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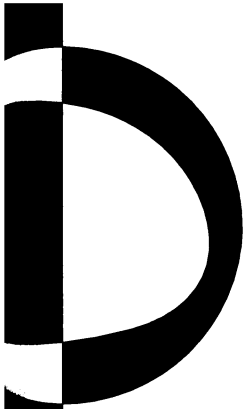
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Lauren Fitzgerald

## Undergraduate Writing Tutors as Researchers: Redrawing Boundaries

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### Abstract

In this edited version of her keynote address for the 2012 IWCA conference, Lauren Fitzgerald contends that the prevalence of undergraduate research by writing tutors presents us with unique insights into several distinctive features of our field that have not been examined in tandem before. Fitzgerald explores four main claims: First, unlike students in rhetoric and composition who don't tutor, undergraduate tutors have been provided with opportunities to share their research at conferences and in print for nearly three decades. Second, writing tutoring programs are usually the only places on our campuses where undergraduates can work with peers on writing in formal and supported settings, which gives them access to sites of Practitioner Inquiry and yields authentic research exigencies. Third, undergraduate writing tutor research is usually supported by ongoing tutor education and mentoring that value tutor knowledge production. Fourth, peer writing tutoring authorizes writers and tutors to be authors in their

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own right. Fitzgerald argues that we should pursue undergraduate research further because it can align writing tutorial programs with institutional values that might in turn lead to more support, improve our programs, and develop the scholarship of our field, including research produced by undergraduate tutors themselves.

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## Introduction

As I considered what this keynote<sup>1</sup> would be about, I found that, because of recent work with Melissa Ianetta (including editing a special issue of *The Writing Center Journal* featuring undergraduate research), I had no choice but to focus on undergraduate writing tutors as researchers. The advantage of talking about this topic with you today is that I believe there will be something to interest us all: for those of us who tutor, whether undergraduates, graduates, or professionals, undergraduate research by peer writing tutors offers insights into the value of helping writers; for the administrators among us, undergraduate research as a movement puts a spotlight on the good work being done in our programs; and for the scholars in the audience, undergraduate tutor-researchers can help us map out what our field needs to consider now and where it might be headed in the future. In our time together, then, I'll first briefly describe the parallel histories of the undergraduate research movement and peer writing tutor research, looking for where these traditions both do and don't (but should) intersect. I'll then look at ways peer writing tutors contribute to the scholarship of the field and, finally, ruminate on how this conversation might evolve and improve our understanding of the work we've undertaken.

## Undergraduate Research and Peer Writing Tutoring: A Brief History

Something that interests me, and might interest you, about undergraduate research as a national movement is how some of its milestones overlap with some of those in peer writing tutoring. Though undergraduate research has, according to Joyce Kinkead, been around for two hundred

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1 I want to thank Shareen Grogan, 2012 IWCA Conference Chair and President of the SoCal Writing Centers Association, Denise Stephenson, and the SoCal WCA for inviting me and for making the conference such a wonderful event.

years, it was “institutionalized” and “termed as a ‘movement’” because of the founding, in 1978, of the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) (“What’s” 25). However, it was the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), formed in 1987, that first provided a forum for students in all disciplines to present their work. The CUR and NCUR officially merged in 2010 (Kinkead, “Undergraduate” 140), and together<sup>2</sup>, they defined undergraduate research as “inquiry-based learning, scholarship, and creative accomplishments” that involve “a four-step learning process” for undergraduates: first, “the identification of and acquisition of a disciplinary or interdisciplinary methodology”; second, “the setting out of a concrete investigative problem”; third, “the carrying out of the actual project”; and “finally, the dispersing/sharing a new scholar’s discoveries with his or her peers” (Council).

