.S. College Composition,” suggest that writing programs develop partnerships with modern language departments to encourage writing in languages other than English (603). In “The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued,” A. Suresh Canagarajah, an applied linguist, advocates for a new type of academic writing that allows strategic code meshing—the blending or juxtaposing of two or more languages—not just in drafts but in finished academic texts. Most recently, Bruce Horner, Min-Zhan Lu, Jacqueline Jones Royster and John Trimbur introduced a “translingual approach” to composition, which includes “recognizing the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both within the U.S. and globally; and directly confronting English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and

against, not simply within, those expectations” (305). All of these approaches imagine an attitude toward linguistic difference as a resource to be cultivated rather than as a limitation to overcome; they encourage openness, flexibility, and genuine habits of listening. Certainly this perspective is an important way to challenge linguistic norms and earnestly embrace the changing demographics of higher education. Moreover, these attitudes toward language difference position educational institutions as possible sites to encourage changes in U.S. language policy (Wible) and potentially promote more peaceful global interactions (Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur).

Many writing center scholars (Bailey; Olson; Denny; Brooks and Swain; Bawarshi and Pelkowski) argue that writing centers have the potential to be sites within writing programs that accomplish these changes and resist the reification of privileged varieties of English. This view of writing centers as sites of progressive language policy and change often leads to suggesting “best practices” for tutoring multilingual writers that focus on the “whole text” (Staben and Nordhaus) and dovetail with non-directive tutoring approaches—focusing on higher-order concerns, avoiding appropriating the text or correcting errors, and encouraging students to be flexible and creative with their language use. For example, in “Rethinking Our Work with Multilingual Writers: The Ethics and Responsibility of Language Teaching in the Writing Center,” writing center director Bobbi Olson suggests that tutors think of multilingual writers as “rhetorically creative,” which in turn means that

a tutor’s job is no longer just about pointing out textual ‘divergences’ from a singular notion of American academic English and then instructing a multilingual writer on how to ‘fix’ that ‘mistake.’ A tutor’s job rather

becomes an effort to engage more consciously with multilingual writers in ways that attend to the realities of the intersections between language, power, and identity, while at the same time conversing with multilingual writers about the fluidity of language (n.p.).

The practices suggested by Olson represent ways to accomplish in the writing center the goals and attitudes I previously articulated. Such tutoring practices help tutors and writers alike explore and understand the power dynamics of standard English and the resources of linguistic difference.

Given these suggested practices and the breadth of other writing center scholarship suggesting sometimes competing best practices for tutoring multilingual students (Bruce and Rafoth; Severino; Myers; Harris; Harris and Silva; Thonus) it is easy to understand the origins of the “grammar guilt” that Liberty’s tutors and administrators face. The power of grammar guilt for Stockslager and others (Denny; Blau and Hall), however, suggests that these idealistic attitudes toward language and linguistic difference may be difficult to achieve in practice. Second language writing scholar Carol Severino expertly navigates this tension in “Avoiding Appropriation,” arguing that writing centers should, of course, support broader goals to challenge the hegemony of standard language usage, but “until teachers and other gatekeepers are sufficiently educated and become more tolerant of accents and nonnative features in writing, some ESL students will ask to be taught how a native speaker would say what they suspect they are saying awkwardly” (54). These requests, Severino claims, should not be ignored. She argues instead that meeting the expressed needs of the writer “is actually a balanced tutorial interaction” (55). Denny agrees, suggesting that writing centers can “raise awareness” of those in

gate-keeping roles about linguistic difference while still honoring what he calls a “moral obligation” to give ESL students access to “knowledge and practices that empower them,” including standard versions of English (132).

In light of these arguments, which suggest that writing centers must balance a theoretical resistance of language hegemony with practices that best meet the individual needs of multilingual writers to succeed within institutional and gate-keeping contexts, “best practices” for tutoring multilingual writers become more flexible. Some scholars, like Paul Matsuda and Michelle Cox, argue that one way to prevent difference from seeming like deficiency is to explain differences in terms of choices that the ESL writer has (40). In other words, tutors can present multilingual writers with a range of options and explain the differences in meaning and adherence to standards of each option. Other scholars, however, take their recommendations further and give tutors permission to correct sentence-level errors and provide appropriate vocabulary. As Sharon Myers argues in “Reassessing the ‘Proofreading Trap’: ESL Tutoring and Writing Instruction,” “tutors need to relinquish the attitude that giving second-language students the language they need is ‘unethical’ or ‘immoral’” (66). She suggests that tutors take into account the process of second language acquisition, which often requires more directive tutoring. Blau and Hall agree, arguing that “there’s nothing wrong with being directive and to the point when explaining a local error related to idioms, mechanics, or grammar” (34). In fact, they suggest that doing otherwise can create a “false sense of collaboration” wherein the tutor merely fishes for a correct answer (34). While these scholars recognize the same power dynamics that Horner, Trimbur, and others do, they believe that directive tutoring,

attention to sentence-level issues, and accommodation to some standards can play a role in giving multilingual students access to linguistic power.

Gatekeeping and Multilingual Graduate Writers

Despite the breadth of work on multilingual writers in writing centers, very little attention has been given to multilingual graduate students specifically beyond agreement that multilingual graduate students can benefit from more focused writing center and writing program efforts (Jordan and Kedrowicz; Ferris and Thaiss; Brooks and Swain). And as Talinn Phillips argues in “Tutor Training and Services for Multilingual Graduate Writers: A Reconsideration,” “the unusual positioning of [multilingual graduate writers] generated a unique combination of needs” (n.p.). As the director of the Ohio University GWC, Phillips interviewed multilingual clients in her center. She found that, in addition to discipline-specific writing support from peers (as opposed to undergraduates), these students asked for “help with sentence-level composing and error-correction, concerns that have often been a point of contention in writing center work with multilingual students” (n.p.). Similarly, in her study of Chinese international graduate students at a Canadian university, Zheng Zhang found that the students she interviewed most often reported their “language challenges in terms of idiomatic ways of expression, word choices, sentence structures, and grammar” (45). The findings from these studies—that international graduate students most desire help with sentence-level writing programs—corroborates many of the observations that Liberty writing tutors made about international student graduate writers. Many tutors, for example, explained that international student clients have very strong content and know their fields well; they just need help communicating that content clearly. As Jim explains, “a lot of our international

students are in seminary, many of them already have masters degrees from Korean seminaries so they know the theology. It's just being able to communicate that." Thus, sentence-level issues often become a priority in consultations with international graduate students.

International graduate students' requests for help with grammar and syntax is strongly related to the gate-keeping policies admonished by Horner and Trimbur and Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur. However, the stakes are too high for graduate writers, Phillips suggests, to adopt policies that merely resist standards or refuse to help students correct their work: "Sentence-level problems—even those that tutors might judge to be minor or moderate—may have serious implications for [multilingual graduate writers'] professional advancement" (n.p.). Correctness and style perform gate-keeping functions for graduate students in coursework, with their committees, and as they submit pieces to conferences and journals. Liberty's QEP also emphasizes this point, noting that "the University has recently added a limited number of doctoral programs where writing skills are essential to the dissertation process and future publications" (9). Thus, writing that does not meet standard expectations, in terms not just of genre but of language usage, can create a major barrier to success for these students.

The ability to write technically correct prose not only determines international graduate students' ability to succeed professionally, but also influences their confidence as writers and scholars. Beyond external barriers, Elizabeth Erichsen and Doris Bolliger also found that language differences contribute to internal barriers to success. In "Towards Understanding International Graduate Student Isolation in Traditional and Online Environments," they found that an awareness of their language differences causes

anxiety, stress, and a loss of confidence among international graduate students (311). Ultimately, these feelings create a sense of social and academic isolation that acts as a barrier to professional success (318). In these contexts, then, style, grammar, and word choice are no longer lower-order concerns, but instead represent ways to help students gain a particular kind of institutional power that allows them to pass through academic and professional gates. That these gates remain, in part, controlled by markers of linguistic difference is no doubt problematic; however, addressing those larger institutional and cultural problems cannot lead writing centers to overlook the needs of graduate writers in the present.

Considering the Needs of Adult Writers

Liberty's GWC also provides the opportunity to consider the needs of returning adult writers—a population seldom included in writing center scholarship or in composition scholarship more broadly. While the field of education has devoted much more attention to adult learners (Jarvis; Knowles, Holton, and Swanson; Merriam *Third*) as education researchers Sharan Merriam, Rosemary Caffarella, and Lisa Baumgartner argue in *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*, there is no unified theory of adult learning (104). While Malcolm Knowles's theory of andragogy is the most cited, Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner point out that his work provides not a theory but a "set of assumptions" about adult learners and their learning process (104). Thus, composition and writing center scholarship could contribute much to the understanding of adult learners as writers.

Certainly the needs of returning adult students are not identical to those of international students; however, the conflicts between pedagogical ideals and writers'

needs apply to both populations and both are often associated with remedial writing. There is very little scholarship on adult learners in the writing center, but the few articles that exist (Smith, Haynes-Burton, Werner) agree that adult students often have clear learning goals but also face anxiety and a lack of confidence after being out of school for many years. Jim's experiences in Liberty's GWC confirm the lack of confidence observed by others. As he explains, "we get a lot of people in seminary and even in counseling...people will have gotten one degree and then suddenly feel a call to the ministry, and they'll suddenly do something completely different. And it's completely overwhelming for many of them. And they do feel like they need their hand held." In other words, the anxiety and lack of confidence that international students may feel about their language difference, returning adult students may feel about their experience difference. Moreover, like international graduate students, returning adult students may have subject-area expertise but lack the writing or academic literacy strategies to convey that content knowledge appropriately. For example, Christine, whose appointment with Jim I return to later in the chapter, worked as a nurse for over a decade before returning to Liberty to earn a graduate degree. Her nursing experience is certainly applicable to her degree, but her lack of academic writing experience creates feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. Even seemingly lower-order writing tasks, like formatting citations, can be overwhelming for returning adult writers.

It is likely that the centrality of writing in graduate programs—for example, the need to produce a Master's thesis in a relatively short amount of time—further contributes to the anxiety of returning adult students and raises the stakes for the writing they produce. However, there are very few studies of adult graduate students specifically

(Nesbit). More frequently, scholarship—including writing center scholarship—groups together adult undergraduate and graduate students without making any distinction between them. However, as the Council of Graduate Schools argues, “It is clear that the population [of adult graduate students] is growing in sheer numbers and that this growth will likely persist for at least the next decade. To serve this growing population, U.S. graduate schools will need to continue to offer flexible programs, delivered in a variety of formats, to meet the needs of these older students” (3). Thus, returning adult graduate students warrant, and may soon receive, greater scholarly and institutional attention.

