VSU Writing Tutoring: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the effects of sociocultural changes on the writing tutoring practices and environments of Valdosta State University's three writing tutoring iterations: The Writing Center, Student Success Center, and Academic Support Center. Through an interview series involving past and current peer writing tutors and writing tutoring staff, this thesis evaluates the similarities and differences in collaborative learning, scaffolding, and dialogic interactions that have influenced the sociocultural writing tutoring environment. After collecting interview data from each writing tutoring generation, this study explores how the writing center's physical environment, community values and goals, and sociocultural-based tutoring training practices have shaped tutees' writing development. Additionally, tutor and staff interviews help acknowledge how sociocultural tutoring strategies, based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, Bruffee's collaborative learning, and Bakhtin's dialogic theory, have effectively taught students how to write over time. This study further clarifies which tutoring methods should be maintained and which aspects could improve. Overall, this thesis describes Valdosta State University's writing tutoring impact over the years, emphasizing the relationship between sociocultural writing-based practices and collaborative environments in providing students with effective writing support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I had always been curious to learn more about VSU's writing center history and discover the best writing tutoring approaches, but encouragement from many friends and faculty kept me going when this project became overwhelming. While I worked extremely hard to research and conduct interviews to complete this thesis within a short timeframe, I had several supporters who cheered me on throughout my entire writing process. I would like to give a special thanks to my good friends Georgia Wynn, Kilie Huckleby, and Tyler Cosper, who made me feel less alone fulfilling my graduate assistantship duties. As we all taught our own classes and worked towards meeting our thesis or comprehensive exam requirement, these friends of mine consistently reminded me that I could successfully undertake this large project.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to William and Tricia Cooper, my parents. I am eternally grateful for your financial support throughout my undergraduate and graduate years, instilling the importance of education and obtaining a higher degree. Dad, looking forward to your hugs and the smell of your cooking when I came home motivated me that I could continue writing more after I ate a good meal. Mom, I owe you my optimistic outlook on this entire process, as you reminded me that sharing my research is a privilege and opportunity that not all have. I love you both dearly.

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CHAPTER I

Research Introduction

Overview of Research and Research Questions

This thesis discusses research taken from three different time periods of Valdosta State University's writing tutoring history. Throughout this thesis, I refer to these writing center periods as "generations" to emphasize generational changes such as overall institutional or program changes and the different tutors and tutoring staff employed over the years. To effectively evaluate and collect sufficient evidence, I interviewed six past and present writing tutors as well as two staff members from each of VSU's writing center generations: The Writing Center—VSU's first writing center between the early 1990s and 2006; the Student Success Center—VSU's writing center between 2006 and 2018; and the Academic Support Center—VSU's current writing center as of 2025, which was established in 2018. Instead of using numerical data, such as tutee's academic outcomes, I directly interviewed writing tutors and tutoring staff. Participants' interviews showed how the sociocultural factors—institutional and operational changes, writing tutoring practices, plus generational shifts associated with educational trends and technological changes—influenced specific variables. These dependent variables included perceived tutee's learning engagement, the tutor's effectiveness according to popular writing tutoring practices, and the environment's overall inclusivity. Through an interview series with influential members from each writing center generation, each participant's responses provide valuable experiences that reveal patterns and changes regarding writing tutoring practices over time. My project's findings consider the main research question: How

does sociocultural theory reveal how tutoring has evolved across VSU's three writing tutoring generations? Additional more-specific research questions include the following:

1. How does each writing center's physical design and space directly impact tutor-tutee interactions and support learning?
2. How does the writing tutoring organizational structure support writing tutors' skills and confidence in tutoring writing?
3. Which writing tutoring strategies have been the most successful over time?

Purpose and Objectives

This thesis allows VSU's writing center tutors and staff to reflect and examine their organization's successes and failures that relate to writing tutoring methods. Interview responses will allow the writing center to learn from prior and current experiences, noting which tutoring strategies should continue or change. Additionally, if VSU's current writing tutoring organization can better understand the impacts of the writing center's physical environment and daily tutoring operations, interview findings will hopefully prompt necessary changes needed to make writing tutoring even more effective. Alongside understanding these environmental successes, this project further confirms the best tutoring practices that relate to sociocultural theory.

The project's first objective includes noting changes and similarities within each writing center generation's location, physical environment, and ethos. This objective considers how the writing center environment—the physical layout and overall atmosphere or culture—positively impacts both the tutor's and tutee's tutoring experience. This objective considers how each writing center's physical design and space cultivate a supportive learning environment. Another aspect of this objective includes analyzing each writing tutoring community based on past and

present organizational values, institutional priorities, and sense of inclusivity. For instance, organizational structures, which include writing center leadership and hiring and training procedures, give an inside look into how each writing tutoring organization provides quality writing tutoring. Additionally, institutionally required responsibilities, including the writing tutor's expected role, can also help evaluate the effectiveness of sociocultural writing methods. Therefore, understanding each writing tutoring program provides further insight into how to improve the tutor-tutee relationship since the sociocultural environment could directly affect how tutors and tutees collaborate.

The second research objective of this thesis compares patterns in the three generations' writing tutoring practices. Sociocultural writing practices include the specific ways that tutors teach students writing through collaborative methods. In comparing sociocultural writing tutoring strategies' frequency and variability across the three writing center generations, this thesis shows the benefits and shortcomings of incorporating the Zone of Proximal Development, collaborative learning, and dialogic theory. Through these two main objectives, observing environmental shifts and tutoring strategies, VSU's current writing center will have a clearer understanding of which organizational practices to continue, adjust, or substitute.