If we look back to where peer writing tutoring research was in the late 1970s and mid-1980s, we can see that peer tutors have long been engaged in work strikingly similar to the learning process outlined by the CUR and NCUR. In the 1970s and culminating in his groundbreaking 1984 article “Peer Tutoring and the ‘Conversation of Mankind,’” Kenneth Bruffee was coming to the conclusion that peer writing tutoring too is a “way of introducing students to the process by which communities of knowledgeable peers . . . create knowledge” (12). Moreover, the same year that Bruffee published his foundational essay, both the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPTW) and the Rocky Mountain Peer Tutoring Conference convened for the first time, and *The Writing Lab Newsletter’s* “Tutor’s Corner” (now “Tutor’s Column”) became, as Laurie Grobman and Kinkead suggest, probably the first publication venue for undergraduates in rhetoric and composition (xix).

The historian in me wonders whether something was going on at the time that led to these very different developments. The two centuries of undergraduate research Kinkead charts were almost exclusively in the sciences (“What’s”), so perhaps both were informed by the laboratory method Neal Lerner argues has linked science and writing instruction for more than a century. The historian in me also wonders about how these events relate to what was happening—or *not* happening—with undergraduate research in rhetoric and composition during the 1970s and ’80s. This field’s entry into the undergraduate research movement is relatively late, after all, with the founding of the

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2 The Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) and the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) are now known officially as the CUR. Thanks to Joyce Kinkead for this clarification.

journal *Young Scholars in Writing* in 2003, the appearance, starting in 2008, of two other journals (*Xchanges* and *Queen City Writers*), and, in 2010, the formation of the CCCC's Undergraduate Research Task Force and subsequent efforts to make more room for undergraduates at the organization's conference. If late to the party, rhetoric and composition now seems to be experiencing its own undergraduate research moment.

### **Peer Writing Tutors in *Young Scholars in Writing***

As intriguing as this line of inquiry is, however, it's not my focus here. Instead, I want to use undergraduate research as a lens or heuristic by which to put side by side qualities of peer writing tutoring that I don't think have been discussed together before. So I turn now from this brief historical contextualization to take as my starting point a hypothesis that Kinkead offers in response to this historical account. She surmises that in rhetoric and composition, "undergraduates who tutor are the most likely authors of scholarly and research essays" ("Undergraduate" 150). As a leading figure in both writing center studies and the undergraduate research movement, Kinkead is in an excellent position to make this assertion. But the good research I've been reading by undergraduates inspired me to test this hypothesis by way of a specific data set, the 107 articles published in *Young Scholars in Writing* through 2011 (all of which are available online). I wanted to see if, in a venue devoted to undergraduate research in rhetoric and composition as a whole, Kinkead's hypothesis still holds up.

Well, initially it looked as if it didn't. I found that, of the total 107 *Young Scholars* articles, only 27 were by writing tutors. Undeterred, however, I took a more fine-grained approach to these 107 articles, considering who wrote them, what they are about, and how their studies were conducted, which led me to evidence that supports Kinkead's hypothesis. For instance, I decided I could rule out all 15 articles in the "Spotlight on First-Year Writing" section since tutors don't tend to meet the submission criteria of conducting their research in "lower-division composition course[s] or [as] . . . first-year student[s]" ("Spotlight").

Then I considered the subject matter and methodology of the remaining 92 articles, and I found that only 40 used composition studies research methods. By "research methods," I have in mind the Practitioner Inquiry, Conceptual Inquiry, and Empirical Inquiry described by Sarah Liggett, Kerri Jordan, & Steve Price in their recent taxonomy of writing center research. By contrast, the 52 *Young Scholars* articles that don't fit this taxonomy are what I would call traditional textual analyses, usually rhetorical, of readily available (not archival)

cultural artifacts such as presidential and political speeches, novels, poems, museum exhibits, images, advertisements, and blog posts. These analyses bear some resemblance to Liggett, Jordan, & Price's definition of Conceptual Inquiry since this methodology too takes texts as its objects of study. But these articles do not, in Liggett, Jordan, & Price's words, aim "to create interpretations of what happens within writing centers and beyond in the broader contexts of writing programs and institutional hierarchies" (64). Instead, they answer the "Research in Rhetoric" part of the journal's mission.