Writing centers are a viable option for providing the kind of “flexible programs” that the CGS suggests could meet the needs of returning adult graduate students. In fact, several adult learning researchers (Mark and Donaghy; McGivney; Rogers and Uddin) advocate what they call “drop-in literacy centers” as a way to best support adult learners. One such study, “Adult Learning Theory and the Provisions of Literacy Classes in the Context of Developing Societies” focuses on case studies from developing nations, but Alan Rogers and Aftab Uddin argue that their findings are applicable across cultural contexts (237). Their findings emphasize the importance of collaborative learning for adult students, noting that “sharing between equals is a key characteristic of much adult learning” (254). Thus, the peer-to-peer interaction of a GWC can provide a comfortable and individualized environment for returning adult students. Moreover, Rogers and Uddin argue that drop-in literacy centers are so successful for adult writers because they offer assistance at the point of need, are “highly individualized and immediate, practical and personal,” and “not intended simply to do the literacy tasks for the persons who come to it; that would be to deny both adult learning theory and indeed its essential purpose,

which is to help those who come to develop their own skills” (257). These goals and benefits of drop-in literacy centers should sound familiar to writing center practitioners.

These centers, like writing centers, focus on individualized and personal collaboration with the goal of developing more independent writers. The challenge for GWCs is to achieve these goals while still feeling comfortable meeting returning adult students at the point of need, which may mean focusing on formatting citations or, as is common in Liberty’s GWC, reviewing academic literacy skills related to research and writing. In other words, while the goals of GWCs that serve returning adult learners may be the same as other writing centers, the content of the appointments may look different. In fact, taken together, the literature on multilingual writers and returning adult students demonstrates that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all model for GWCs or writing center appointments. In order to best navigate institutional demands, pedagogical goals, and student needs, GWCs may need to modify typical writing center practices and be flexible with the ways they address issues like grammar and style. The following sections describe and analyze the strategies that Liberty uses to tutor international and returning adult students. As the next section argues, GWCs are a place to reconsider not only how different populations of students prioritize writing problems—and therefore necessitate a reprioritization of writing center practices—but also how to integrate a focus on those problems with discussions about students’ scholarly identity.

Diverse Practices, Diverse Populations

While some research (Thonus; Harris and Silva) indicates that tutors are more likely to set the agenda during writing center appointments with multilingual writers, Liberty’s

tutors are committed to meeting the expressed needs of their clients. Michael tries to begin each appointment by helping the writer set an agenda:

So, I typically ask, "What can I do for you?" Because I don't want to give help that they don't need. So, they go on and explain, and they normally start [with] anything from, "I don't understand the syllabus," to, "I don't know what writing is." Some good students say, "I wrote the abstract. Could you have a look at it?" So, whatever they kind of ask – because I only have one hour at that particular session – I try to kind of really narrow down what exactly they want.

Often, however, allowing writers to set the agenda—particularly international students and returning adult students—can lead tutors to work more as proofreaders or editors, focusing on grammar and citation style. In fact, in my observations the three most frequently discussed topics during consultations were (1) citation style, which I coded to include any discussion related to the mechanics²² of formatting or citation in any style, (2) word choice, which I coded to include any discussion related to the appropriate use of a particular word or phrase singled out by the writer or tutor, and (3) interpreting the assignment, which I coded to include discussion of the purpose or objective of an assignment and the instructor's expectations of the writer.

The following excerpt from an appointment between Korean student Sun, who was working on a response paper for a master's-level course, and tutor Eric will feel

²² By mechanics, I mean the specific features of a citation style including where to place footnotes, what margins are appropriate, and what to include in an in-text citation. I excluded from this category broader discussions about plagiarism or techniques to signal whether an idea belongs to the writer or the author.

familiar to many writing center tutors who constantly receive requests to “check” grammar:

Sun: Okay. You can check this one first. These are the questions and these are the answers.

Eric: [Reads the prompt.] So, you want me to look at grammar primarily?

Sun: Grammar, word choice, yeah.

Later in the appointment, Sun gives Eric another document.

Sun: This I haven’t finished, but you can just check the grammar.

Eric: Okay.

Writing centers often get requests from students to “just check the grammar,” and scholarship encourages tutors to resist those requests or put them off until the end of an appointment, lest they be seen as the fabled “fix-it shop.” Yet more scholarship (Harris; Staben and Dempsey Nordhaus) suggests that students often use the term “grammar” as a catch-all that might also refer to higher-order concerns like generic conventions, rhetorical choices, and structure. In other words, grammar becomes a metonym for any potential flaw in the writing.

This literature, however, represents the needs of undergraduate students, students who often have not yet developed a vocabulary for talking about writing. Graduate students, on the other hand, may have greater awareness of their needs and the help they want from a peer. As Eric explained in an interview, his experiences in both a UWC and a GWC have led him to believe that undergraduates need more help recognizing how to write well in an academic context. On the other hand, “the graduate students usually know how to write well. It’s something that they’re unfamiliar with, either the English

language, or a new format, or a new type of essay. You know, even myself, I'd never written a [master's] thesis before, you know?" In other words, Eric's experiences have shown him that graduate students often know how to make and structure an argument for an audience, but they need help "checking" that their argument makes sense in terms of style, mechanics, and genre. In Sun's case, for example, she felt confident in the content of her answers to the response questions. She wanted guidance in making her writing sound professional and appropriate, which reflects the perceived high stakes of graduate-level writing, even in informal assignments. I return to Sun and Eric's appointment soon to demonstrate the ways that "checking" a document in a GWC moves beyond merely "fixing" student writing.

In the sections that follow, I present three ways that Liberty tutors attempt to meet the needs of their clients while moving beyond merely "fixing" their work or remediating them. First, I argue that Liberty's GWC blends writing center practice and the values of their campus environment, which privileges fields like ministry and counseling, as a way to build writers' confidence. Many tutors mentioned confidence building as a primary goal in their consultations, and they see it as a way to make "better writers" while still improving students' writing. Second, I argue that Liberty's GWC rethinks the traditional categories of higher-order concerns (HOCs) and lower-order concerns (LOCs) based on the needs and wishes of their clients. They recognize that, for example, word choice might represent a HOC for an international student, and they have developed strategies for addressing these concerns that move beyond merely correcting an error. Finally, I argue that Liberty tutors use both of these strategies—confidence building and rethinking HOCs and LOCs—to attempt to help clients see themselves as scholars and write in a

way that reflects their place in the scholarly community, perhaps a concern of the highest order for graduate students.

Building Writers' Confidence

All of the tutors I interviewed mentioned building writers' confidence as a primary part of their role in the GWC. As Brittany put it, "I think it's just making people feel more confident in their ability to write a paper without someone else's help." Confidence building, then, becomes a version of "make better writers, not better writing" by focusing on helping the writer feel able to complete writing tasks—something with which returning adult students and international students often struggle. In "Non-traditional Students in the Writing Center: Bridging the Gap from a Process-oriented World to a Product-oriented One," Angie Smith describes her own anxieties as a returning adult student and the experiences of returning adult students she tutored: "The one thing they all have in common, regardless of what they have done in the interim between high school and their return to college, is the terrible memory of their eighth-grade English teacher bleeding on their papers with a red-ink pen" (12). Returning adult students are often juggling jobs and school and may be worried about their ability to fit in with their younger peers or feel insecure in the relevance of their experience (Smith; Haynes-Burton).

Similarly, international students often feel insecure about their language proficiency and the ability for their speaking and writing to fit in with their native-speaking peers. This anxiety reveals itself even during writing center consultations, as it did in this appointment between Brittany and international student Marlana:

Marlena: It seems that the author did not do any experiment, any metho- . . . how do you call that?

Brittany: Method section.

Marlena: Method. He just did research about how Christianity is . . . how do I say this? Sorry.

Brittany: That's okay.

Marlena apologized several times during the consultations when she paused to think of or ask for words, suggesting that even with Brittany she felt self-conscious about her language skills. Michael confirmed that this lack of confidence in speaking with peers is often a problem for international students at Liberty. He finds that the students with whom he consults in Korean are often much less nervous than students who cannot conduct their consultations in their native language, despite what Michael describes as their “substantial explanation ability to actually say what they want.” Despite this ability, he explains, international students often have “this intense nervousness to explain their idea in English, because they feel like they just can’t talk.” Thus, for both populations, building confidence is important for overcoming barriers within the GWC and helping students overcome nervousness or anxiety with tutors and for helping students overcome barriers—like writer’s block and writing anxiety—outside the classroom that may hinder their academic success.

At the most surface level, the tutors in the GWC build students’ confidence by verbally reassuring them throughout appointments, which I coded as anytime a tutor praised a writer or told a writer his/her anxiety or difficulty was normal. Often praise was as simple as Jim telling a writer, “I think that’s a great idea,” when she comes up with a

new way to focus her topic or Eric reassuring a writer that her sentence structure is “actually very good.” Tutors also praised good writing habits, like students bringing a draft in well before the due date or giving themselves plenty of time to do research. To allay writers’ anxieties, tutors often also drew on their roles as peers to reassure writers that the difficulties they experience are normal. As Clark and Ivanic argue, “it is important to share insights about the process and practices of writing with learner writers as soon as possible and to let them voice their worries about them” (233). In Liberty’s GWC, writers can express their anxiety about writing and be met with reassurance about the difficulty of managing the writing process. For example, Jim related to a student who was having trouble with Turabian style, a citation style very similar to Chicago and the preferred style for many ministry-related fields. “I know it’s overwhelming, and it will be the first couple of . . . It took me two years to figure out Turabian, so, because it’s just this different thing if you’re not used to writing in it.” Tutors’ willingness to put themselves in the position of “peer” and relate to the difficulties of writing in graduate school is one reason that Stockslager believes GWCs are places that build confidence: “It’s just this [writing center] environment; I think it builds confidence for a lot of people.”