Significance of Study

While this thesis further contributes to composition theoretical studies and writing center research, studying the positives and negatives behind implementing sociocultural writing theory will support VSU's existing writing tutoring program. Compared to other subjects like math or science, writing's subjective nature can make it difficult to tutor. Obtaining interview answers from prior and current writing center staff and tutors provides a clearer understanding of organizational aspects that work and writing tutoring approaches that still need improving. While

this thesis shows VSU's tutoring history, this research could arguably present a narrow perspective since this project only addresses a singular institution's progression, VSU's writing tutoring services. Despite this limited lens, I hope that other writing tutoring organizations can benefit from seeing VSU's writing center's environmental influences and see sociocultural writing theory in action. Similar University System of Georgia Institutions could benefit from knowing the successful practices of VSU's tutoring writing program. This writing center research would allow other colleges and universities to implement improvements so that they could influence writing tutoring and the overall tutor-tutee experience as well. Lastly, since applying prior writing center research to real-world tutoring situations such as my own and tutoring and staff participants, I can further show which sociocultural aspects prove most practical for tutoring writing.

Theoretical Framework and Key Terms

I used sociocultural theory as my main theoretical lens to discuss and observe writing tutors' strategies and the writing center's environmental influences. Joining sociocultural rhetorical thought with composition's social-constructivist view allowed me to best understand the individual writing processes that align most with my own tutoring practices and determine social influences that go beyond individual interaction. Through a mostly sociocultural but at times cognitivist lens, the sociocultural theorists Kenneth Bruffee, Lev Vygotsky, and Mikhail Bakhtin further explain how the writing center's social aspects and overall culture further harness social tutoring practices.

Although a psychologist, Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural engagement theory relates to process-centered writing instruction and writing center theory. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, including the well-known Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept, provides a cognitivist

yet socially mediated approach, underscoring the social implications of writing tutoring work and the writing center environment. Laura E. Berk describes Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as how the "mind extends beyond the skin and is inseparably joined with other minds" (30). Vygotsky's ZPD urges that instructors should prioritize students' growth potential rather than strictly utilize their beginning knowledge.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory further supports how cultural and social environmental influences comprise the writing tutor situation's success. Essentially, "social experience shapes the ways of thinking and interpreting the world available to individuals" (Berk 30). The peer writing tutor serves the tutee twofold: personalizing the writing process and being present to catch the tutee and reroute them when they reach their Zone of Proximal Development limits. Through Vygotsky's views, peer socialization drives the writing process, especially as writing tutor and tutee interact, therefore encouraging the cognitive processes, which cognitivists Linda Flower and John R. Hayes mention—brainstorming, outlining, drafting, and revising.

Likewise, writing center theorist Kenneth Bruffee highlights how collaborating positively influences tutoring. Bruffee activates sociocultural theory through peer learning, specifically situating his collaborative learning theory in writing tutoring instruction. Kenneth Bruffee states that "collaborative learning" is an "indirect teaching" form and does not differentiate the classroom content, which is taught, but rather "change[s] the social context" that students learn within" (Bruffee 418). This collaborative learning emphasizes that institutions need a writing center, or simply peer writing tutoring. Bruffee also mentions the writing tutor's position, despite providing a classroom context that shows how students use collaborative learning: "Students' work tended to improve when they got help from peers; peers offering help, furthermore, learned from the students they helped and from the activity of helping itself" (418). Bruffee emphasizes

peer influence and conversational power, critiquing how traditional educational practices often forget or fail to see valuable practices such as students helping other students.

This describes VSU's writing center, or at least the ASC which I am most familiar with since I had many experiences recruiting tutees through class visit presentations. These beginning-of-the-semester class visits inform students about writing tutoring services, highlighting that writing tutors are not professionals but peers and students who are still learning like the tutees that they tutor. Therefore, I referenced Bruffee's collaborative learning and role of conversation throughout this thesis, anticipating that tutors might have used these approaches when tutoring writing. Since Bruffee emphasizes how students benefit the most when they learn through sharing ideas and feedback with one another, prioritizing tutor and tutee relations can be a necessary first step.

Following Bruffee's insistence that conversation greatly influences the writing tutoring, Mikhail Bakhtin gives dialogue a nuanced meaning, adding how back-and-forth discussion shapes meaning within social environments such as the writing tutoring context. In Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination,* he discusses dialogic theory's powerful foundational influence to understand social interaction and the multiple conversational perspectives that create new meaning. Bakhtin states, "The dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of any discourse" and that dialogue between subjects is "the natural orientation of any living discourse" (279). Bakhtin expresses how naturally dialogic discourse aligns language around the previously anticipated spoken word. These spoken words that form during a tutoring session can then transform later into written words that further expound the writer's perspective within the context of their lives and academics. In other words, Bakhtin's

dialogic theory can help student writers recognize that their writing joins and participates in larger conversations, such as discourse surrounding their relevant research field.

The tutoring session becomes a dialogic space when the tutor and tutee discuss ideas together, providing students with a new perspective towards their writing. Bakhtin's dialogic theory further stresses the relationship between understanding and responding: the two are "dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other" (282). As Bruffee emphasizes conversation's role, Bakhtin urges that exchange builds meaning. Dialogue powerfully supports conversational-based writing tutoring strategies. Oftentimes, tutees find themselves stuck and cornered within their own ideas. The writing tutor can help tutees find new meaning as tutees explain their thought process, and the writing tutor engages with them, providing responses. Evidently, Bakhtin's dialogic theory aligns with sociocultural writing views, proving how implementing conversation allows tutees to acknowledge multiple perspectives, thus circulating more ideas during a writing tutoring session.

References throughout this thesis include vocabulary that explains specific VSU operations and services, writing center pedagogy, plus those related to composition and rhetoric studies. These key terms are included below:

Foundational Learning Theories

- Sociocultural Theory: Lev Vygotsky's cognitive development theory that stresses how students learn through social interactions. Applying this social approach to peer writing tutoring, specifically Kenneth Bruffee's collaborative learning theory emphasize that social interactions, tutor-tutee relationships, and a collaborative culture, all influence a student's learning.
- Social constructivism: This term refers to a student's process of constructing knowledge as they interact with others throughout the learning process.

- Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): Lev Vygotsky's concept that refers to the tasks that a student cannot complete on their own but can complete with help or guidance from a peer tutor or instructor.
- Scaffolding: Often used in combination with ZPD, this teaching strategy provides the student with temporary supports that are removed gradually as students' learning progresses and they master skills, eventually allowing them to complete work independently.