More to the point, of the 40 *Young Scholars* articles that use the methodologies of composition studies generally and writing center studies in particular, the majority, 24, are by writing tutors. As a result, this inventory of articles allows me to argue that *Young Scholars in Writing* supports Kinkead's hypothesis if in a qualified manner: that is, based on this data, we can say that "undergraduates who tutor are the most likely authors of scholarly and research essays" that use composition studies methodologies.

I am led by my research to make one more modification to Kinkead's hypothesis, for I found that the composition scholars who discuss *Young Scholars in Writing* at any length—Amy Robillard; Laurie Grobman; and Doug Downs, Heidi Estrem, & Susan Thomas—all refer only to *tutor*-authored essays from this journal. So, with this additional finding in mind, Kinkead's hypothesis should now read, "Undergraduates who tutor are the most likely authors of scholarly and research essays" that use composition methodologies and that are singled out by composition scholars.

### **Why Peer Writing Tutors?**

Now we come to what for me is the obvious question: Why are undergraduates who tutor the most likely authors of scholarly and research essays that use composition methodologies and are singled out? This question is worth asking for a couple of reasons: First, as I mentioned before, the answers can suggest practical strategies for promoting the work that we do. Second, I don't believe we've looked at these answers side by side, and undergraduate research helps us see them together. Third, looking at them together might give us useful ways to understand our practice and scholarship.

In abbreviated form, here are four answers to my question:

1. Undergraduate writing tutors have been provided with presentation and publication venues for nearly three decades.
2. Peer writing tutoring is *the* site of Practitioner Inquiry, offering exigencies for research.
3. Undergraduate writing tutor research is supported by ongoing tutor education and mentoring.
4. Peer writing tutoring authorizes writers and tutors.

Before I take you through the longer versions of these answers and reflect upon the implications of each, I should make clear that by discussing the ways peer writing tutoring programs support undergraduate researchers, I do not want to suggest that tutors research and write only—or even primarily—*because of* writing tutoring programs, as what Robillard might call an “instantiation of a particular pedagogy” (257). Rather, I follow Dominic DelliCarpini & Cynthia Crimmins’s discussion of how peer writing tutoring contributed to the research of tutors in their program, including one who published in *Young Scholars*: though tutoring can provide students “with opportunities for research,” they argue, only tutors themselves “can take credit for [their] success” (198). Put another way, undergraduate research is attributable not to writing tutoring programs but to the peer writing tutors who do the work. I should mention too that I’m using the clunky phrase “writing tutoring programs” as shorthand for all forms of institutionalized one-with-one and small-group writing support, including writing centers, writing fellows programs, writing tutoring within academic support centers, and course-based writing tutoring programs.

*Undergraduate writing tutors have been provided with presentation and publication venues for nearly three decades.* Even though presentations and publications are not the starting point for undergraduate research, because I’ve already discussed them so much here, I’m offering them as my first reason that “undergraduates who tutor are the most likely authors of scholarly and research essays” that use composition methodologies and are singled out. Tutors have been provided with these venues for nearly three decades, and as a result, undergraduates who tutor have had more opportunities to share their research than students in rhetoric and composition who don’t tutor. As I personally know so well, such venues are useful not only as motivation for getting the work done; presenting and publishing can also prompt us to deepen our interest in the subject and produce and share more. And it can serve as an invitation to professional conversations. For instance, in her

discussion of the importance of undergraduate research for preservice teachers, Sarah Hochstetler looks back on how her own experience as a presenter at a peer writing tutor conference gave her “a new enthusiasm for and an understanding of ‘our field’” that eventually led to several publications “that shaped [her] growing professional identity” (44, 43).

I find the pesky historian in me wants to ask a follow-up question: Why have tutors been provided with these venues for so long? Again, though I’m not pursuing historical origins at this juncture, I can say that the answer seems related to the call for contributions from undergraduate tutors in writing center scholarship. I’m thinking especially of Brian Fallon’s keynote last year at NCPTW, when he said that administrators and professional scholars need “to pay more attention to peer tutors, to what they tell us about learning, teaching, and writing, and to what they bring to our scholarly conversations in the writing center and composition studies fields.” Even as exhortations such as Fallon’s point to a lack of tutor voices, they make clear that there is also a belief that they should be included, and the venues for tutor research bear witness to this belief. *Young Scholars* tutor-author Anita Varma confirms the helpfulness of such invitations when she quotes Sue Dinitz & Jean Kiedaisch’s observation that “writing center theory can be enriched by including tutor voices and perspectives” (qtd. in Varma 37n). And with her own article, Varma articulates “the value of having a student consultant participate in the conversation about writing center theory and practice” (37n).