The most common strategy employed by tutors to build writers’ confidence was listening. Recent rhetorical scholarship has recovered the practice of listening as not just one-sided reception but as an active, engaged rhetorical practice. For example, in *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* feminist rhetorician Krista Ratcliffe describes what she terms “rhetorical listening” as “a trope for interpretive invention” (17). For Ratcliffe, listening is not just receptive; it can be generative and lead

to moments of rhetorical production. Cheryl Glenn, feminist historiographer and rhetorician, similarly redefines silence as productive in *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*. She argues that a “rhetorical silence of careful listening” changes the goal of rhetorical interaction from one of persuasion to one of understanding that can “readjust relations of power” (153, 156). When tutors listen, then, they give writers the power to express their ideas or their anxieties about writing in an atmosphere that encourages understanding and invention.

While there are not yet fully developed theories of listening specific to writing centers (Harris *Teaching*), it is a practice central to tutors’ roles in the writing center. Julie Bosker even goes as far as to describe tutors as “professional listeners” (48). And, in fact, in Liberty’s GWC many of the tutors are training to become what we might think of as professional listeners outside the writing center—ministers, counselors, nurses. Thus, listening is a well-developed skill among these tutors. As Brittany, who is working toward a graduate degree in crisis counseling explains, “Through my experience in practicing counseling sessions and really just reflecting back to people, if they ask me a question, I’ll be like, ‘Well, what do you really think about that? What is it that you noticed?’ rather than just telling them [what to think or notice].” In other words, Brittany and others use genuine listening to help students discover their own ideas or reflect ideas back to students.

This potential connection between counseling and writing center work is not new. For example, in *Writing Without Teachers*, Peter Elbow discusses the connections he sees between his experiences with group therapy and teaching writing, particularly adult students. In “‘Our Little Secret’: A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open

Admissions,” Elizabeth Boquet explains early writing centers’ connections to Rogerian nondirective counseling, which asks questions “leading to knowledge these clients presumably already possess” (470). In both cases, these writers focus on the connections between listening, reflecting or paraphrasing back to a writer, and confidence building. As Boquet explains, these ties to nondirective counseling helped secure the counter-hegemonic role of the writing center as a space where “students should feel secure in their expression of thoughts and ideas” (470). Creating these feelings of security in their own ideas is precisely the kind of confidence building that the GWC hopes to achieve.

I observed this listening-focused confidence building in practice in several sessions. Most often, the tutor asked the writer a question, listened carefully to the answer, and then paraphrased the answer back to the writer. Michael reports that one of his first strategies in an appointment is asking “What is this paper about?” and then “listening it out fully and giving them time and space” to explain their main point. He believes this helps writers see that they have an argument, and then he can help them bring it out more clearly in the text. An appointment between Jim and Katie, a student who is returning to graduate school after four years in the workforce, shows how listening and repeating can help writers realize the ideas they have. Katie spoke for several minutes about the trouble she had structuring her paper and the breadth of information she had. Jim reflected these concerns back to her, saying “Okay. I understand what you were saying about you think it might be a little broad.” After discussing the various threads of her argument, Jim’s repetition of Katie’s use of the phrase “conversational oriented” sparks an idea in Katie:

Jim: Yes, and I feel like, maybe, if you did go at it from, maybe, the opposite direction, I mean, still keeping this . . . this conversational orientated style in mind . . .

Katie: Okay.

Jim: But look for those specific examples within that [. . .] and then try to pick out the things that are applicable

Katie: What if I wrote the paper strictly having to do with the conversational orientation theory?

Jim: Okay.

Katie: Just that one thing.

Jim: Okay.

Katie: Instead of, like, having all these different family patterns like it says in the literature review right now, maybe I could just . . . because I did find a lot of sources on conversational orientation.

Throughout the appointment, Jim listened carefully to Katie's problem and reflected back to her the ideas he saw her repeating. Eventually, she developed an idea on her own to narrow her paper. Jim stayed quiet while she worked out the idea, just replying affirmatively as she thought aloud through her new concept. In this exchange, Jim and Katie demonstrate the ways that listening can be used, as Ratcliffe and Glenn describe, as a way to empower writers and generate ideas. Listening becomes a way for tutors to help writers see their own ideas more clearly and build confidence in writers' instincts and ability to develop good ideas. Moreover, Jerry Wellington in "More than a Matter of Cognition: An Exploration of the Writing Problems of Post-Graduate Students and their

Possible Solutions,” reminds us of the emotional aspects of writing, particular for graduate writers whose writing is so firmly attached to their personal and professional success. He argues that when working with graduate writers, “We should also focus, in all interactions with students, on the affective domain” (149). In other words, considering writers’ feelings about writing and taking the time to provide reassurance or build a rhetoric of understanding—as opposed to competition—is not a trivial task but a higher order concern.

Rethinking HOCs and LOCs

Students’ feelings about writing are not the only issue that Liberty’s GWC reframes as a higher order concern. My observations revealed that Liberty’s tutors are, like many writing center tutors, highly attuned to the distinctions between HOCs and LOCs and the benefits and pitfalls of “fixing” grammar. For example, Michael explained that he tries to leave grammar to the end of a session, particularly if he notices larger structural problems with a students’ argument. However, the tutors also realize that what seem like LOCs in general writing center scholarship may, in fact, be HOCs in practice. This section draws on observations from two consultations, one with an international student and one with a returning adult student, to demonstrate the strategies that Liberty’s tutors use to treat word choice and citation style as HOCs worthy of engaged collaboration between tutor and writer. As the consultation between Eric and Sun shows, this collaboration ranges from more directive correcting to less directive conversations about choices the writer has.

As Eric explained in an interview, he does sometimes correct students’ work: “Yes, I correct. I read it [aloud], usually I read it incorrectly, and then I tell them or I

show them . . . I give them a demonstration of what needs to be changed and usually explain why.” I observed Eric using this technique in his appointment with Sun. Sometimes—most often with missing articles—he just offered corrections without any explanation. Articles, as Ferris and others argue, are incredibly difficult for non-native English speakers to master and explaining the complicated rules regarding articles would likely not have a lasting effect (Ferris; Myers). Most often, however, Eric would point out the error, explain how to fix it, and explain the rule, so that the student might be able to better understand the mistake. Thus, Eric did not merely edit the papers; he tried to also offer a way for Sun to understand a mistake and potentially correct it herself in the future. For example, in her response, Sun had written, “The actions people might chose to do might harm themselves.” Eric explains that chose is the past tense of the verb, and that “choose” would make the most sense in the sentence: “The actions people choose to do might harm themselves,” and that keeps us in the present tense, because you’re talking theoretically.” Eric, in other words, provides a correction and then an explanation that the writer might be able to recall the next time she uses the verb “to choose.” Sun responded that she understood, and they continued with the document.

Other kinds of errors, particularly those related to syntax or idiomatic speech, inspired much more collaborative, engaged discussions between Eric and Sun. When Sun arrived, she specifically requested help with word choice, explaining, “I just don’t know what are the words that can be used. . . .So maybe I will keep using the same words, or I will like to try more variety of words.” With this request in mind, Eric addressed word choice specifically throughout the appointment. Rather than merely correct poor word choice, however, he engaged in conversations with Sun about her choices, as he does in

the following example. In a sentence about counselors using rational thinking as opposed to Biblical examples, Sun had used the verb “alternate,” which confused Eric.

Eric: Well, let’s see. Okay. So you’re saying that, I mean, basically that when people are getting counseled, they should alternate rational thinking with Biblical truth? They should use both?

Sun: For a counseling session which is not Biblically based, they don’t need to use the Bible. But if it is for a Christian counselor, they would use Bible truth because that’s what they believe.

Eric: Okay, so [. . .] are you saying “alternate” as in “use both one and the other,” you know, use them like, you know, you alternate between going to class one day and going to a difference class on a different day?

Sun: Oh, no. No. Alternate with negative with the positive.

Eric: Okay, yeah. I think that’s what we were getting confused on. I think you mean “alternate,” which is the same word, same spelling, just, basically, used differently. So you’re saying the Biblical thinking should be the alternative to purely rational thinking?

Sun: Should be substituted. The negative thoughts should be substituted with the Biblical thinking.

Eric: Okay, say that one more time.

Sun: The negative thoughts, which are stated here, should be substituted with the Biblical truth.

Eric: Okay, okay. I get it. Okay. So not “alternate” as in “switch back and forth” but as “substitute.” So that’s probably the word you want to use there.

“Substitute.”

In this exchange, Eric does not simply correct what he perceives to be a mistake in word choice. Doing so would, in part, assume meaning on the part of the writer—meaning that he seems to be unsure about. Instead, he adopts a more collaborative stance and engages the writer in a conversation about her meaning. Throughout the conversation, he employs several strategies. For example, he provides a definition of the word “alternate” and then gives an accessible example about alternating between classes. Immediately, the student realizes that her intended meaning does not match the meaning as Eric understands it.

Eventually, the student comes up with her own word—substitute—as a way to replace the confusing “alternate,” which could be a verb or an adjective.

By treating word choice as a higher order concern—one that deserves engaged collaboration—as opposed to a lower order concern to be left to the end of the appointment, Eric accomplishes a few things, all of which address Sun’s stated need to improve her word choice. First, he models the rhetorical effects of word choice by discussing his evolving understanding of the meaning of the passage. Second, he explains the possible range of meanings and parts of speech of the word alternate. Finally, he helps Sun perform the process of making decisions between possible word choices by asking her to rephrase her original meaning. This leads Sun to come up with a new—and clearer—word choice on her own. Thus, Eric does not just correct Sun’s passage, but gives her a more focused understanding of the word in question and collaborates with her to give her strategies for addressing word choice in the future.

While word choice was a frequently addressed concern in the appointments I observed—and is a frequent concern for multilingual writers in general (Phillips, Zhang)—the most often addressed problem in appointments was citation style and formatting. Some might consider citation a HOC when missing citations, unclear attributions, or uncited passages lead to questions of academic dishonesty. However, the discussions about citation in these appointments were far more basic than questions of potential plagiarism. For example, one appointment between Brittany and international student Marlana began with several minutes of discussion about margin size:

Marlena: For this part, it should be an inch or point five?

Brittany: On this side or from the top?

Marlena: From this side, it goes, like, one inch, I think.

Brittany: Right.

For many, margin size might not seem like a HOC. In fact, it may barely qualify as a LOC; most tutors might just refer writers to an online resource or handbook at the end of the appointment. But, in Liberty's GWC even these minor formatting aspects get major attention during appointments. As the following observation between Jim and Christine demonstrates, citation style can become a HOC, particularly for returning adult graduate students.