Writing Center and Tutoring Concepts

- Writing center/Tutoring center: The writing center and tutoring center both refer to where writing tutoring takes place. When used for VSU, these terms might be used interchangeably since writing tutoring services began in a writing center but were eventually included with other tutoring services in a comprehensive tutoring center.
- Tutoring session: The writing tutoring meeting where the tutor helps the tutee learn.
- Peer writing tutor/ Peer tutor: A student who demonstrates excellent writing abilities; the writing center hires and trains them to assist students who need help.
- Tutee: A student who comes to the tutoring center and attends the tutoring session since they need help with an English class or class that requires writing.

Writing Tutoring Strategies

- Dialogic Conversation: Mikhail Bakhtin's idea that shared dialogue creates knowledge; participants engage in collaborative out-loud discussion or questioning, which helps develop meaningful ideas as the two exchange their unique perspectives.

- Scaffolded Conversation: My own tutoring strategy that is inspired by scaffolding. The writing tutor utilizes questioning to assess the tutee's assignment goals and writing progress, which encourages the tutee to learn through actively engaging in conversation.
- Feedback Loops/Looping Feedback: An education-based strategy that the writing tutor uses to provide ongoing feedback, encouraging the tutee about their current learning progress and motivating them about how they could improve.
- Re-imagined Peer Tutor Cycle: A structured writing tutoring cycle model that occurs across many tutoring sessions compared to the original tutoring cycle that occurs in one sitting and includes greeting the tutee, assessing the student's writing, providing suggestions or writing strategies, and concluding the session. During the re-imagined peer tutoring cycle, the tutor gradually reduces support as the tutee masters skills and gains writing independence. This cycle has three stages ranging from most to least tutor support: 1. Out-loud brainstorming (70/30 support): the tutor leads an out-loud brainstorming discussion to help the tutee generate ideas; 2. Structured brainstorming (50/50 support): the tutor and tutee both structure initial brainstorming ideas; and 3. Written practice (10/90 support): the tutee practices writing independently while the writing tutor oversees the writing process.
- Writing Transfer/Transfer: An instructional approach that encourages students to recall prior writing knowledge and adapt these skills for new writing tasks and contexts.

Composition Theories

- Cognitivist theory: A scientific approach to writing, referring to the cognitive and mental processes that occur when individuals write, essentially observing how psychological studies explain writing.

- Product-Based Writing Theory: A writing view that focuses on the final written product or essay, considering writing correctness and mechanics such as grammar, structure, and formal conventions.
- Process-Based Writing Theory: A writing view that focuses on the writing process—brainstorming/outlining, drafting, and revising—rather than the finished product or essay.

About the Researcher

My experiences tutoring writing and teaching English during my undergraduate English and Secondary Education dual-degree program prompted my interest in writing center studies, which directly influenced the topic of my thesis. In 2019, I became a writing tutor and have been heavily involved with VSU's Academic Support Center ever since. I learned about the ASC when my undergraduate faculty mentor, Dr. Donna Sewell, contacted me after my first-year writing instructor suggested that I tutor writing. When I joined the ASC during the fall semester, Dr. Chere Peguesse, the ASC's director at the time, welcomed me with open arms, and after attending the required pre-semester tutoring training days, I met many tutors who later turned out to be some of my closest friends.

Finding belonging in the ASC tutoring community, I started tutoring under the technical title of "embedded tutor," which meant that I was assigned or "embedded" into one freshman composition course. Similarly to a supplemental instructor (SI) or facilitator role, instead of tutoring students who made appointments, I attended class meetings, discussed students' progress during meetings with the course instructor, and hosted walk-in tutoring sessions that occurred at a set time. Since I was paired to one course and only tutored a specific group of students, I created a GroupMe messaging group to remind students about writing tutoring meeting times and upcoming course assignments. All these elements of embedded tutoring were

useful, as they allowed me to make strong relationships with students, providing me with a steady stream of returning tutees that I knew well from attending the class. As an embedded tutor and peer, students trusted me as a fellow student to help them learn the writing process, making tutoring appointments low-stakes and casual but overall productive.

Ever since I first tutored as an embedded writing tutor, I have seen VSU's writing tutoring evolve before my eyes. My role shifted to strictly an appointment-based writing tutor after I was an embedded tutor for two semesters and supported two freshman composition courses. Although I still tutored in the ASC, I did not attend a specific course. My tutoring services were no longer limited to students from one course but extended to all VSU students across various disciplines and class standings, from freshmen to seniors. I now had to consider students' various writing styles and diverse needs, causing me to take a broader but still student-centered approach. Meeting students at their writing level, I found ways to support students but also challenge them, requiring them to actively participate and engage with their writing through one-on-one discussion with me.

Additionally, as an embedded tutor and appointment-based tutor, I have had other responsibilities, such as being the writing tutor group team lead. Team leads essentially support the other writing tutors, reminding them about completing administrative duties and observing their overall tutoring progress. These administrative tasks include completing session reflection forms after each tutoring session and meeting weekly for writing training meetings. During weekly meetings, writing tutors obtain training hours and engage in valuable discussion over writing skills, tutoring pedagogy, and their tutoring experiences.

When I started as an embedded tutor and throughout my undergraduate tutoring career, the ASC's previous director, Dr. Peguesse, hosted these weekly training meetings every Friday

afternoon. These training meetings were instrumental in developing my expertise as a writing tutor, allowing me to learn how to best navigate specific tutee situations and write better myself. These training meetings were also a main source of staff and peer support since everyone got to know each other well. However, when I tutored as a graduate tutor, I had the opportunity to lead these meetings myself and create activities that would help newly hired, undergraduate, and fellow graduate writing tutors sharpen their writing tutoring skills. This was a big change since I still needed to develop as a writer and missed having the prior director's support and leadership. Currently, since I now tutor with VSU'S Center for International Programs (CIP), ASC graduate writing tutors no longer receive any weekly training, which differs greatly from the ASC's previous tutoring training focus.

