

“Thanks, Writing Center!”:

Analyzing the Workplace Writing Experiences of Writing Center Consultant Alumni



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Introduction

How do Writing Center consultants' various writing-related experiences at Elon University function as rhetorical training (i.e., immersing students in writing or different audiences, purposes and contexts) for the writing they are now doing in the workplace and beyond? This study examines an excerpt of data from a larger study about Elon students and alumni. It paints a picture of the writing lives of consultant alumni, demonstrating how a variety of experiences shape their writing after college.

Literature Review

The Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project (and replications) examined the effects of consulting on alumni's lives after graduation. My study builds on those findings by looking at workplace writing. This study also builds on the 2016 multi-institutional Revisualizing Composition project, which studied what and how students write.

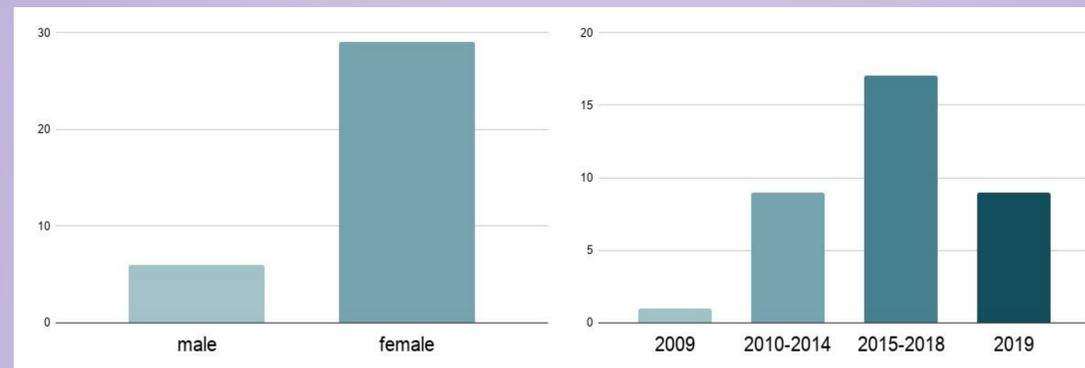
My focus is on the intersections of consulting with other university experiences (classes, internships, extracurriculars, etc.) in shaping consultants' perspectives on the writing they do beyond the university.

Methods

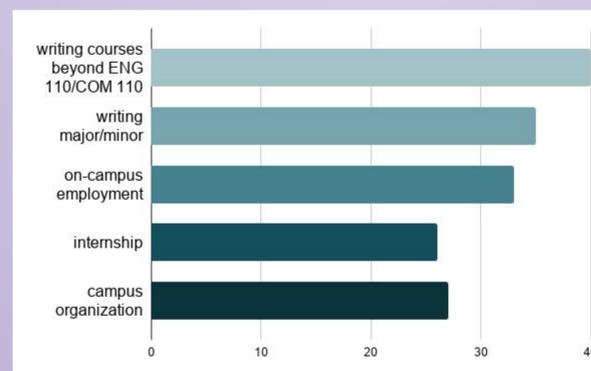
- Survey of Elon students and alumni (130 total responses)
- Emergent coding of open-ended responses for themes
- Reviewing/recoding subset of WC alumni respondents (40 responses)

Quantitative Data From WC Alumni Respondents

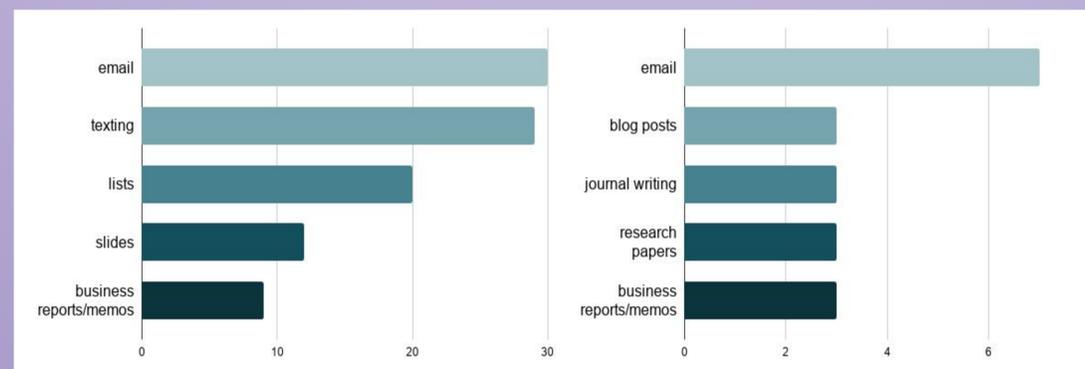
Gender & Year of Graduation



Campus Writing Experiences



Top 5 Most Often Composed & Top 5 Most Valued Types of Writing



Selected Quotes From WC Alumni Respondents

13 references to Writing Center by 12 respondents:

- “Reading another's writing [at the Writing Center] helps you to understand common pitfalls of writers....The greater exposure you can get to other people's writing, the better writer you will become.” *Benefits to consultant's own writing from reading others' work.*
- “The writing center prepared me so well. It taught me that writing can be hard, but that's ok!Good writing is collaborative.” *Preparation for challenges in workplace writing; instilled value of collaboration.*
- “Always read those emails aloud, y'all! Thanks, Writing Center!” *Explicit transfer of commonly used Writing Center technique to writing beyond university.*

Conclusions

1. Transfer or use of techniques (reading out loud, writing in variety of disciplines, explaining process to others) from Writing Center to workplace
2. Picture of writing lives of WC alumni shows variety of experiences that shape WC consultant alumni's writing after college (revision process, collaboration)--some directly from WC but multiple influences which builds on PWTARP

Sources

Hughes, Bradley, Paula Gillespie, and Harvey Kail. “What They Take with Them: Findings from the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project.” *The Writing Center Journal*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2010, pp. 12-46, www.jstor.org/stable/43442343.

Moore, Jessie L., et al. “Revisualizing Composition: How First-Year Writers Use Composing Technologies.” *Computers and Composition* vol. 39, 2016, pp. 1-13.