Formatting easily—and visually—separates who belongs in the academic discourse community and who remains outside it and thus becomes a HOC for graduate students, particularly those just returning to academia. Christine came to Liberty in the fall of 2012 to start a Master's degree in chaplaincy and hospice after graduating with a Bachelor's degree in nursing in 1999. Thus, she has been out of school and in a job,

which requires very little writing and no academic writing, for thirteen years. During her appointment, she asked several questions about Turabian style. As she later explained to me, “See with nursing, I had to use APA [American Psychological Association style]. Now I’m looking at this [Turabian], and I’m like ‘whoa.’” Unfamiliarity with citation style was a large source of anxiety for Christine. Thus, while the minutia of perfecting style format may seem like a lower-order concern in a traditional writing center appointment, for Christine it was a large barrier to her ability to feel like she could complete her work. At Liberty, and perhaps in other institutions, citation style and formatting serve a gate-keeping function. As Michael explained, he often starts by looking at students’ formatting because “so much credit, like points, are involved in format.” Attention to style, then, is not a lower-order concern; it is a way to help students move beyond a barrier.

Rather than ignore Christine’s requests for help with Turbain style or shoving her out the door with a manual, Jim spent a substantial amount of the appointment addressing her style questions. He gave her a handout and took her through both the handout and the manual, modeling how to use both:

If the page number is the same, you just have *ibid.* by itself. If it’s not the same, you just include the page number after it. That’s on this page [points to page in manual], and it’s right here [points to explanation on handout], so you can take a look at that because you do have the manual, and all these page numbers [on the handout] correspond to this manual.

He also explains how to use Microsoft Word to insert footnotes, a skill that has certainly changed in Christine’s decade out of school.

Citation formatting, like word choice or verb tense, might seem remedial, particularly in the larger contexts of graduate writing, which includes publishing articles and drafting dissertations. However, Liberty's tutors realize that these represent real concerns for students and often function as gate-keeping forces that might hinder writers' confidence and their academic and professional goals. These experiences have created opportunities for Liberty tutors to rethink HOCs and LOCs so that appointments meet the needs of the student population that uses the GWC. And rather than treat these students as remedial or merely "fix" errors, as the observations described above demonstrate, Liberty's tutors use these appointments as opportunities to model the processes that academic writers use, from considering the rhetorical effects of word choice to matching a citation question to the answer in a manual.

Moving from Style to Scholarship

By building writers' confidence and paying attention to issues of grammar and style that often serve gate-keeping functions in the academy, Liberty's GWC tutors are not just remediating students or proofreading their work. Within these conversations about style, Liberty's tutors also use strategies to attempt to help initiate writers into a scholarly community and allow anxious and sometimes under-prepared writers to see themselves as scholars. Because international and returning adult students may feel isolated (Erichsen and Bolliger) or like outsiders (Werner), helping these students see themselves as scholars and represent that scholarly identity in their writing is an invaluable role for the GWC. Moreover, this role allows the GWC to have a more holistic goal in mind while still addressing concerns like word choice or citation style. I observed tutors making this move from addressing style to addressing issues of

scholarship in two ways. First, they provide academic vocabulary to writers. Second, they give writers strategies for developing a distinct scholarly voice.

Although international and returning adult students may be unfamiliar with academic jargon, Liberty's tutors do not talk down to their clients or omit this jargon from their appointments. Instead, they give students access to these terms that are often markers of belonging to an academic community. For example, when Jim and Christine discussed Turabian style, he explained the abbreviation *ibid.*, which is used ubiquitously in academic work without explanation and could easily seem foreign to someone unfamiliar with citation styles that include it.

Jim: Anytime after that, if you're citing them consecutively . . . so let's say one is the full citation and your second footnote is the same thing. All you have to do is *ibid.*

Christine: That's what *ibid.* is. Okay.

Jim: Yeah, it's short for the Latin word *ibidem*, which means in the same place.

Christine reveals that she was unfamiliar with the meaning of *ibid.* or its significance in Turabian style. Quickly and without embarrassment, Jim gave Christine access to that academic jargon.

Later in the same session, Jim models for Christine how to use academic vocabulary to talk appropriately about other scholarship. Being able to critically discuss other scholars' work is an essential part of graduate writing, but it is rarely taught explicitly (Russell). In fact, many of the assignments I observed graduate students bring to the writing center were literature reviews and critical reviews of single works. Thus, having the right academic vocabulary for discussing the strengths and weaknesses of

another writer is important to achieving success in the scholarly community at Liberty. First, Jim tries to get Christine to develop focused criticisms of the book she is reviewing for her course. After she mentions parts that confused her, he pushes her to develop that idea:

Jim: Okay, and why couldn't you understand it? What was confusing about?

Christine: It just . . . it didn't flow. It seemed choppy, and he's start on something and then he would finish, but it was all this stuff in the middle that I really didn't understand where he was going with it.

Jim: Okay, so what necessarily . . . maybe not the language he was using, but his, like, organization?

Christine: Yes. The organization.

Christine has a clear criticism of the book—the author makes a point but then digresses from his argument before returning to it. However, she relies on a familiar yet vague term, “flow,” to describe this problem. Jim provides an alternative term, “organization,” for the problem that Christine is describing. Thus, he models for her a more academically standard way to frame the criticism she has. She picks up on this term and repeats it. Ultimately, Jim has given Christine the academic language she needs to make her argument align more closely with academic norms and mark her as a member of the academic community for which she is writing.

Helping graduate students develop a distinctive scholarly voice also often requires giving them particular language. Myers suggests, for example, that international students “may require macro-organizing language . . . or other language to signal sequencing or information across a text, provide background for contrast, or announce the dimensions in

which the topic will be presented (e.g., whether the writer is going to evaluate, analyze, report, or critique). The language and the writing are inseparable” (52). While this language is important across undergraduate and graduate writing, it is especially crucial to graduate students, whose careers hinge on their ability to make original arguments while aligning with and distinguishing themselves from other scholars. In other words, graduate writers are expected not only to articulate the scholarly conversation but also to articulate their position within that conversation. Brittany describes it as moving writers to “the next level of paper writing,” and accomplished this by modeling ways for Marlena to distinguish her scholarly voice from others during their appointment.

Like Jim, one of the strategies Brittany used was to give Marlena specific vocabulary for indicating the source of each of her arguments. For example, after reading a passage that left her unclear about whether Marlena was explaining another author’s work or her own interpretation, Brittany said, “I think what the big thing is, is just making sure that whoever is reading it understands that this is the author’s point, not your point. So, saying things like ‘the author found’ or ‘the author researched.’ Later in the appointment, Brittany repeats these phrases for Marlena, “Even just saying, like, ‘the author stated,’ or ‘the author found,’ those sorts of [phrases].” Pointing to very specific passages in Marlena’s work, Brittany is providing the kind of macro-level signaling language that is typical of academic writing but perhaps unfamiliar to Marlena.

Beyond providing sign-posting language, Brittany also encourages Marlena to more clearly develop her own voice throughout the paper. The assignment, a critical review of an article, asks for the writer’s analysis of and interaction with the main ideas of the article. Marlena, however, feels uncomfortable moving beyond summary: “I was

just cautious on not to push myself on saying so much.” Brittany encourages her, however, to think about her own response to the article:

Brittany: Your interaction would be a combination between the two [your ideas and the article]. It would be how you understood the article, like the lessons learned, and how you understand love differently.

Marlena: It doesn’t have to be . . . like I have to research, cite it, and all that?

Brittany: Not necessarily. It would depend on if you pulled the statement from the article saying, like, ‘This is what he says, and I believe that this . . . ’”

Again, Nikki models a way for Marlena to use scholarly patterns of language that mark the difference between the author’s voice and her own opinion. Simultaneously, she reassures Marlena that her opinion is a valuable source of critique in a review and doesn’t necessarily have to depend on research. During the appointment, Marlena expresses clear opinions about the theme of Biblical love, but she does not use conventional academic markers to signal those opinions in her work. Nikki helps Marlena to develop a more distinct scholarly voice by modeling for her how to separate her own ideas from those she is analyzing.

Jim and Nikki often seem to focus on smaller, sentence-level concerns. However, they are able to translate these concerns to larger issues of the kind of voice markers that are expected in academic writing, particularly graduate-level academic writing. Thus, even as they seem to be focusing on word choice or transition phrases, those phrases actually model for inexperienced graduate writers how to write their way into academic discourse. For Kwan, this ability to write like a graduate student is the most essential skill for success. As he explains, “I think writing is the most important. I can just keep a

silence in the classroom. But I cannot keep the silence in my paper. I have to write something in them.” In other words, writing requires him—and other graduate students—to demonstrate a voice. The strategies Liberty’s tutors use attempt to give students strategies for honing that voice.

Together, these strategies—confidence-building, rethinking lower- and higher-order concerns, and recognizing style as a way to address scholarly identity—help Liberty’s GWC meet the expressed needs of clients while also providing strategies to enhance their academic and professional writing style more holistically. As Phillips argues, GWCs “need to explore ways of providing support for writers’ whole texts—from the first word to the complete paper in all of its disciplinary situatedness—and for the whole writing process, from research design to editing” (5). By combining sentence-level concerns with larger issues of scholarly discourse and a sense of academic belonging, Liberty’s GWC tutors move toward this holistic approach to attempt to meet the range of scholarly needs for their populations of graduate students.

Conclusion: Reaching Beyond the Remedial

Despite using strategies to address higher-order scholarly writing issues while helping students “fix” issues of language and style, Liberty’s GWC tutors are still subject to “grammar guilt” and sometimes frustrated by the consistent focus on grammar and style. When I described other kinds of GWCs and appointments to the participants, like appointments that focus on argument or revising an article for publication, Jim joked, “You mean if we went somewhere else, we could help people with higher problems?” Jim and the other tutors find their jobs rewarding, but also frustrating at times:

Jim: It thrills my soul when someone comes in who is already a good writer, and you can help them get better. We get these elementary issues, and sometimes it's frustrating. It's tedious for us as tutors.

Debbie: We occasionally get law students in here. And they're really excellent writers . . . We struggle with really good writers because we're so used to working with people who need articles and subject-verb agreement.

Jim: [Nods in agreement.] So, I do hope eventually we'll get to the point where we can help a broad spectrum of students.