During the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, I witnessed further changes as the ASC attempted to adapt. Mandatory quarantines that switched all in-person classes and campus activities online also meant that writing tutoring could no longer occur face-to-face in Odum Library. This experience pushed me to be even more flexible, as I had to exchange my collaborative writing tutoring methods that worked best in person with an online platform. As a result, the quality of writing tutoring suffered since frequent connectivity issues arose; writing tutors had to take shortcuts, utilizing less conversational approaches and more online comments. When writing tutoring shifted to the internet, it exposed the need for a collaborative and physical writing tutoring environment. Without a tangible tutoring space, tutors and tutees could not connect the same.

Although I have mainly tutored in the main ASC space as an appointment-based tutor, during my recent graduate assistantship, my tutoring services have relocated to VSU's CIP. Outside of my previous Odum Library location, I and one other graduate writing tutor solely

tutor international students or students involved in studying abroad, who can walk in at any time. Since many students have attended walk-in tutoring, I have seen the firsthand benefits of prioritizing availability, giving students the chance to easily receive tutoring when they need it rather than having students plan ahead and make appointments far in advance. However, since the ASC's recent partnership with the tutoring platform Knack, general VSU students must submit a peer tutor request and then wait for an ASC writing tutor to accept, making it more difficult to provide walk-in tutoring.

After graduating in 2025, I will have tutored writing for twelve semesters total. My experiences tutoring writing at the ASC have shaped my views towards the writing center environment and writing tutoring strategies. Having spent many years with the ASC and seen VSU's tutoring program evolve, I genuinely care about the future success of VSU's writing center. By observing how writing tutors and staff perceive the writing center's environmental efficiency and tutoring practices, this thesis can inform current and future ASC members about effective approaches, ultimately benefitting VSU. Additionally, documenting the history of VSU's writing tutoring with participants' subjective accounts that detail their tutoring program's highs and lows may encourage VSU to consider institutional-level changes that could improve writing tutoring services.

Therefore, examining VSU's writing center origins and comparing the three writing center generations will allow me to assess the writing center's potential direction and provide overall suggestions for how writing tutoring can improve moving forward. My own writing tutor role has given me the opportunity to see the success of a collaborative environment and sociocultural tutoring strategies. As I have witnessed the ASC tutoring program change over time and successfully tutored students across a wide range of needs and disciplines, I can recall

effective environmental elements and writing tutoring strategies that I have witnessed work. This thesis also functions similarly, providing testimonials from other VSU writing tutors and tutoring staff that can affirm or deny what went well during their tutoring generation.

Since I only have personal experiences tutoring at the ASC, I am aware that I could bring potential bias, favoring the third VSU writing center generation over the others. However, since I gathered an equal tutor and staff participant sampling for each writing center generation, this thesis presents a well-rounded account of each generation's successes and potential areas for improvement. Moreover, during the interview and data analysis process, I tried my best to objectively deliver my findings, as I have taken the appropriate steps, and more specifically, IRB training, to uphold ethical standards throughout this thesis project's entirety.

CHAPTER II

Historical Introduction: Writing Theory Literature Review

A Process Theory Timeline: Exchanging Formalism for Collaborative Writing

Writing process theory has evolved over the years, beginning with institutions realizing formalist approaches' ineffectiveness. Previous formalist writing pedagogy emphasized teaching and assessing writing based on students' completed polished essays. This traditional writing view prioritized students' writing correctness and formal conventions rather than acknowledging the various recurring writing stages.

Harvard's 1874 English entrance exam was an influential turning point, exposing the institutional need to transition from product-based writing approaches to process-based instruction. Steven Lynn confirms Harvard's writing exam's flaws: "It is not therefore surprising that the exam revealed a problem, but it is still nonetheless startling to learn that over half the students admitted to Harvard failed this initial exam, sparking the first national crisis regarding the poor writing skills of American boys" (Lynn 20). Harvard's product-based structure that assessed students' writing skills made the institution aware that students could not produce sufficient, high-quality writing. During the 1880s, students' overwhelming inability to pass this entrance exam prompted Harvard's new course, "English A," the first "'required freshman course in composition that within fifteen years would be standard at almost every college in America'" (Lynn 20). With this new preliminary writing course, Harvard attempted to bridge the gap between students' poor writing skills and their high standards, which further exposed that incoming freshman needed foundational writing courses.

Although this realization left instructors with a big task, these introductory composition courses provided students with the opportunity to improve their novice writing skills. Even though these beginning writing courses still utilized a formalist pedagogical structure, Harvard's new course approach was a first step towards institutions realizing the need for process-based writing instruction. The process-based writing approach shifted this focus away from a finalized written product, emphasizing a flexible and more student-centered writing process. This new writing instruction encouraged students to view writing as a recursive process in which they generated ideas, learned to develop their writing across drafts, and revised their work.

Jumping ahead several years, the 1966 Dartmouth Conference was another crucial milestone that advanced writing process theory throughout schools and post-secondary institutions. During this Dartmouth College conference, several "American and British writing teachers" gathered, determining whether formalist instruction should continue, "liberat[ing] teachers from the dull routine of teaching grammar and logic" (Mac Donald 4). This instructional shift significantly influenced how teachers taught writing since they moved away from product-based approaches—strict grammar and students' writing outcomes—now embracing process-based pedagogy—students' growth and writing development.

However, Heather Mac Donald's article, *Why Johnny Can't Write,* implicates process theory as a leading contributor to American students' writing deficiencies. She argues that by the 1990s, process-based approaches diminished writing instruction and hindered students' basic writing skills: "The only thing that composition teachers are *not* talking and writing about these days is how to teach students to compose clear, logical prose" (Mac Donald 3-4). Mac Donald criticizes initial process-based instruction, explaining that its emphasis on students' individual growth and expression led to students neglecting crucial writing conventions. As a result,

without considering these prior product-based correctness standards, the quality of students' final writing product seemed to be lost in an overshadowing writing process.

