

SWCA 2024 Conference Proposal

Southeastern Writing Center Association | February 22 – 24, 2024

Presenter Information

Okunola Odeniyi | ozo0018@auburn.edu

Huan Liu | hzl0136@auburn.edu

Presentation Type:

50-minute workshop (interactive session)

Presentation Title

Promoting Access and Support through Asynchronous Feedback

Presentation Category

TBD

Abstract (50 – 100 words maximum)

This workshop explores the asynchronous tutoring modality, including methods for giving effective written feedback, to promote access and support for diverse and marginalized writers in writing centers. We argue that asynchronous tutoring was long devalued by writing center practitioners due to misconceptions about fewer interactions. However, with effective written feedback, asynchronous tutoring may have a significant impact on increasing writers' engagement and critical thinking. In this workshop, all attendees will learn strategies for providing effective written feedback and participate in hands-on activities to write a structured feedback letter.

Proposal (250- 500 words)

Writing center scholars have debated ways to increase access in writing centers. These debates often revolve around questions of inclusivity, equity, and accessibility (Khoo & Huo, 2023). Central to these debates is the ongoing discussion of synchronous versus asynchronous tutoring modalities (Christine, 2013). Writing centers may prioritize face-to-face and online synchronous tutoring over asynchronous tutoring because of the fear that asynchronous tutoring could reverse all efforts to break the fit-it shop cliché (North, 1984). Additionally, there is a tendency for asynchronous tutoring to devolve into a drop-off editing service (Denton, 2017) with limited scope and absence of student engagement. Moreover, each modality requires different methods of providing feedback to establish rapport and meet writers' needs (Jones et al., 2006). Despite the misconceptions about asynchronous modalities, skilled tutors can provide personalized and detailed written feedback tailored to writers' needs (Bell et.al., 2022), and writers can

reflect more deeply on their writing and the feedback, leading to increased engagement and critical thinking (Barron et al., 2023; Christine, 2013).

No doubt, the pandemic inspired more writing centers to embrace asynchronous modalities. Yet, even in the age of COVID-19, our writing center eschewed asynchronous tutoring due to the scarcity of literature on the topic. For example, a basic search of the word “asynchronous” in the *Southern Discourse in the Center* (SDC) archives provided about 13 results (SDC, 2023). Due to this limitation, writing centers may struggle to develop strategies and guidelines to provide effective written feedback to writers. In 2023, calls for writing centers to focus on intercultural communication and promoting access for all (e.g., Babcock, 2015; Batt, 2018; Rafoth, 2014), led us to try asynchronous tutoring. Our goal is to provide writing support to diverse student populations, including those with cognitive or hearing needs, multilingual students, and non-traditional students. We developed our methods for giving feedback using marginal comments and a feedback letter that provides the rationale for the comments. A combination of marginal comments and the feedback letter is engaging and evokes critical thinking in writers.

During this workshop, Speaker 1 will discuss the engrained notion that synchronous tutoring is better for writers. The goal is not to place both on a scale, but for attendees to see the possibilities for how asynchronous tutoring could promote access in writing centers. Next, Speaker 2 will discuss the inclusion of neurodiverse clients through asynchronous modalities in writing centers, as well as strategies for avoiding the copy-editor trap and empowering tutees with transferable writing skills. Finally, this workshop will present an opportunity for attendees to engage in hands-on activities, including giving effective written feedback and writing a structured feedback letter to a hypothetical client. The overall goal is to explore ways to strengthen writing center pedagogy, promote inclusion, and provide individualized support to clients asynchronously.

References

- Babcock, R. D. (2015). Disabilities in the writing center. *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*, 13(1).
<http://www.praxisuwc.com/babcock-131>
- Barron, K. L., Warrender-Hill, K., Buckner, S. W., & Ready, P. Z. (2023). Expanding Writing Center Space-Time: Tutoring Modality, Access, and Equity. *The Peer Review*, 4(2).
- Batt, A. (2018). Welcoming and managing neurodiversity in the writing center. *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*.
- Bell, L. E., Brantley, A., & Van Vleet, M. (2022). Why Writers Choose Asynchronous Online Tutoring: Issues of Access and Inclusion. *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, 46(5-6), 3-11.
- Bruffee, K. A. (1984). Collaborative learning and the conversation of mankind. *College English*, 46(7), 635-652. <https://doi.org/10.2307/376924>
- Christine R. (2013). So You Want to Start a Peer Online Writing Center? *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 4(1), 17-42.
- Denton, K. (2017). Beyond the lore: A case for asynchronous online tutoring research. *The Writing Center Journal*, 36(2), 175-203. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44594855>
- Jones, R. H., Garralda, A., Li, D. C. S., & Lock, G. (2006). Interactional dynamics in on-line and face-to-face peer-tutoring sessions for second language writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 15(1), 1-23.
- Khoo, E., & Huo, X. (2023). Listening to diverse voices: A liberatory writing pedagogy for empowerment and emancipation. *The Peer Review*, 7(1).
- North, S. M. (1984). The idea of a writing center. *College English*, 46(5), 433-446.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/377047>
- Rafoth, B. (2014). *Multilingual writers and writing centers*. University Press of Colorado.
- SDC (2023). Scholarship. Southern Discourse in the Center.