The population served by their writing center does not diminish the importance of the tutors' work, but it does limit the kinds of consultations that they conduct. And as Debbie suggests, it also limits their ability to develop new strategies and skills for addressing different kinds of writing problems. For Jim, a broader range of students would enliven the writing center and their consulting practices. To attract a greater variety of students, however, Liberty's GWC needs to expand the definition or perception of graduate writing support on their campus. In other words, the GWC is responsible not only for honing the scholarly ability of their graduate student clients but also for developing a broader scholarly role for the writing center itself.

Stockslager has two plans for accomplishing this goal. First, she hopes to reach out to a more diverse student population by hiring a dissertation-specific tutor and holding more workshops related to dissertation writing. As Stockslager explains, writers who do want help with their dissertations often come with a completed product, just wanting proofreading help, because they believe that the purpose of the GWC is to provide a kind of triage for their document. To encourage these students to come to the

GWC sooner, the GWC will not read completed dissertations. This policy is intended to limit the association of the GWC with last-minute triage and instead force writers to ask for help throughout the writing process. The GWC administrators hope that by having a tutor specifically focused on dissertation writing more students will come earlier in the writing process and start to understand the range of ways the GWC can help with their writing projects. They also hope to implement programs popular at other institutions, like dissertation boot camps. Stockslager says, “We’re thinking that that’s going to help get some of the stronger writers in here.”

In addition to changing the GWC’s perception among students, Stockslager also hopes to change the perception among faculty and administrators, who she believes often see the center as a remedial space and thus do not recommend it to a full range of their students. Already, Stockslager presents at Liberty’s Center for Teaching Excellence as a way to reach out to faculty members. One of her goals is to “get into more faculty meetings and just talk to them about what we do.” There is also discussion of changing Stockslager’s staff position to a faculty position. While she doesn’t think the change would affect her day-to-day work, it would change her relationship with faculty because she would be serving on more committees with them. Thus, a shift in her role on campus might give her greater access to faculty members to explain the role of the writing center and may also increase her status—and by association, the status of the GWC—among faculty members.

This problem of institutional perception is common among writing centers, and the branding of the center is just as important as the services it offers. As writing program administrator Emily Isaacs argues in “The Emergence of Centers for Writing

Excellence,” rebranding a writing center as a Center for Writing Excellence signals a “deliberate mission of becoming truly valuable to all,” including advanced students and faculty members (131). These centers, she argues, rely on the “assumption that a writing center can and should be deeply valuable to *all* students and faculty on their campuses” (131). While Liberty’s GWC’s location within a larger Center for Writing and Languages may hinder its ability to rebrand itself in terms of a title, the changes that Stockslager hopes to make may allow the GWC to rebrand itself in terms of the perception of who can benefit from graduate-level writing support. As the GWC becomes more deliberate about targeting varied groups of writers, including dissertators, they will create strategies to serve these students that add to and complicate the work and, hopefully, their perception.

A broader benefit of this change in perception is the writing center’s potential to shift campus perceptions of graduate writers as well. Already, as Kwan explains, “I sometimes make PowerPoint for faculty members [about] how they can understand Korean [students].” These kinds of projects, which translate what the writing centers knows about its clients to faculty who teach these students, can recast the writing center as a resource for helping Liberty better understand the writing needs of its students. The GWC, then, becomes a site of research and produces knowledge that aids both writers and the university. Localized research projects might also help change the campus perception of international students and returning adult students as remedial. As Matsuda explains, despite a perception that students acculturated in academic writing should be the norm, in reality, “the presence of language differences is the default.” Thus, academic writing could—perhaps should—represent a larger variation of language use and

scholarly voices. Min-Zhan Lu in “Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone,” advocates a “way of teaching which neither overlooks the students’ potential lack of knowledge and experience in reproducing the dominant codes of academic discourses *nor* dismisses the writer’s potential social, political, and linguistic interest in modifying these codes” (449). This approach toward the teaching of writing, she argues, encourages innovative language use and a broader range of rhetorical options for writers. The GWC could play a leading role in shaping institutional attitudes toward language difference and in determining what standards best capture the range of linguistic and academic diversity among Liberty’s students. A shift in perception—of both the GWC and the students it serves—ultimately would allow the writing center to embrace the hybrid space between grammar guilt that serves institutional standards and a wholesale rejection of those standards by helping students work within establish standards while leading the way in reshaping and rethinking them.

PROGRAM NOTES

Funding

One of the primary reasons GWCs are coordinated by staff members and graduate students is to save money. Finding funding can be difficult for GWCs despite the fact that university administrators may be persuaded of the benefits of a GWC to a university's ranking and Ph.D. productivity. Survey results suggest that the most difficult part of finding funding may be knowing where to look. Of the twenty-one responses to "How is your GWC funded?," there were twelve different answers, ranging from a special President's Fund and government fees paid by graduate students to subsets of Academic Affairs and various academic departments. GWC funding, then, is not only linked to the unique institutional contexts of each center (Anson), but also may reflect the lack of standard knowledge about GWCs and how they operate. That is, each time a new GWC looks for funding options, they may not have clear examples of the range of options. Inconsistency in funding, like contingent administrators, also puts GWCs in vulnerable positions. The Writing, Research, and Teaching Center (WRTC) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education closed in 2004 after five years when TA lines were redistributed and writing services became the responsibility of the library (Snively, Freeman, and Prentice 159).

Even promising external funding sources, like federal grants, provide only short-term solutions for GWCs. For example, at least three GWCs, Colorado State University Pueblo, University of La Verne, and University of New Mexico, are funded by Department of Education Title V Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans (PPOHA) grants. Title V grants are awarded to Hispanic-serving institutions

to improve services and instruction, and PPOHA grants fund services specifically designed for Hispanic graduate students. At CSU Pueblo, these funds supported a Graduate Student Support Center, the primary function of which is to serve as a GWC. The grant funds one full-time staff member, the coordinator, and the Provost's office funds an additional writing consultant for twenty hours per week (Sartin n.p.). This grant, however, only provides funds for five years. As Peggy Jolly notes in "The Bottom Line: Financial Responsibility," federal funds are a boon to writing centers, but "once these monies are depleted, the director is again faced with the necessity of keeping the program going" (113). The Provost's investment in CSU Pueblo's GWC is promising, but the need for these programs to rediscover funding underscores the importance of making information about how GWCs are funded more readily accessible, so that there are multiple models for new and continuing GWCs to follow.

Among the more controversial of these models are GWCs that offset costs by charging students for services. For example, Teachers College, Columbia University charges students twenty-five dollars per session, Brenau University charges twenty-three dollars per hour, and the University of St. Thomas charges students after four hours of tutoring per semester. As Snively, Freeman, and Prentice argue, charging students for writing center services "raises serious ethical questions...because it presents a clear problem for financially strapped students" (162). Some of the alternatives they suggest, however, including using volunteer tutors and conducting workshops for fees, seem equally problematic. In a time of budget cuts and increasing financial strain on individual departments and institutions as a whole, questions of funding are likely at the forefront of many GWCs' considerations. While the previous chapters provide information about the

funding structure of each of the GWCs they describe, the funding of academic programs is complicated and is one area that deserves greater attention and more scholarly investigation. In the following chapter, “Possibilities: Where GWCs Could Lead Us,” I suggestion additional areas for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Possibilities: Where GWCs Could Lead Us

In an email to the writing center listserv, a new GWC director wrote, “I am looking for models, advice, and literature, anything related to identifying, training, and funding graduate students in the scientific disciplines to be peer writing consultants.”

In response to a survey question asking respondents to list other GWCs, a director wrote, “I’m not aware of any other writing centers that serve only graduate students. I know they’re out there, but I haven’t made any connections with them yet.”

“I’d like to know [how other GWCs do] all of these things you’ve been asking me,” explained a GWC director in an interview, “because I feel isolated.”

I began this dissertation with the voices of graduate students who felt alone and unsure of how to best approach their writing projects. I end with the voices of GWC directors who feel similar isolation and uncertainty. These directors are assuming the task of supporting hundreds of graduate writers across the disciplines each semester with little research from which to draw best practices and no community from which to draw the support that typically characterizes writing center work. In fact, I believe that the biggest challenge facing current GWCs is a lack of community among them. There is no place to share resources and no way to model a new program off of a successful—or even merely existing—one. I concluded my survey by asking respondents to name other GWCs of which they are aware. Twelve respondents did not name any other GWCs and many of the respondents who did often named centers that are no longer open (i.e., Harvard) or UWCs that also serve graduate students. GWCs need a hearty scholarly community,

because they must rely on the collaborative history and praxis of writing centers to meet the complex challenges illuminated by this project.

With at least thirty GWCs in the U.S. and countless other UWCs and specialized writing center programs serving graduate students, GWCs no longer need to feel isolated. Although this dissertation does not represent a definitive study of GWCs or even a blueprint for developing one, it has made the case—through its attention to the specific pedagogical and administrative practices of GWCs—that these centers are sites that can make important scholarly contributions to the fields of writing center studies, rhetoric and composition, and studies of graduate writing. The ability to recognize one another and build cross-institutional collaborations will be invaluable to generating and producing this scholarly activity.

This chapter attempts to provide directions that this scholarship might take by first reviewing the findings of this dissertation and beginning to theorize the work of GWCs and then suggesting avenues for future research.

Conclusions

Each chapter and program note in this dissertation helps provide an answer to my critical question by describing and analyzing specific administrative and pedagogical practices at individual GWCs. In this concluding chapter, I want to answer that critical question more completely by considering what this project reveals about GWC practices as a whole. I argue that the case studies presented in this dissertation suggest two important findings about the administrative and pedagogical practices of GWCs. First, GWC practices are intimately linked to the institutional context surrounding each GWC

and the student populations served by each GWC. Second, UWC practices can provide a starting point for GWC practices but must be modified to fit the needs of graduate writers.

The ways GWCs operate, from their day-to-day administration to the ways consultants interact with writers, is bound to the institutional context and the student population. UCLA's student-initiated and student-governed center requires a GWC committed to writing in the disciplines because the stakeholders—students across the disciplines—demand it. Thus, UCLA hires consultants from across the disciplines and trains them to recognize and respond to a variety of genres. On the other end of the spectrum, Liberty University's GWC began as a top-down response to accreditation efforts and to growing numbers of international and returning adult students. As a result, Liberty's GWC practices reflect their accountability to institutional benchmarks. Penn State's GWC represents a potential middle ground. Its consultants have robust administrative responsibilities and with those responsibilities, the opportunity to experiment with and develop new practices and programs, such as their distance consulting program to support distance writers and place-bound local graduate students. Those initiatives, however, must be integrated into a larger institutional structure, and their case demonstrates the potential difficulty integrating ad hoc strategies into formalized programs.