Nonetheless, Mac Donald acknowledges the 1966 Dartmouth Conference as a significant event within the process theory timeline but criticizes process theory's initial start as an ultimately unsuccessful approach. The Dartmouth Conference was a turning point that rejected previous transmission models of teaching writing in exchange for a growth model, believing more exploratory and creative approaches would improve students' writing skills. Mac Donald explains the impacts of the process-based writing instruction transition: "Lesson: Once out of the bottle, the process genie is hard to get back in" (8). Since the Dartmouth Conference previously deemphasized grammar and writing form, this pedagogical shift seemed challenging to reverse, also leaving students with inadequate writing skills. Early process theory critics and Mac Donald emphasized that process-based writing approaches needed to grow before actually becoming effective and practical. When the Dartmouth Conference reframed writing instruction with grammar and formal conventions as a lesser priority, one thing became clear: though students now understood writing as a procedure, process-based approaches still needed to develop to consider crucial writing conventions and close students' writing gaps that this shift left behind.

Despite some critics who viewed initial process theory as a laid-back approach, the 1980s welcomed a new process theory that emphasized a more scientific approach and provided insight about the writer's cognitive processes. Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, known for their cognitive writing process theory, outlined the main writing process stages that writers go back and forth between when crafting a writing piece. Flower and Hayes explained that "writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing" (366). This cognitive "model identifies three major processes (plan,

translate, and review) and a number of sub-processes available to the writer" (Flower and Hayes 375). However, these cognitivists urge that the writer's true writing process does not happen as consecutively as the brief process list provided suggests. Rather, the writer's writing process often happens out of order, as the writer might first develop their ideas, and as they continue writing and researching, return to revise their initial ideas, brainstorm again when their ideas completely change, or even revise as they go rather than waiting until the last step of the writing process.

Flowers and Hayes address that writers can approach the writing process differently, but understanding cognitive processes can give writers room to improve: "One major advantage of identifying these basic cognitive processes or thinking skills writers use is that we can then compare the composing strategies of good and poor writers" (Flowers and Hayes 367-368). If tutors can observe how a tutee's writing process differs from their own, they can then redirect them more productively when they become stuck. Flowers and Hayes break down specific methods that tutors can use to observe writers further, using a traditional psychological modeling method that better illustrates the writing process. Flowers and Hayes suggest this modeling approach: "Obviously, the best way to model the writing process is to study a writer in action, and there are many ways to do this," including utilizing "thinking aloud protocols" during a problem-solving type of assignment, which "capture a detailed record of what is going on in the writer's mind during the act of composing itself" (368). This thinking-aloud protocol which records the writer's writing process from start to finish provides a glimpse of later sociocultural approaches that utilize tutor-tutee dialogue. Linda Flowers and John R. Hayes's cognitive process theory was a crucial step towards sociocultural writing instruction, paving the way for social-constructivism approaches. Since understanding individual cognitive processes' writing

role, composition theorists could now understand how the writer's social interactions and relationships with others impact writing—social-epistemic and sociocultural theory.

James Berlin's 1988 essay, "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," further developed writing process theory with his social-epistemic approach. Berlin discusses writing's ideological side, highlighting how cultures, power dynamics, and socialization can influence communication that occurs in the classroom and society. Berlin discusses first how cognitive and social approaches construct reality, grounding social-epistemic theory's main ideas. According to Berlin, social-epistemic writing practices replace the student's neutral writing views with the understanding that writing channels deeper meaning. Berlin states, "Social-epistemic rhetoric attempts to place the question of ideology at the center of the teaching of writing" (Berlin 492). Encouraging the notion that collaborating with others builds knowledge, Berlin sees socialization as a vehicle that enables people to further generate and mold their ideas. Berlin notes that social-epistemic theory provides a "detailed analysis of dehumanizing social experience and a self-critical and overtly historicized alternative" that originates in democracy or, more specifically, traditions such as "economic, social, political, and cultural spheres" (492). Moreover, Berlin views that societal relationships, plus their related dynamics and belief systems, directly influence writing.

While Berlin warns that social-epistemic rhetoric holds lesser practicality, social-epistemic rhetoric urges that students in the classroom—or tutees in the writing center—recognize that ideological forces impact their writing. If cognitive approaches prove that "the real is rational," then social-epistemic rhetoric places the real "in a relationship that involves the dialectical interaction of the observer, the discourse community (social group) in which the observer is functioning, and the material conditions of existence" (Berlin 488). When instructors

dedicate time towards building students' awareness that these power structures exist, students can fully interpret the reading assignments they consume; therefore, students can write more strategically. Social-epistemic ideas, such as those that James Berlin introduces, help bridge the hierarchal gaps between instructors and students or tutors as seasoned writers and students as learners, shaping writing tutoring's peer learning emphasis. Since the writing center utilizes peer interacting to help tutees learn, this active engagement prevents them from going through the motions like those situated in a classroom environment. Without the classroom's more intimidating power dynamics that keep students unconscious, learning with a writing tutor in a new social context—the writing center— helps the student make new connections and approach writing differently amidst a new space.

Around the late 1990s and early 2000s, Neal Lerner strongly supported that writing centers were where the most effective sociocultural-based learning took place. Lerner's ideas built upon James Berlin's central social-epistemic ideal that social ideologies such as power dynamics and community discourse construct writing and shape knowledge. Before Lerner discusses how writing centers have evolved, he explains why they were first created: Escaping the traditional teacher-led instruction within a classroom environment, "writing centers have long offered themselves as nonevaluative, relatively safe spaces, as *experiments* in the teaching of writing" (15). Lerner's contributions furthered writing research, as his book, *The Idea of a Writing Laboratory*, helped shape how writing centers were understood despite their changes over time.

Lerner outlines that writing centers brought about two major changes for writing instruction— a new learning environment and who taught students the writing process. Advancing Berlin's social power dynamics awareness, Lerner reminds us that writing centers

made writing instruction an even playing field where two students who related to each other could have natural interactions, as they met within a more laid-back environment. Lerner explains this difference further, providing a quote from the 1950 Conference on College Composition and Communication workshop: "The writing laboratory should be what the classroom is not—natural, realistic, and friendly" (15). Implementing writing centers provided students, or tutees, with another option—an escape from the typical classroom's confines and pressures—where their poor writing skills first emerged, surfacing more as they struggled with keeping up as fast-paced lessons progressed.

