

Proposal for Panel at SWCA 2023

Panelists:

Ashanti Kira Belcher, akb0055@auburn.edu, Auburn University

Okunola Odeniyi, ozo0018@auburn.edu, Auburn University

Huan Liu, hzl0136@auburn.edu, Auburn University

Layli Miron, layli@auburn.edu, Auburn University

Presentation Title:

Developing a Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Writing Center

Proposal (500 words maximum):

While nearly every writing center professes a commitment to diversity, what does empowering writers with minoritized identities look like in practice? Perhaps it looks like striking a balance between giving students access to the communicative tools needed for academic success and questioning the pressure to assimilate (Greenfield & Rowan, 2011; Bruce & Rafoth, 2009). Aiming for this delicate balance, the four panelists, all of whom work at the Miller Writing Center (MWC) at Auburn University, will present practical strategies for writing centers to support cultural and linguistic diversity.

The first presentation will explore how writing center practitioners can use two complementary strategies, “calling out” and “calling in,” to challenge prejudice. Panelist 1, Ash/Kira Belcher, has tutored in the MWC since 2017; she is currently working toward an M.S. in TESOL. In her years at the MWC, Ash/Kira has noticed that coworkers can identify when someone is called out, but they struggle more with calling in, which involves asking questions to spark learning opportunities. Therefore, Ash/Kira will use the “calling in/out” framework developed by Haslam (2019) to discuss effective execution of both techniques. Ultimately, to become truly supportive of diversity, writing center communities must know how to call out and in.

International students contribute greatly to our institutions’ diversity, but they often face a difficult adjustment, as Panelist 2, Okunola Odeniyi, has experienced firsthand. A doctoral student and MWC tutor, Okunola is passionate about creating a welcoming and inclusive space for international students. In addition to dealing with the emotional troubles of moving to the United States, international students have to grapple with unfamiliar writing conventions (Schneider, 2018). To this end, Okunola will share strategies for tutor education, such as teaching genre expectations, that are focused on bridging the writing gap and empowering international students throughout their academic journey.

Panelist 3, Huan Liu, a TESOL Master’s student and MWC tutor, will argue that, while many international students rely on writing centers for academic support (DeJoy & Smith, 2017), language and cultural differences can pose barriers between tutors and writers. Therefore, Huan will present two bold and innovative ways for writing centers to attract and serve multilingual students. First, she will explain how writing centers can train tutors on predominant home languages and cultures, potentially even

encouraging tutors to learn target languages (Lape, 2019). She will also share ideas for hiring multilingual candidates who have diverse backgrounds (Rafoth, 2015).

The final presentation will build on Huan's recommendation for tutor education. Panelist 4, Layli Miron, directs the MWC, where multilingual students comprise about one-fifth of visits. Responding to the call of scholars like Thonus (2014) to provide differentiated support to multilingual clients, she piloted a tutor training module that adapts TESOL principles to the writing center in Fall 2022. Layli will present an overview of the module's dozen lessons, along with an assessment of its effectiveness based on preliminary feedback. This curriculum aspires to empower multilingual writing center clients to both understand U.S. academic writing conventions and make strategic choices to challenge them.

Abstract (100 words maximum):

While nearly every writing center professes a commitment to diversity, what does empowering writers with minoritized identities look like in practice? Perhaps it looks like striking a balance between giving students access to the communicative tools needed for academic success and questioning the pressure to assimilate. Aiming for this delicate balance, the four panelists, all of whom work at the Miller Writing Center at Auburn University, will present practical strategies for writing centers to support cultural and linguistic diversity. These strategies include calling in and out, easing international students' transitions, recruiting multilingual tutors, and educating all tutors in TESOL pedagogy.