All of these cases highlight the process of negotiation that happens among GWCs, writing center practices, and institutional contexts. Happily, this kind of negotiation is the bedrock of writing center praxis. Writing centers recognize that the best writers do not work in isolation. Rather, they always work in conversation with others and through that

conversation, attempt to make a contribution to their subject. GWCs similarly cannot employ practices in isolation. They must always be in conversation with the students they serve and the stakeholders around them, from academic departments to the university itself. As a result of these conversations and negotiations, GWCs position themselves to make a contribution to the graduate students on their campuses and their institutions as a whole.

In addition to being influenced by their institutional contexts, these cases reveal the ways that GWC practices are also influenced by UWC practices. The philosophy behind these practices, rooted in peer-to-peer collaboration, is preserved across the GWCs that I studied. However, these practices must be modified to account for the needs of graduate writers, which include their high-stakes documents, the absence of a “genre set” that provides firm guidelines for their work, and the length and disciplinary complexity of their writing. Across these cases, consultants demonstrate the ways that traditional practices, like reading aloud or asking non-directive questions, cannot always move a fifty-minute consultation forward in a way that supports graduate writing. In fact, the consultants at Penn State even question the value of the fifty-minute session. Deviating from the current UWC research, however, can cause consultants and directors to feel that they are at odds with accepted best practices. At all three sites, consultants spoke in hushed tones about “fixing grammar” and Liberty University’s director admitted to the guilt that she feels when her consultants (necessarily) help graduate writers correct their work. By describing the range of practices that these three GWCs use, I hope that GWCs will let go of their guilt and instead embrace the idea that the current writing center toolkit is incomplete. Rather than seeing themselves as transgressors, I hope that

GWC directors and consultants will see themselves as innovators who have the potential to contribute new and diverse practices to GWC scholarship.

Inferring Best Practices

The incompleteness of writing center tools is advantageous in that it allows new practices to develop organically from peer collaboration and makes room for the diversity of writers, consultants, and institutions. I think it is helpful, however, to use these case studies to infer potential best practices for GWCs. The following suggestions are not meant to be prescriptive; rather they are meant to serve as starting points for conversations both at the level of the individual center to consider how to adapt these practices to the center's institutional context and at the level of writing center studies to continue to add to and adapt these practices as the body of research on graduate writers and GWCs grows. Based on my research, I argue that best practices for GWCs should include attention to the following features of graduate writing.

Genre

Graduate writers are composing in unfamiliar disciplinary genres. Moreover, these genres are often occluded genres (Swales) with no published examples for writers to use as models. For instance, graduate writers—particularly those without close relationships with their colleagues—have trouble finding examples of conference proposals, dissertation prospecti, and academic job documents. Best practices of GWCs must include attention to the generic expectations for graduate students and a realization that meeting these generic expectations is necessary for entry into relevant discourse communities. Attention to genre does not mean that writing consultants must be experts

in graduate genres. It does mean, however, they should be aware of how to identify the features of an unfamiliar genre and have a general awareness of the ways generic conventions vary across disciplines. This approach would constitute what Amy Devitt calls “critical genre awareness.” Practices that promote critical genre awareness in the GWC might include

- Collecting models of graduate writing from across the disciplines and training consultants to help writers make use of those models
- Inviting faculty from a variety of disciplines to staff development meetings to share their own written work and their expectations for writing
- Helping consultants develop a repertoire of questions that reflect the kinds of questions academics ask of one another’s work, both within and outside of their disciplines

Style

While style is traditionally a lower-order concern for writing centers, this project demonstrates the ways that grammar, citation, and mechanics can serve high-stakes gatekeeping functions for graduate students, particularly multilingual writers. For instance, appropriately formatting a document signifies a writer’s place within a particular discourse community because it demonstrates an awareness of and fluency with its conventions. GWCs need not perform line editing for entire documents, but they should listen carefully to graduate writers’ requests for stylistic and mechanical help and try to provide that help in a way that promotes collaborative learning. Best practices for addressing style in the GWC might include

- Using word processes technologies (i.e., Microsoft Word's track changes feature or Google Docs) that keep a record of changes made to a text during a consultation so that writers can try to apply stylistic changes to other documents
- Making consultants aware of resources (i.e., The Purdue OWL and style manuals) and how graduate writers can use them
- Offering brief, editing-focused appointments to those graduate writers who already use the center so that writers can receive both holistic and line-by-line writing support

Emotion

Graduate writers feel uncertain of their abilities and often experience extreme anxiety about writing. This anxiety is compounded by high expectations for their writing—to be published, to win a fellowship, to secure them a faculty position in an increasingly tight job market, to get them out of graduate school. Voicing these concerns is particularly difficult for graduate writers who worry that admitting their insecurity will mark them as unfit for graduate study. Working with a peer writer who faces the same high stakes writing environment can reassure graduate writers that they are not alone in their feelings or in the challenges that they face. GWCs can be on the forefront of creating opportunities for graduate students to see themselves and one another as writers and building communities around those identities. Best practices for addressing the emotional aspects of graduate writing might include

- Offering workshops such as Overcoming Writer's Block and Managing Dissertation Stress that attend to the affective challenges of graduate writing

- Encouraging consultants to see themselves as graduate writers and share their experiences with clients
- Providing opportunities for graduate writers to experience a sense of community and overcome isolation by sponsoring academic events, like writing groups and bootcamps, as well as social events, such as open mics or guest speakers

Theorizing the Value of GWCs—and How to Measure It

This project represents a first step in understanding the work of graduate writing centers and—more broadly—the needs of graduate writers. Given what I observed in these three case studies, I propose a heuristic that might help GWCs define their own practices and more clearly articulate the goals of their center. Not only does this heuristic draw on my observations, it also draws on Paul Prior’s definition of “deep participation,” a concept that he adapts from Lave and Wenger’s work on communities of practice. According to Prior, deep participation is “marked by a rich access to, and engagement in, [disciplinary] practices” and a transparent understanding of these practices (103). One Penn State consultant’s explanation of the benefits of working the GWC exemplifies this kind of deep participation:

[Consulting in the GWC] made me aware of a lot of the conventions that I’ve internalized that I wasn’t aware of. I hadn’t even realized that I had become part of a discourse community. I guess I’ve become more aware that I possess this knowledge that I didn’t realize I possessed before that you’re never explicitly taught.

In other words, she is able to see what signals participating in a discourse community and has a more transparent awareness of disciplinary conventions. The GWCs in all three case studies seem to share a goal of giving graduate writers—both consultants and clients—this kind access to disciplinary practices in a way that allows them to engage as developing experts in their fields. This goal is articulated in various ways—genre awareness at UCLA, ownership over writing at Penn State, and scholarly identity at Liberty—but these ideas all represent ways for writers to engage more consciously with their writing processes in the context of graduate disciplines.

As the Figure 5.1 indicates, GWCs employ two kinds of practices to support writers toward this goal: writing center strategies and graduate writing strategies. Writing center strategies include practices like non-directive questions and reading aloud, while graduate student specific strategies might include blaming the writer from Chapter Two or the peer-based confidence building from Chapter Four or finding and explaining models of occluded genres. Necessarily, these strategies overlap and inform one another. As more studies of GWCs emerge, my hope is that this heuristic becomes more complex and makes room for the diversity of both graduate writers and graduate writing.

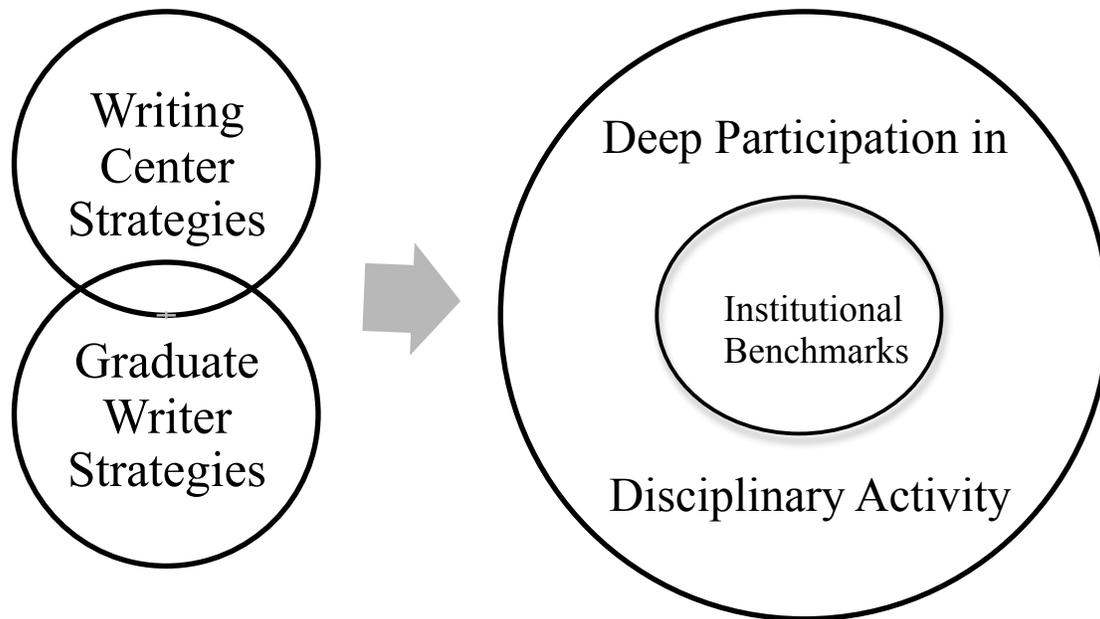


Fig. 5.1. A heuristic for understanding the strategies that inform GWC practices and the goals of those practices.

In the center of “deep participation in disciplinary activity,” I have included “institutional benchmarks.” While GWCs—like other writing centers—should not feel solely accountable to product-based institutional measurements, these benchmarks (degree completion, fellowship awards, publication) are central to graduate student success and a real part of the reason graduate students need and desire writing support. So, while there are other forms of deep participation, meeting these benchmarks certainly represent one way that writers participate in their disciplines.