*Peer writing tutoring is the site of Practitioner Inquiry, offering exigencies for research.* Before the presentations and publications comes tutoring itself. It’s worth taking a moment to remember how unique and remarkable peer writing tutoring really is. Other than courses that require students to respond to each other’s texts, writing tutoring programs are usually the only places on our campuses where undergraduates can work with their peers on their writing in formal and supported settings. And undergraduate writing tutors’ direct access to this formal site of learning in turn gives them greater access to composition methodologies than other students in rhetoric and composition have. As Kinkead says, tutoring “lends itself to practice as inquiry” (“Undergraduate” 143). Drawing on John Dewey’s notion of “occupational experience,” DelliCarpini & Crimmins explain how such inquiry can lead to tutor research: the tutors’ “*experience*,” they write, “becomes the subject of reflective impulses that drive [them] to ask wider questions about the practices of the field, and so to engage in disciplinary research” (192). Such experience and reflection help to make peer writing tutoring *the* site of Practitioner Inquiry.



What also helps is that, as Stephen M. North points out in his foundational *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, the one-with-one work of the writing center is “the most obvious setting” for “practical inquiry” (44). First of all, as Liggett, Jordan, & Price put it, “problems find tutors in the writing center; they need not go looking for them” (57). Second, as North says, rather than deploying “existing strategies,” tutors-as-practitioners are “able and/or encouraged to try new solutions” for these “new problems” (44). If the word “problems” gives you pause in this context, the undergraduate writing tutor research in *Young Scholars* offers another way to understand the process, in terms of the more expansive concept of “exigence.” As you probably know, rhetoricians use “exigence” to discuss what motivates us to speak, write, or research, and it is often described not just in terms of a problem that must be solved but a gap or lack that needs to be filled (Bitzer 6–7; Jolliffe 139). Though many of the tutor-authored *Young Scholars* articles examine and try to solve problems in their programs, many others frame their research exigencies as gaps. And they do so not just to make the usual academic move of highlighting what’s missing in the scholarship to justify their own arguments. Instead, and foregrounding the interpersonal urgency that North gestures to, these tutors often put a spotlight on the more authentic gaps they encounter—between themselves and the people they work with. Mara Brecht, for example, discusses her attempt “to bridge [the] gap” between herself as “a student from an elite educational institution” and the working-class adult learners she tutored in a community literacy program (62). Similarly, writing about how multilingual writers and their tutors “expend a lot of energy on parallel paths because their starting points and end points are not common,” Cameron Mozafari argues that what’s needed is to “bridge the gap between the unofficial ESL bank of knowledge and the official academic bank of knowledge” (47).

Such gaps, these tutor-authors demonstrate, must be filled with research. In their article on the differences between tutoring writers from engineering and English classes, Ruth Johnson, Beth Clark, & Mario Burton point out a gap in the scholarship and between people that in turn calls on them to conduct their study. They write,

Although various articles discuss the writing center’s significance in merging the gap between the engineering and English departments, very little research exists on the interpersonal relationship that develops between writing center consultants and engineering students, and even less on the strategies used by consultants within these relationships. Therefore, we decided

to conduct research to explore the similarities and differences in consulting strategies when working with engineering and English students. (63)

Similarly, Jonathan Doucette locates gaps both in the scholarship and in his own identity, which, again, led to the writing of his article. He says,

I came to this research topic with the hope of finding a way to reconcile my academic and personal selves: to find a way to bridge the gap between the academic disciplines of composition and queer studies, while also attempting to place myself personally within certain academic spaces. In short, this paper is an attempt at belonging. (14)