Additionally, Lerner challenges the idea that writing center spaces are mainly remedial. Lerner traces the writing center's historical impact, such as name changes and institutional needs, which shaped the writing center's position, reputation, and overall purpose. Providing the writing center's high points as he investigates their role alongside the academy's core curriculum changes, Lerner mentions, "When writing centers were called *writing laboratories*, they often thrived, with a lineage going back to the 1890s" (2). During this time, institutions utilized "laboratory methods of instruction" across various disciplines and levels; most specifically, the "newly required first-year English composition classes" followed this structure (Lerner 2). Lerner reiterates that past writing laboratories were a necessity, joining together with the freshman composition course so that students could learn to write with both instructional means.

Falling off the scene and resurfacing during the open admissions era, these writing laboratories were then renamed writing centers, which stuck since many composition theorists, like Stephen North from the 1980s, believed that the writing center title held a more positive connotation than the previous outdated perceptions associated with the writing lab. Lerner explains North's great influence and contribution to better representing the writing center

audience, shifting away from past rhetoric that associated writing centers with clinical spaces. North reshaped views towards writing centers, "castigating [English department colleagues] for their notions of writing centers as 'fix-it shops' or 'grammar garages,'" also rejecting the 'laboratory' term's "association with 'students being dissected . . . or tutors creating Frankenstein monsters'" (Lerner 1-2). When named 'writing labs,' this terminology furthered the belief that tutees were broken or sick and needed to be cured. Present-day writing centers stray away from this labeling, repositioning themselves as centers where learning takes place rather than remedial spaces that label students' writing weaknesses up front.

Thus, while composition theory has developed significantly—from traditional formalist product-centered instruction to cognitive and social-epistemic process approaches—these changes provided valuable insights for writing center work and integrating sociocultural-based writing tutoring practices.

Sociocultural Writing Practices: The Need for Tutor-Tutee Collaboration

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, specifically Zone of Proximal Development, can advance another rhetorical situation besides the classroom—the tutor-tutee relationship. Vygotsky's ZPD idea supports that "students' accomplishments while under instruction might be better markers of their potential intellectual growth than their unaided accomplishments" (Nordlof 55). In other words, students learn most effectively when they learn within their ZPD since this space falls between what the student can achieve independently and what they can potentially achieve with their teacher's help.

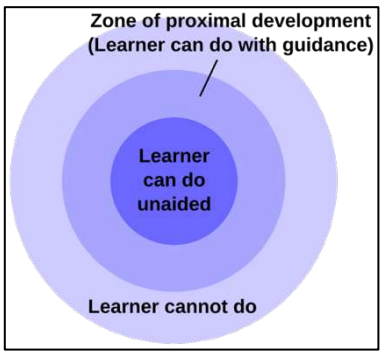

Fig. 1. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development. *Source: Why I Teach*.

John Nordlof connects Vygotsky's ideas with writing center research for understanding current writing center pedagogy in volume 34 of *The Writing Center Journal*. Lev Vygotsky and John Nordlof both provide sociocultural perspectives since they argue that learning occurs when social interactions take place. Throughout educational research, "Vygotskian ideas about teaching and learning have largely been implemented in academically relevant early childhood contexts" (Berk 30). However, John Nordlof argues that Vygotsky's ideas can apply to writing tutoring since learning occurs when the tutor considers the tutee's current level, assesses their writing needs, and adjusts instruction accordingly.

With scaffolding approaches, supports are gradually removed throughout the learning process, and the writing tutor can further challenge the tutee using their ZPD as a tool. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes utilizing a student's ZPD during instruction, which Nordlof argues can be directly implemented with scaffolding since ZPD ideas "fram[e] the issue of student learning clearly in terms of growth" (Nordlof 55). Nordlof emphasizes that although David Wood, Jerome Bruner, and Gail Ross originally created scaffolding in 1976, scaffolding "has close parallels with Vygotsky's concept, and this association has been recognized by scholars in education" (Nordlof 56). When tutees regularly attend tutoring sessions, the tutor can consider the tutee's ZPD and scaffold the writing process rather than covering too many skills at once. If tutors provide help over time through many sessions, this consistent scaffolding also benefits their relationship with the tutee, fostering a more effective and collaborative learning environment.

Nordlof stresses that when the tutor and tutee collaborate, scaffolding reinforces a student's ZPD. More specifically, cognitive scaffolding and motivational scaffolding approaches are two ways that ZPD can apply to current writing tutoring instruction. Nordlof suggests that

continuous feedback can allow the tutor to reassess the tutee's ZPD and adjust tutoring instruction accordingly. Essentially, cognitive scaffolding provides students with necessary support so that they can "figur[e] out problems for themselves" (Nordlof 57). Collaborative scaffolding includes "simplifying problems, hinting, asking open-ended questions (pumping), and prompting" (Nordlof 57). Although they may not realize that they are initializing Vygotsky's ZPD theory, writing tutors assess a tutee's ZPD upon first meeting.

Writing tutors ask tutees preliminary get-to-know-you questions when they first meet, then continue questioning tutees as they progress with the current task and assignment. A tutor might also ask how the student feels about their overall class progress. Combining ZPD and scaffolding helps the tutor not focus on the student's limits and repositions learning through a glass half-full mindset. With this new approach, the tutor can leverage what a student has already accomplished and establish their growth potential using assisted intervention. Understanding the tutee's ZPD can help the tutor provide cognitive scaffolding to further close any gaps, helping the student acquire more writing skills over time.