Rather than eschew these benchmarks, GWCs might also find opportunities to embrace them as a way to build assessments of their work. Writing centers—and composition programs more broadly—are well known for their hesitancy to embrace quantitative measures of assessment (Lerner; Johaneck) and resistance to outcome-based assessment (Hawthorne; Schendel and Macauley). However, assessing a GWC does not

have to mean merely tying writers who visit the GWC to degree completion numbers. (In fact, such an assessment would have to ignore countless other factors that influence degree completion.) As their ability to answer survey questions indicates, most GWCs count the number of students who walk through their doors and collect demographic information about them. But, as both Neal Lerner's and Ellen Schendel and William J. Macauley's works on writing center assessment argue, counting clients is not enough.

More robust assessments of writing centers might use these clear institutional benchmarks as ways to characterize their work and report their ability to support writers. In "Approaching Assessment as if it Matters," Joan Hawthorne argues that writing center assessments should focus on documenting, rather than measuring, their influence. In one potential approach to assessment, GWCs might follow up with their clients to document what happens to graduate writers and their writing after they leave the writing center. Do they win fellowships? Publish articles? Complete their dissertations? With this data GWCs, while they certainly cannot claim full credit for these successes, can document how they participate in supporting the institutional goals for graduate writers. Social media tools like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram would enhance these efforts to collect information and make this documentation even more public to graduate writers, institutional stakeholders, and other GWCs.

Implications for Future Research

To answer my critical question and to provide a broad enough understanding of the work of GWCs to enable future research and future program development, I had to maintain a narrow focus. This focus kept me from investigating the many additional

questions that arose during this project. These questions suggest implications for future research in several areas.

For Graduate Writing Centers

- My project acknowledges the varying identities of consultants and writers in terms of linguistic background, status in the program (MA or Ph.D.), and educational background. However, I was not able to investigate these or other identity categories (race, gender, class, sexuality) in depth. Future research might ask how these identities influence peer relationships in the GWC. Recent scholarship, including Harry Denny's *Facing the Center: Toward an Identity Politics of One-to-One Mentoring* and Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan's edited collection *Writing Centers and the New Racism*, investigates the role of identity politics in writing center consultations and administration, and it is important to carry these questions into the GWC, especially given the low rates of minority enrollment in graduate education ("Enrollment").
- Future research should also examine the potential benefits to graduate consultants as writers. A great deal of research has considered the administrative benefits of graduate students working in the writing center (Snyder Mick; Eckerle, Rowan, and Watson; Mattison; Ryan and Zimmerelli; Tirabassi, Zenger, and Gannett), but consultants may also grow as writers by being exposed to new genres and gaining a broader understanding of how discourse communities operate. The Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project (Gillespie, Hughes, and Kail) has demonstrated the ways that writing center work benefits undergraduate tutors, and this research can be extended to graduate writing consultants.

- This project also presents a rather optimistic view of GWCs, but as I discussed in the previous section, without assessment data, it is difficult to know to what extent the practices outlined here are effective. Future research might ask “When do GWCs fail?” and follow up with dissatisfied clients or faculty who do not recommend the GWC to determine what potential needs are unmet by current practices.
- Finally, given Jordan and Kedrowicz’s findings that many faculty members see teaching writing as not a part of their jobs, future research should investigate ways for GWCs to contribute to campus conversations about the role of writing in graduate education. How can GWCs support graduate faculty as well as graduate students?

For Writing Center Studies

- This dissertation represents a call for writing center studies to pay more attention to graduate writers. A key question for the field is “What do we need to know to best support graduate writers in a writing center?” This question applies not only to GWCs but to writing centers that serve both graduate and undergraduate writers, and particularly to those centers in which undergraduate consultants work with graduate writers. Gathering more evidence-based practices through qualitative research—including the observation of consultations and the analysis of drafts and revisions—can help writing centers answer this question. In turn, these practices need to be included in the anthologies and edited collections that are used for consultant training.

- The lack of attention to graduate writers in writing center scholarship is one part of a larger omission: attention to advanced writers. Upper-level undergraduates, not unlike graduate students, are writing high-stakes documents in occluded genres, such as fellowship applications, graduate school applications, and honors theses. Writing centers should think about not only how to support these students but how to attract them to the writing center in the first place. Bringing more advanced writers to the writing center would go a long way in dismissing the remedial reputation some centers still face. Drawing ideas from programs for graduate writers, such as bootcamps and writing groups, may be one starting point for better serving these students.

For Writing Programs

- One benefit of studying GWCs is that, while many problems faced by GWCs are unique to graduate writers, GWCs also face challenges typical of all writing centers and writing programs: the increasing population of international students and multilingual writers, the need to integrate contemporary technologies into tutoring practices, the perceived divide between writing knowledge and content knowledge, and the ability to build genuine peer relationships. In fact, many of these issues, rather than being fully individual to GWCs, are just intensified in a graduate context. For example, in 2011, international students “comprise about 15.5% of all graduate students in the United States” (Bell 1) whereas international students only make up about 3.5% of all undergraduate students (“Opendoors”). Thus, GWCs may be developing practices that can be more broadly applied to writing programs, particularly in these three areas.

- One specific example of the broader research suggested above would be to investigate the question of transfer. Many scholars (Driscoll; Wardle; Roberston, Taczak, and Yancey) have attempted to study the extent to which undergraduate writers are able to transfer their first-year writing knowledge to more discipline-specific contexts. A better understanding of how graduate writers combine and redeploy genres throughout their graduate careers to create increasingly high-stakes documents may provide insight into how writers learn to adapt their writing to new contexts and audiences. For example, a graduate writer might redeploy a description of a dissertation in multiple genres: a *curriculum vitae*, a job talk, an abstract for the graduate school, a book proposal, or a fellowship application. Studying how graduate writers accomplish—or fail to accomplish—this transfer of writing and rhetorical knowledge across multiple genres and audiences might provide a starting point for teaching these skills in first-year or advanced writing courses at the undergraduate level.

For Rhetoric and Composition

- In the broadest sense, this dissertation represents an opportunity for the field of Rhetoric and Composition to expand its definition of “writer.” Not only is there not enough scholarship on graduate writers, the field would benefit from more attention to adult writers, advanced writers, and distance writers. In other words, the field must look beyond students who are most typically served by writing programs. Investigating the writing processes of these writers may introduce writing studies to new modes of composing and new strategies for the teaching of writing. Studying these writers would also put Rhetoric and Composition scholars

in conversation with scholars in Europe, where research on graduate and adult students is more prevalent, and scholars in other disciplines, including disability studies, education, and applied linguistics.

A Final Note and Call to Action

“I’m actually hoping that eventually I’ll be able to at least publish a few articles myself,” explained one GWC director. “But I don’t have research time, so that’s a challenge [laughs]. Obviously.” As I explained in the Program Note Staff and Administration, none of the GWC directors who replied to my survey is tenured or in a tenure-line position. In addition to the labor issues I outlined in that program note, research is not a valued part of non-tenure line faculty or staff members’ jobs. Establishing GWCs as sites worth of scholarly inquiry and suggesting future implications for research have little meaning if those who know GWCs best do not have the time or institutional support to conduct and publish research.

Of course, solving the labor issues within writing centers or composition programs more broadly is far beyond the scope of this project. However, one small step toward better supporting GWC directors would be to make GWCs an official group within the IWCA. The IWCA recognizes K-12 writing centers and two-year college writing centers on their website and elsewhere as sites that have unique needs. Both types of centers, for example, have a representative on the IWCA board. Gaining representation in IWCA would allow GWCs to increase their visibility and have institutionalized support for other collaborative initiatives, such as starting a listserv or hosting Special Interest Groups at writing center conferences. In turn, these initiatives might provide

GWC directors with the opportunity to collaborate on research and co-author publications, or even just share their practitioner-based research with one another. Interest in supporting graduate writers is growing, and GWC directors and consultants—with the support and encouragement of the IWCA—could contribute important knowledge to these initiatives.

APPENDIX A

List of Graduate Writing Centers (as of 12 November 2013)

School	City, State	Carnegie Classification ²³	Year Opened (if known)
Ashland U	Ashland, OH	DRU	
Baylor U	Waco, TX	RU/H	2012
Brenau U	Gainesville, GA	M/L	2011
California State U, Fresno	Fresno, CA	M/L	2010
Claremont Graduate U	Claremont, CA	RU/H	1985
Claremont Theological	Claremont, CA	Special	2002
Clark Atlanta U	Atlanta, GA	DRU	2012
Colorado State U, Pueblo	Pueblo, CO	M/S	2011
Hamline U	St. Paul, MN	M/L	2009
John F. Kennedy U	Pleasant Hill, CA	M/M	1994
Liberty U	Lynchburg, VA	M/L	2006
Monterey Institute of International Studies	Monterey, CA	M/L	2006
North Dakota State U	Fargo, ND	RU/VH	2004
Ohio U	Athens, OH	RU/H	2013
Penn State U	University Park, PA	RU/VH	1999
St. Louis U	St. Louis, MO	RU/H	2010
St. Mary's U	Winona, MN	DRU	2001
SUNY Buffalo	Buffalo, NY	M/L	

²³ The basic classifications for Doctorate-granting and Master's Universities are Research Universities, very high research activity (RU/VH); Research Universities, high research activity (RU/H); Doctoral/Research Universities (DRU); Master's, large programs (Master's/L); Master's, medium programs (Master's/M); Master's small programs (Master's/S), and Special Focus. For more information, see <http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org>.

Syracuse U	Syracuse, NY	RU/H	
Teacher's College, Columbia	New York, NY	RU/H	
Texas Christian U	Fort Worth, TX	DRU	2004
U of Arkansas	Fayetteville, AR	RU/VH	
UC Irvine	Irvine, CA	RU/VH	
UCLA	Los Angeles, CA	RU/VH	2007
UC Riverside	Riverside, CA	RU/VH	2011
U of Colorado, Boulder	Boulder, CO	RU/VH	2011
U of La Verne	La Verne, CA	DRU	
U of Maryland, Baltimore	Baltimore, MD	Special	
U of Massachusetts, Boston	Boston, MA	RU/H	1998
U of Mississippi	Oxford, MS	RU/VH	2012
U of New Mexico	Albuquerque, NM	RU/VH	
U of St. Thomas	St. Paul, MN	DRU	2006
U of Utah	Salt Lake City, UT	RU/VH	2012
Washington State U	Pullman, WA	RU/VH	2008
Yale U	New Haven, CT	RU/VH	2008

APPENDIX B

Data Collection Instruments

Survey

Name

Title/Position

College/University

1. Do you have a writing center dedicated primarily to serving graduate students?

Y

N

If yes, please continue with the survey.