These gaps highlight the tutors' sensitivity to what's happening—and not happening—in their tutoring and academic lives. I don't know whether these gaps indicate that peer writing tutoring programs are good at helping tutors see research exigencies or that the people hired to be tutors come already equipped to see them, or both. I do know that the tutors I work with can and do, and that I try to take advantage of their perspicacity at the end of every semester with a meeting on what works and doesn't in our center. Tutors always point out what I can't see or can't afford to see from my administrative position, but now I'm thinking that instead of trying to solve these problems or ruling out the ones I can't address, I should first invite tutors to see them as research opportunities, and I should embrace them as such.

*Undergraduate writing tutor research is supported by ongoing tutor education and mentoring.* As a writing center director, I need to consciously invite and embrace research because, though the practice of writing tutoring might present research exigencies, the inquiry into them isn't necessarily automatic. But that's not usually a problem because undergraduate writing tutor research is often supported by ongoing tutor education and mentoring. Kinkead observes that “the standard seminar in tutoring naturally results in questions on improving practice, which, in turn, leads to inquiry,” and she sees this as another key reason that undergraduate writing tutors are most likely to author scholarship and research in rhetoric and composition (“Undergraduate” 155). In their survey of 100 small liberal arts colleges, Jill M. Gladstein & Dara Rossman Regaignon report that nearly half offer such a course and, anecdotally, that “many of these courses—at small colleges and nationwide” include writing center research (168). As those of you who teach, have taken,

or are now taking tutor education courses know, this work is not your grandfather's first-year composition research paper. For instance, Emily Hall & Brad Hughes tell us that the research paper that tutors write at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Writing Fellows Program allows them “to participate in the scholarly discourse on composition, rhetoric, and writing centers in ways different from research they’ve done in previous courses” (33). What makes the difference, I suspect, are the very gaps and exigencies that the tutor-authored *Young Scholars* articles point to and fill with their original research.

But even if your peer tutoring program, like mine, does not offer a course, tutor education might encourage research in other ways. For example, you might read Paula Gillespie & Neal Lerner's *Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring*, which insists “that all writing center workers”—tutors and administrators alike—see themselves as researchers (128). Or you might use as models essays by undergraduate writing tutors in *The Writing Lab Newsletter's* “Tutor's Column” or in Leonard A. & JoAnne M. Podis's *Working with Student Writers* or by current and past tutors in your own program.

And even if you don't read these works, your staff development might embrace Anne Ellen Geller, Michele Eodice, Frankie Condon, Meg Carroll, & Elizabeth Boquet's expanded notion of “tutor training” in *The Everyday Writing Center*, which exhorts us to debunk the myth that teaching and research are mutually exclusive (59). To my mind, a perfect example of this myth busting is Hochstetler's description of how the director of her writing center encouraged her not only to present at a conference but, once she had returned, to “write about” her “ideas about tutoring and teaching writing.” Hochstetler goes on to say that “[w]ith her [director's] mentorship,” she published an article on her own and two with her director, including one that strove to disrupt the “black and white world” in which only faculty publish and present at conferences (44, 43). Tutor research can not only bridge gaps but break out of institutionalized binaries.

*Peer writing tutoring authorizes writers and tutors.* Finally—and for me most important since in many ways it subsumes the other answers on my list—is the last reason I believe undergraduate writing tutors are the most likely researchers: because peer writing tutoring authorizes writers and tutors. What I mean by the first part of this statement is akin to Beth Rapp Young's observation that “[m]any writing centers have embraced the goal of empowering *student writers* to become *writers*” (144). I don't want to be overly idealistic here, but I am convinced that when we work with people on their writing, we work with them as full-on, 100% WRITERS, not sort-of/half writers that the term *student*

*writer* can conjure up. This conviction is confirmed by several tutor-authored *Young Scholars* articles. Mozafari, for instance, recounts how he told the multilingual writer he was working with that “though she was writing a research paper for her teacher, she was ultimately the author of her piece” (58). Likewise, Amber Carini, Sarah Haufrect, Bina Patel, Andrea Ruiz, & Nithan Sannappa describe how an undergraduate group workshop leader moved a student “from a ‘passive consumer’ to a ‘producer’ of knowledge” (154). And Varma suggests that one way tutors can achieve all of this is by “literaliz[ing] the notion of audience by establishing for clients that though their papers are being written for a specific class, the potential or imagined audience of their prose extends beyond a single professor” (31).