Nordlof provides another scaffolding technique, motivational scaffolding, which is another way that tutors can utilize a student's ZPD. With motivational scaffolding, the tutor prioritizes making learning sessions uplifting and encouraging. Motivational scaffolding techniques could include "expressions of praise, sympathy, and empathy, and optimism about students' possibilities for success" (Nordlof 57). This scaffolding version targets the tutor-tutee relationship directly, as the motivational scaffolding process requires the tutor to establish rapport with the tutee further. As tutees attend learning sessions, tutors not only should care about the student's success but also genuinely know them as a person. To supply relevant positive feedback, the tutor must closely observe the tutee's progress, establishing the student's

prior knowledge and ZPD level. Understanding where the student stands, the tutor can accurately gauge when the tutee encounters new successes and reaches milestones. This way, the writing tutor can continuously challenge the student and simultaneously empower them with praise.

Sociocultural Writing Environments: How to Build Inclusive Writing Environments

The tutoring environment, or where the tutoring session occurs, should allow the tutee to collaborate with the writing tutor and promote overall inclusivity. A sociocultural learning environment encourages social collaboration and fosters inclusivity since students from all backgrounds, academic levels, abilities, and situations engage with one another to learn. Rather than feeling too intimidated to ask for help, students should feel included and motivated when they walk into the writing center and make a tutoring appointment. For tutees to attend tutoring without any reservations, the writing center should assess their inclusivity with two environmental aspects: the writing center's overall sense of community and the environment's overall physical arrangement. If the writing center prioritizes connecting with students and recognizes their environmental characteristics' influence, then the writing center can provide inclusive services, making students feel supported within the tutoring space.

According to Kenneth Bruffee, collaborative learning is a foundation building block of inclusivity. Bruffee explains that tutors can use collaborative learning techniques to help tutees contribute to their field's discourse. Historically, literature teachers have perceived "collaborative learning as a way of engaging students deeply with the text and also as an aspect of professors' engagement with the professional community" (Bruffee 635). When teachers use small groups and peer review activities, these collaborative approaches increase students' social engagement, giving a productive alternative when traditional classroom methods like lecturing and listening fall short. However, Bruffee stresses that to fully harness collaborative learning's

pedagogical benefits, teachers should enlighten students that engaging with professional discourse allows them to join the "conversation of mankind."

As students conduct research and draw individual conclusions related to their discourse disciplines, they ultimately find belonging within their chosen professional fields. Bruffee's "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind'" discusses how teachers can utilize collaborative learning to show students that when they learn and make observations, they contribute to the world's progressing knowledge. Bruffee explains that collaborative learning allows students to participate in humanity's ongoing conversation, or as the philosopher Michael Oakeshott calls it, "the conversation of mankind" (Bruffee 647). For instance, when students acquire advanced degrees and become a member of their chosen field, they contribute a new perspective and dialogue as they engage with others. When teachers utilize collaborative learning techniques, education can then serve as students' initial training, where they acquire necessary vocabulary and deeper understanding to perpetuate this ongoing conversation.

Writing tutors can use collaborative learning or socially constructed knowledge to fully engage struggling students. Bruffee explains how the writing tutoring environment should be a social space since collaborative learning and peer workshopping help students learn, giving them access to the normal discourse within the academic community. Collaborative learning promotes overall togetherness between students on campus. As tutors remind tutees that their voices are important, tutees can then learn how to express their ideas more effectively with normal discourse. William Perry describes normal discourse as "the established contexts of knowledge in a field, discourse that makes effective reference to facts as defined within those contexts" (Bruffee 643). One of collaborative learning's main goals includes providing "social context for conversation, a particular kind of community—a community of status equals: peers;" a

community where students learn to write and "can practice and master the normal discourse exercised in established knowledge communities in the academic world and in business, government, and the professions" (Bruffee 643-644). The writing center environment serves students with its emphasis on specifically providing peer-based tutoring services. When students attend tutoring, they receive help from another peer who understands English courses' academic expectations and normal discourse.

Although still learning and not fully established within the conversation of mankind, peer tutors' unique position as students with expertise helps them pass on normal discourse pertaining to their prior courses. Bruffee explains the collaborative learning technique, "peer evaluation," where students learn through "describ[ing] the structure of a peer's paper, paraphras[ing] it, and comment[ing] both on" what works and what does not (Bruffee 637-638). Using this collaborative writing method, peer evaluation helps the tutor review the tutee's writing and provide them with additional professor-specific expectations that tutees might not have considered. While the literature and composition fields' normal discourse stay consistent, professors' preferred writing styles and pet peeves may vary. However, since tutors most often have taken the tutee's professor before, the peer tutor can translate the professor's specific wants and expectations to the tutee. For instance, the tutor can enlighten the student that their professor cannot stand contractions or will take off major points for passive voice usage.

David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University" also mentions this issue with the student's novice position compared to the instructor's expertise: "The student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community"

(Bartholomae 619). Peer writing tutors bridge tutees' gaps as they provide tutoring targeted towards writing skills and help students recognize additional professor-based conventions.

As writing tutors advance through several English courses, they accumulate an individualized understanding of their professor's dos and don'ts. When tutees attend tutoring sessions, writing tutors can pass on this insider information, or what Bruffee and Bartholomae call "normal discourse" (640). Once tutees tell the tutor the professor that they are taking, the writing tutor can then review their paper while also considering the professor's individual preferences. For instance, a writing tutor can inform the tutee whether the instructor deals fiercely with specific writing conventions such as missing commas and incorrect MLA citing, such as in-text citations. Though content takes top priority during a writing tutoring session, passing on this knowledge to tutees can prevent missing points from accumulating, greatly improving the student's grade and including them in academic conversation.

Currently, Rebecca Nowacek, the Norman H. Ott Memorial Writing Center Director at Marquette University, proposes transfer as a rhetorical tool and a collaborative opportunity. Nowacek and other Rhetoric and Composition scholars' "writing knowledge transfer" research, or "transfer," highlights "how writing knowledge and abilities learned in one context can be repurposed and recontextualized within new writing contexts" (Nowacek et al. xi). Nowacek specifically emphasizes how transfer enables students to practice utilizing rhetoric, which makes them more adaptable and stronger writers.

