

CENTERING SERVICE TO GRADUATE WRITERS

REVIEW OF *RE/WRITING THE CENTER: APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE WRITING CENTER*, EDITED BY SUSAN LAWRENCE AND TERRY MYERS ZAWACKI

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Lawrence, Susan and Terry Myers Zawacki, T., editors. *Re/Writing the Center: Approaches to Supporting Graduate Students in the Writing Center*. Utah State UP, 2018. 270 pages, \$34.95.

At the Kathleen Jones White Writing Center at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), I have been both witness to and participant in myriad innovative graduate services at a generalist college writing center. IUP's center is fifty years in the making, and today their practices reflect recent graduate student writing scholarship—including many practices recommended in *Re/Writing the Center: Approaches to Supporting Graduate Students in the Writing Center*, edited by Susan Lawrence and Terry Myers Zawacki. Those writing center services include innovative approaches, such as a Graduate Editing Service, hybrid models of tutoring, partnership with the School of Graduate Studies and Research, and explicit training in access for multilingual and international students. What *Re/Writing the Center* offers is not just elaboration on the many writing center services that may assist graduate students to degree completion, but the argument that to support future scholarship, writing center directors and writing program administrators must strive to holistically serve all graduate students' writing needs.

Re/Writing the Center seems both an attempt to end the conversation about *whether* we should support graduate student writers, and begin another about the challenges of doing so. In writing center studies, we have agreed that supporting graduate students is necessary, and the literature illustrates various successful approaches to graduate writing needs (Bell and Hewerdine, Busl, Donnelly, and Capdevielle, Medvecky, Simpson, Voorhies). Other disciplines, however, may not yet see the necessity of graduate students' writing development. In *Re/Writing the Center* one frequent source of concern is the "sometimes-daunting faculty adviso[r] whose ideas of graduate writing and the needs of graduate writers may not mesh with ours" (Gillespie 6). The contributors to the volume suggest several pathways to overcoming this

issue, including WID/writing center collaborations and internal mentorship models, which will be discussed in a moment. But it is worth pausing here to explore the climate of conversation about graduate writing support services.

In 2016, responding to writing consultant Daveena Tauber's assertion that private writing consultation may be a necessary pathway to addressing the issues that graduate student writers have in finishing doctoral work expediently or at all, Shannon Madden and Jerry Stinnett's series of three articles on the *Writing Center Journal* blog asserted that while "mentorship services" for graduate students are showing up on more campuses nationwide, they "are still not present at the majority of U.S. universities." However, Madden and Stinnett explain, there are many internal collegiate pathways that can assist these students. In other words, we writing center practitioners can do it. The suggestion that graduate students still need more support—and that such support is a systemic collegiate problem—is the strongest argument set forth in *Re/Writing the Center*.

In recent years, an increasing number of studies have looked at ways to serve the diverse population of graduate students. Some innovative graduate writing support services are writing camps, or retreats where doctoral students are given writing space and time, but no instruction (Busl, Donnelly, and Capdevielle), specialized tutor training for graduate writing with recommendations for tutors to be trained in WID (Voorhies), and efforts to engage peer tutors in creating their own professional development to meet the needs of students and build their *vitas* in the process (LeCluyse & Mendlesohn). *Re/Writing the Center* adds several more, including the successes of pre-tutoring intake and orientation meetings (Lawrence, Tetreault, and Deans, chapter five), hybrid consultations where tutors read online before meeting in person (Kallestinova, chapter six), and training tutors to use Comparative Genre Analysis, or CGA, to meet the needs of STEM students (Reineke, Glavan, Phillips, and Wolfe, chapter eight). And in his chapter on

multilingual STEM graduate students in writing centers, Simpson suggests that writing centers position themselves as “resources for advisors and graduate faculty” (79). But elsewhere, the contributors maintain that there is no single proven method for graduate writing success (Simpson, “The Problem of Graduate Level Writing Support”).

In recommended praxis, *Re/Writing the Center’s* contributors align well with Nancy Grimm’s frameworks that make space in the center for Global Englishes, for differing discourse systems and genres, and for the understanding that students live within social powers and contexts beyond their control. Possibly growing from these ideas, the collection includes chapters on STEM writers, service to multilingual writers, graduate student identity, and proofreading. A focus on the last, however, demonstrates that as a collective body of writing professionals, we are still struggling to create space free from bias and limited service behaviors (Grimm).

Perhaps the best example of an access struggle is Joan Turner’s chapter on proofreading, or what she calls “microlevel issues of language use.” She argues the “right” kind of language is still expected (101), despite many scholar-researchers’ push for less normative standards (Young) and more flexibility and openness to multilingual writers’ written inflection. As Turner says, “proofreading can also be seen as a process of cultural sanitation, making all texts conform to acknowledged standards” (101) and according to her research, these standards are still deeply ingrained in the dissertation process. We are clearly not done with the proofreading conversation or the discussion of how writing centers can equivalently listen to and serve multilingual writers. Altogether, this book, despite its intention to revise our assumptions, illustrates that we are still grappling with them.

That said, the contributors clearly share the belief that graduate students need writing centers not just to complete degrees or to move quickly to defense (Mannon 59), but to better understand and create knowledge in their fields (Madden and Stinnett) and that learning to write for academic audiences will assist them to knowledge-create in their disciplines. Several contributors cite Anthony Paré in his efforts to link writing with knowledge creation. In chapter twelve, Lenaghan asserts that “academic writing is an iterative process through which knowledge is made” (241). This emphasis on knowledge-creation, and the necessity of supporting graduate students who will be contributors to their fields, is woven throughout the volume. *Re/Writing the Center* is grounded in the call for writing centers to be “change agents in support of graduate students” (Purdue, 256).

In *Re/Writing the Center*, we are reminded that scholars work collaboratively. We don’t go it alone, and we should not expect our graduate students to. In the conclusion to the book, Sherry Wynn Perdue asserts that “if [graduate students] were going to perceive of themselves as knowledge makers, their supervisors needed more explicit preparation for and knowledge of the writing process” (257). In the end, that is the story of this volume: a strong message from excellent researchers in the field that if we are to lift up scholars who will create knowledge in their disciplines, we must invest time in graduate students’ writing development.

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