2. If no, do you have plans to open a writing center dedicated primarily to serving graduate students?

Y

N

3. What services, if any, are available to graduate students at your undergraduate writing center?

One on one face to face tutoring

One on one synchronous online tutoring

One on one email tutoring

One on one phone tutoring

Writing workshops focused on dissertation writing

Writing workshops focused on other aspects of academic writing

Writing workshops focused on non-academic writing

Writing groups

Presentations to graduate-level courses

Handouts

Other (please explain)

No answers from Q 1 are finished with study.

Yes answers from Q 1 start here:

2. When did your GWC open?

3. Who directs/coordinates your GWC? (Check all that apply.)

Tenure line faculty member

Non-tenure line faculty member

Staff member

Graduate student

Other (please explain)

4. How is your GWC funded? (Check all that apply.)

English Department

Other Academic Department(s)

The Graduate School

I do not have this information.

Other (please explain)

5. In one or two sentences, describe the physical space of your GWC.

6. Which of the following services does your GWC offer? (Check all that apply.)

One-on-one face-to-face tutoring

One-on-one synchronous online tutoring

One-on-one email tutoring

One-on-one phone tutoring

Writing workshops focused on dissertation writing

Writing workshops focused on other aspects of academic writing

Writing workshops focused on non-academic writing

Writing groups

Presentations to graduate-level courses

Handouts

Online resources

Other (please explain)

7. Approximately how many tutors/consultants currently work at your GWC?

8. Briefly describe the training, if any, provided for GWC tutors.

9. Approximately how many appointments does your GWC offer each week?

10. Approximately how many appointments does your GWC fill each week?

11. Approximately how many students are turned away each week because there are no open appointments?

12. What percentage of your GWC's clients are

MA/MS/MFA students?

PhD students?

Professional students?

Post-doctoral students?

Visiting scholars?

Faculty?

Other (please explain)

13. Briefly describe the relationship, if any, between your GWC and your Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC).

14. What tutoring practices does your GWC endorse? (Check all that apply.)

- Tutor reading aloud
- Client reading aloud
- Reading silently
- Other (please explain)

15. What do the majority of your GWC's appointments focus on? (Check all that apply.)

- Grammar and mechanics
- Style
- Organization
- Argument
- Source Integration
- Proofreading/Editing
- Academic Writing Conventions
- Audience Awareness
- Other (please explain)

Writing in the Disciplines

16. What kinds of documents do clients bring to your GWC? (Check all that apply.)

- CV
- Cover letter
- Dissertation/Thesis
- Dissertation/Thesis proposal
- Literature review
- Bibliography
- Conference proposal
- Conference paper
- Lab report
- Course-related assignment (i.e., reading responses, seminar papers)
- Articles for scholarly publication
- Course-related presentation
- Teaching philosophy
- Graduate school application materials
- Creative writing
- Personal writing (i.e., emails)
- Fellowship or grant applications
- Other (please explain)

17. Of the above documents, which **2-3 documents** do your GWC tutors most often encounter?

- CV
- Cover letter
- Dissertation/Thesis

Dissertation/Thesis proposal
 Literature review
 Bibliography
 Conference proposal
 Conference paper
 Lab report
 Course-related assignment (i.e., reading responses, seminar papers)
 Articles for scholarly publication
 Course-related presentation
 Teaching philosophy
 Graduate school application materials
 Creative writing
 Personal writing (i.e., emails)
 Fellowship or grant applications
 Other (please explain)

18. From what disciplines do the majority of your GWC's tutors come? (Check 2-3.)

English
 Other humanities disciplines
 Business
 Social sciences
 Science and math
 Engineering
 Other (please explain)

19. From what disciplines do the majority of your GWC's clients come? (Check 2-3.)

English
 Other humanities disciplines
 Business
 Social sciences
 Science and math
 Engineering
 Other (please explain)

20. Briefly describe the training, if any, that your tutors receive for tutoring writing from a variety of disciplines.

21. What else would you like to include about tutoring writing in the disciplines in your GWC?

Technology

22. Which of the following technologies do you use regularly in your GWC? (Check all that apply.)

Word-processing software (i.e., Microsoft Word)
 Distance-tutoring software (i.e., Adobe Connect)
 Web-based communication software (i.e., Skype, Google chat)

Video conferencing
 Email
 Social Networking (i.e., Facebook)
 Microblogging (i.e, Twitter)
 Blogging
 iPad or other tablet
 A GWC website
 Online scheduling software
 Other (please explain)

23. Approximately what percentage of your GWC tutorials take place online (either synchronously or asynchronously)?

Less than 25%

25-50%

51-75%

over 75%

We do not collect this data.

24. Briefly describe the training, if any, that your tutors receive for tutoring with technology.

25. What else would you like to include about tutoring with technology in your GWC?

Multilingualism

26. Approximately what percentage of your GWC's clients identify as multilingual students?

Less than 25%

25-50%

51-75%

over 75%

We do not collect this data.

27. Approximately what percentage of your GWC's clients identify as international students?

Greater than 75%

Less than 25%

25-50%

51-75%

over 75%

We do not collect this data.

28. Describe the training, if any, that your GWC tutors receive for tutoring multilingual or international students.

29. What else would you like to include about tutoring multilingual/international students in your GWC?

Wrap Up

30. What else, if anything, would you like to share about your GWC?

31. List any other GWCs that you know of.

32. Check all that apply:

You may contact me to learn more about my survey responses

You may contact me for additional information related to my GWC

You may contact me to discuss the possibility of my GWC serving as a case study site for this study.

Thank you. You have now completed this study.

Semi-Structured Interview Scripts

For GWC Coordinators/Directors and Administrators

1. What about your GWC are you most proud of?
2. Can you provide a brief overview of when and how your GWC was established?
3. What were the factors (institutional or cultural) that led to the creation of the GWC?
4. What's the philosophy or mission of your GWC?
5. Tell me about the services your GWC offers.
6. How do you publicize your GWC?
7. How does your GWC deal with tutoring large projects like dissertations?
8. Tell me about the tutor recruitment and training process at your GWC.
9. How do you assess the effectiveness of your GWC?
10. How would you compare GWCs and UWCs? Administratively? Pedagogically?
11. What writing center scholarship have you drawn on for administrative and/or pedagogical practices?
12. What does existing scholarship fail to address that is relevant for GWCs?
13. What other sources of scholarship have you drawn on to develop GWC practices?
14. What do you think is most unique or innovative about your GWC?
15. Based on your survey responses, your GWC [tutors students in a variety of disciplines/uses technology in tutorials/or tutors a large number of multilingual or international students]. Tell me more about the tutoring and administrative practices surrounding this phenomenon.
16. In response to [survey question A] in your survey, you responded [survey response A]. Tell me more about this.
17. In response to [survey question B] in your survey, you responded [survey response B]. Tell me more about this.
18. In response to [survey question C] in your survey, you responded [survey response C]. Tell me more about this.
19. What do writing centers need to know or find out about graduate student writers?
20. What do you think the role of a writing center is/should be in graduate education?

21. What do you want to know about other GWCs?
22. Imagine there were a four Cs workshop on GWCs. What would you hope to learn and share during this workshop?
23. What, if anything, would you like to improve about your GWC?

For GWC Tutors

1. What do you enjoy most about being a GWC tutor?
2. What has most surprised you about being a GWC tutor?
3. How did you become a tutor at the GWC?
4. What's your area of study?
5. How does tutoring in the GWC fit in with your academic goals?
6. How has tutoring in the GWC influenced your understanding of academic writing?
7. Tell me about the tutor training you received prior to working in the GWC.
8. Talk me through a typical tutorial from start to finish.
9. What are some of the practices you use when you're tutoring?
10. How do you deal with tutoring large documents like dissertations?
11. What kind of perceptions/expectations do clients bring to their tutorials?
12. What kind of feedback do you get about your tutorials from clients?
13. Have you tutored undergraduates? If so, what's different about tutoring graduate students?
14. During my observation of your tutorial, I noticed [observation A]. Tell me more about this.
15. During my observation of your tutorial, I noticed [observation B]. Tell me more about this.
16. During my observation of your tutorial, I noticed [observation C]. Tell me more about this.
17. This GWC [tutors students in a variety of disciplines/uses technology in tutorials/or tutors a large number of multilingual or international students]. Tell me more about how you deal with this phenomenon as a tutor.
18. What do writing centers need to know or find out about graduate student writers?
19. What do you think the role of a writing center is/should be in graduate education?
20. What do you want to know about other GWCs?
21. What would you most like to improve about your GWC?

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. English (Rhetoric and Composition) The Pennsylvania State University, 2014.
M.A. English, The Pennsylvania State University, 2010.
B.A. English, DePauw University, 2008.

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

“Delivering Distance Consultations with Skype and Google Docs.” *Writing Lab Newsletter*. 37.7-8 (2013): 10-13.

“‘*Twilight* is so anti-feminist that I want to cry.’ *Twilight* fans finding and defining feminism on the World Wide Web.” *Computers and Composition* 27.4 (2010): 315-323.

Book Review

“Book Review: *Minor Re/Visions: Asian American Literacy Narratives as a Rhetoric of Citizenship; Reading Chinese Fortune Cookie: The Making of Chinese American Rhetoric; Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric.*” *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* 9.4 (2010): 282-285.

SELECTED AWARDS AND HONORS

Council of Writing Program Administrators Award for Graduate Writing in WPA Studies, 2014.

Harold F. Martin Graduate Assistant Outstanding Teaching Award, 2013.

Research and Graduate Studies Office Dissertation Support Grant, 2013.

Wilma R. Ebbitt Graduate Fellowship in Rhetoric, 2012.

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Accessing Expertise: Experience and Insecurity in the Graduate Writing Center.” Conference on College Composition and Communication, Indianapolis (March 2014)

“Tutee or Not Tutee?: The Question of Peer Relationships in the Graduate Writing Center” National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, Tampa (November 2013)

“Charting the Tides: Current Research on Writing Center Practices” International Writing Centers Association Conference, San Diego (October 2012)