By saying that peer writing tutoring authorizes writers and tutors, I’m also arguing that in the process of authorizing their peers, tutors can authorize themselves. Part of the evidence I have for this claim is Mozafari’s, Varma’s, and Carini, Haufrect, Patel, Ruiz, & Sannappa’s articles, for which, of course, they each authored and produced knowledge and through which they continue to reach multiple audiences. The other evidence I have is Heather Bastian & Lindsay Harkness’s study of three years’ worth of literacy narratives by writing associates aiming to “reflect upon their own development as individual writers throughout their educational histories” (107). This is a rich study with many findings that confirm those of the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project (Hughes, Gillespie, & Kail). In the interest of time, I’ll focus on just two. First, like other *Young Scholars* tutor-authors, Bastian & Harkness point to exigence as a motivating force—in this case manifesting as a gap in the tutors’ knowledge of specific disciplines. From their analysis, they found that “Writing Associates learn . . . because they are introduced to different disciplines and genres. Because they are relied upon to advise other students with their writing, Writing Associates must become informed themselves” (117). Second, the tutors in Bastian & Harkness’s study reported that they learned about their own writing from their work with other writers: “[B]y constantly surveying the writing of others with a critical eye,” Bastian & Harkness hold, “Writing Associates begin looking at their own writing more critically. They tend to see some of the same mistakes in their own writing and they then follow the same advice that they give to the students with whom they are working” (118).

Moreover, tutor-authorship subsumes the other answers on my list because it helps to account for the reasons tutor-authored *Young Scholars* articles are singled out by composition scholars. Bastian & Harkness’s article, for instance, is cited by both Robillard and Grobman

because it corrects rhetoric and composition's history of negative depictions of unauthorized "student writers" with what Bastian & Harkness themselves call their own "careful reading and interpretation of 'proficient' writing by 'proficient' writers" (118; see Grobman W177; Robillard 255). Downs, Estrem, & Thomas pursue the authorship issue slightly differently, asking four *Young Scholars* tutor-authors to reflect on how they researched and wrote their articles. What's interesting is that, in these interviews, two of the four tutors—Johnson and Strasser<sup>3</sup>—refer explicitly to how revising their pieces for publication brought home for them lessons they'd learned from tutoring.

Also interesting, if irritating, is that, with the possible exception of Grobman<sup>4</sup>, none of these professional scholars acknowledges that peer writing tutoring might have contributed to both the choice of subject matter and methodology of the articles they cite. Again, I don't want to attribute the agency of these articles' authors to peer writing tutoring. But I am concerned about the way tutoring as a possible exigence is overlooked, except, curiously enough, insofar as the benefits of peer writing tutoring might be exported elsewhere—to the writing major (Kinhead, "Undergraduate" 155) or, especially, to first-year composition (Downs, Estrem, & Thomas 123, 125; Grobman W188). Personally, even as a first-year composition and advanced writing teacher who puts a lot of thought into creating the right conditions for authorship and exigency in her courses, I can't see how to bring most of the rich learning experiences that peer writing tutoring offers into these very different contexts.

However, I should tell you that after I wrote that last petulant sentence, I recalled that three *Young Scholars* articles—by Heather Byland, by Allie Oosta & Rori-Leigh Hoatlin, and by Robin Martin—easily export to the classroom the insights gained from tutoring as they address methods of improving student and teacher feedback in writing courses. Indeed, just last week I shared Byland's article with my first-year composition students to much good effect, including, and probably especially, for me.

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3 Strasser published her *Young Scholars* piece in the "Young Scholars in First-Year Writing" section of the journal, but it was as a tutor that she was later interviewed by Downs, Estrem, & Thomas.

