

Distant Neighbors: First-Year Writing Instructors' Definitions and (Mis)Conceptions of the Center for Writing

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Research Questions

- How do first-year writing instructors in the Department of Writing Studies define, perceive, and conceptualize the Center for Writing?
- How can the Center for Writing promote the center and inform instructors of the center's mission statement and purpose?
- How can the Center for Writing grow our relationship with the First-Year Writing Program?

Past Studies of Student and Instructor Perceptions in Writing Centers

“. . . little unanimity exists in [instructor] perceptions of the tutor role . . . That instructor and tutee perceptions of the tutor role differ substantially from the idealistic peer characterization in writing center theory and training materials is also no novelty” (Thonus 77).

Thonus, Terese. “Triangulation in the Writing Center: Tutor, Tutee, and Instructor Perceptions of the Tutor's Role”

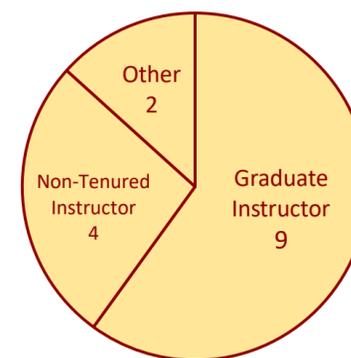
Methods Section

- Data was collected using an anonymous qualitative survey. The survey was anonymous to allow instructors to freely share their current understandings and perceptions of the Center for Writing without fear of hierarchical judgement or evaluation.
- The survey was distributed to all first-year writing instructors in the Department of Writing Studies, including non-tenured and graduate instructors.
- I analyzed the qualitative results using grounded theory to draw conclusions (Strauss and Glaser 1967).

Sample Survey Questions

- How would you define the purpose of the Center for Writing? What expectations do you have from the Center for Writing?
- What issues do you encourage your students to visit the Center for Writing for help with?
- What is your opinion of the Center for Writing? Do you think it's useful to you and your students?
- What do you want to know more about the Center for Writing?
- How could the Center for Writing be more useful to you and your students?

Results & Discussion



Survey Responses: Graduate Instructor (9): English (3), Creative Writing (2), Writing Studies (4), Non-Tenured Faculty (4), Other Category (2): FYW Graduate Assistant Director and English Postdoctoral Fellow

First-Year Writing Instructors Articulated Vague Knowledge of the Center for Writing.

“I would assume the tutors guide the students to ask questions and they talk about issues. (But I know it's not that simple.)”

“I suspect there is a lot of question-asking on the consultants' part, with annotations/comments/editing done as the conversation goes on? Possibly?”

“. . . unsure if they have to have a pre-written piece of writing or if the consultation can also function as a brainstorming session? . . .”

First-Year Writing Instructors Desire a Stronger Relationship with the Center for Writing to Strengthen Student Writing Development.

“I'd love to see a much more explicit relationship between the Writing Studies department and the Writing Center. I know none of our graduates currently work in the Center (understandably), but I also feel like I don't hear much from the Writing Center.”

“I'd love a stronger connection with the Center for Writing. A classroom visit or maybe a workshop from a tutor.”

The Center for Writing Should Boost Outreach Efforts to Cultivate a Stronger Relationship with the FYW Program to Better Support Student Writers and Writing Instructors.

“I know that the Center does more than offer student writing support, but I don't know much about what that entails or how it's part of making best practices in writing pedagogy accessible for those who don't see themselves primarily as teachers of writing.”

“Does the C4W offer tours or visit FYW classes to do informational presentations? . . . I think that could really help students learn more about the center more.”