4 Grobman doesn't acknowledge the importance of tutoring in "The Student Scholar," but she does do so at least implicitly in her introduction (with Kinhead) to *Undergraduate Research in English Studies* and in her coauthored article with Jeanne Marie Rose.

## Conclusion

I see two potential drawbacks and two benefits to the participation of peer-writing-tutoring programs in the undergraduate-research movement. One possible drawback is what Peter Vandenberg warned us of more than a dozen years ago, that the emphasis on writing tutors' scholarly *production*, on presenting and publishing, might do "nothing quite so well as normalize for student tutors the stratification of institutional work into a competitive, exclusionary, and sometimes violent hierarchy of discursive practices" (78). Another is that, like every other numbers game we get into, including reporting on how many writers we served and sessions held, undergraduate research could present another quota to fill each year.

But I also want to suggest that the potential benefits of our participation in this movement outweigh the costs. One possible benefit—and here's the practical application for the administrators among us—is that peer-writing-tutor research might lead to more funding and support for our programs. If our supervisors and institutions are already interested in undergraduate research, we might offer to walk them through a selection of the CUR and NCUR's *Joint Statement of Principles in Support of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities*. And we might note how many of these boxes peer writing tutoring ticks off. Undergraduate research, the CUR and NCUR maintain:

- combines teaching and research: in undergraduate research, teaching and scholarship become parts of one simultaneous, overlapping, shared process
- replaces traditional archetypes of teacher and student with a collaborative investigative model
- replaces competitive modes of inquiry with ones more focused on collective and collaborative work
- motivates students to learn by doing. . . . [S]tudents engage directly in practicing the work of their discipline
- creates internal networks to support these collaborative learning efforts.

To expand on just the first point, undergraduate research by peer writing tutors by definition "combines teaching and research" when tutor-authors take as their starting points the teaching they themselves do.

As testimony to how prevalent the undergraduate research movement is, even at my institution, which has been experiencing the

kind of budget woes that makes everyone hunker down and avoid eye contact, we're suddenly holding an undergraduate research fair. The associate dean was visibly cheered when I mentioned that a tutor in our center was working on a research project that he could easily turn into a poster for the fair. If undergraduate research isn't yet a priority at your institution and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is, you might point out to your administrators that your tutors' undergraduate research is, as Grobman & Kinkead tell us, "one of a few certifiable high-impact educational practices" that result in "greater satisfaction with the undergraduate experience" (xiii).

Other benefits I see in pursuing undergraduate research is that it has the potential to improve our programs, our institutions, and the scholarship of our field. Hall & Hughes report that their writing fellows' research has challenged the usual oppositions of faculty vs. student and producer vs. consumer, on both programmatic and scholarly levels (33), to which Jennifer Corroy's 2003 *Young Scholars* article on writing fellows programs attests. One important reason that tutor research has the potential to effect institutional change is that, as Skyler Konicki writes in her 2011 *Young Scholars* article, "tutors stand at the intersection of several academic crossroads—student, teacher, writer, writing program ambassador, writing program beneficiary—and view a writing program's work in unique ways that reveal previously untapped information" (77).

Robillard and Grobman each argue that undergraduate research is potentially a game changer for rhetoric and composition. To some extent, of course, peer writing tutoring has already been changed by the last three decades of undergraduate research. Dinitz & Keidaisch and Fallon remind us, however, that we still have a ways to go before our scholarship fully engages peer writing tutor voices. Significantly, one place I notice this absence is in the work of undergraduate researchers themselves. What would happen, I wonder, if undergraduate writing tutors stopped citing the giants of writing center studies—the Bruffees, Norths, and others I've mentioned here? And what if, instead, the giants on whose shoulders peer writing tutor-researchers stood were those of other peer writing tutor-authors? What kind of authorizing would happen then? How would the boundaries of the field and our collective understanding of what we do be redrawn? I don't have the answers to these questions, but as our understanding of peer writing tutor research grows and as tutors themselves take a more authoritative position in the conversations of our discipline, I look forward to finding out.

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