Reminding students to recall previous writing experiences and skills strengthens writing transfer, providing students with a starting place when they receive a new writing assignment. In 2007, Wardle "conclude[d] that 'meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies in First Year Composition may be the most important ability" that courses provide;

however, furthering this ability depends on 'treat[ing] writing as a situated, sociocultural activity that takes place within an environment of 'context-specific supports'" (Nowacek et al. 172). While writing transfer skills can include informing tutees about instructors' preferences, another transfer method encourages students to utilize their prior writing knowledge. Before the writing tutor tackles an assignment with a tutee, the tutor can ask about their individual writing process. After the student explains their usual process, this verbalization can encourage them to reflect, using transfer to consider what made their own writing process successful. This reflection exercise enables students to recognize beneficial patterns and learn which writing techniques work best for them.

Prompting students to recall their past writing skills works especially well with returning tutees. Since the writing tutor oversees the tutee's writing development across several tutoring sessions, the tutor can reassure the student that they have completed the writing process before if a new assignment overwhelms them. When a tutee has not previously established an effective writing process, the tutor can still provide transferable writing techniques that the student can use to fit different contexts. For example, the tutor can break down thesis statement elements, then show the tutee how to adjust their sentence to reflect new arguments. Other ways that students can use transfer techniques include the tutor asking the student to answer the assignment's question and consider their audience or rhetorical situation. Once a student learns that answering the assignment prompt means that their thesis statement needs to reflect their main argument, they could then use this prior knowledge to adjust their introduction paragraph when they approach a new assignment.

Nowacek's writing transfer techniques can also support tutoring for students with disabilities. When the writing tutor adapts collaborative tutoring methods to meet students'

diverse needs, this tutoring practice transfer increases the writing center's accessibility to include more students. Rebecca Day Babcock's *Tell Me How It Reads: Tutoring Deaf and Hearing Students in the Writing Center* discusses the challenges and need for adaptable approaches for effectively tutoring Deaf and hearing students. Babcock explains how tutors should view the Deaf tutoring situation after interviewing Deaf and hearing tutees: "Although the needs of deaf students are unique, their writing and learning styles and abilities present very interesting parallels to those of ESL students and students with learning disabilities" (Babcock 14). Since ASL grammar structure differs greatly from Standard American English, deaf students' prior grammar knowledge can influence unclear writing and frequent fragment sentence usage.

The writing tutor can instead shift their approach to help the deaf tutee generate ideas and then demonstrate how the student could rearrange these ideas to create complete sentences. Breaking down the writing process to consider ASL language differences makes writing more manageable for the deaf student, as they can practice learning how to use Standard American English grammar. Combining Rebecca Nowacek's writing transfer practice with Rebecca Day Babcock's visual instructional techniques, writing tutors can anticipate differences in the deaf student's prior knowledge and optimize learning with technology when a Deaf or Hard of Hearing tutee gets stuck.

Nowacek explains the benefits of multimodality, explaining how students can transfer their familiarity using digital resources when they learn: "Transfer and multimodality is an especially vital area because it engages students in their prominent vernacular and extracurricular literacies (which are often multimodal and digital) and attends to the increased presence and near ubiquity of digital composing in school, personal, and professional contexts" (Nowacek et al. 189). Today's students use technology every day like never before with the prominence of social

media, entertainment streaming platforms, and text messaging. Aside from using assistive technology, deaf students continuously use technology like other hearing students. Writing tutors can consider deaf students' plugged-in position and use educational technological resources to add familiarity to a learning session.

To further support deaf students, writing tutors can adjust the tutoring session to meet their visual learning style. Babcock explains that "students who are profoundly deaf rely on the visual channel and, for obvious reasons, are visual learners" (174). When a Deaf or Hard of Hearing tutee needs help with a literature or text-dependent course, the writing tutor can be trained to implement technological resources to provide visual-based instruction. For instance, if deaf tutees struggle in a literature course and are overwhelmed with having to write summaries over a Shakespeare play like Hamlet, the writing tutor can use more visual cues to help the tutee understand plot elements to have a deeper grasp of the overall story.

Writing tutors could move away from relying on dense text, creating a main character bullet list to help the tutee better understand what occurred in the text. Taking this a step further, writing tutors could also prompt the tutee to use their computer to look up character images. Using the online presentation website Prezi, which allows users to create an interactive concept bubble map with main ideas and details, could be another way that the writing tutor could engage the deaf tutee with visual instruction. Overall, integrating technology would help the tutor shift away from solely using text-dependent outlines, considering deaf tutees' visual learning style.

Bruffee's and Bartholomae's collaborative emphases plus Nowacek's and Babcock's multimodal accessibility-centered approaches contribute ways that the writing center can increase environmental inclusivity. If the writing center trains writing tutors to invite tutees into academic conversation and adapt writing tutoring with transfer techniques for students with

disabilities, the writing center can increase overall student access. If the writing center strives to improve its physical functionality and integrate these sociocultural tutoring methods, writing tutors can then provide more effective student-centered services while also considering tutees' diverse learning needs.

Sociocultural Dialogue: Engaging with Collaborative Learning and Discourse

Combining Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic theories with audience rhetorical theory emphasizes why writing tutors should collaborate with tutees to construct knowledge and foster audience awareness. When writing tutors utilize Bakhtin's dialogic framework—dialogism, heteroglossia, and addressivity and responsivity—they lead an active exchange. Tutors can combine both rhetorical theories of audience and language difference with dialogic practice to help tutees consider writing as an ongoing conversation, acknowledging how potential audiences perceive their writing.

The dialogic tutoring process engages the tutee since the writing tutor can assume the roles of rhetorical audience, interlocutor, and collaborator, helping students structure their writing while building understanding at the same time. Bakhtin's "The Dialogic Imagination" explains how conversation and multiple perspectives directly create writing meaning. Linguistic interactions through dialogue or dialogism shape meaning as engaging in dialogue provides content within previous conversations and future responses. As dialogue continues, ideas continuously evolve. Bakhtin explains dialogism's condition in any "living conversation" as "directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it, and structures itself in the answer's direction;" additionally, "that which has not yet been said" and "in fact anticipated by the answering word" determines the word simultaneously (280). As Bakhtin labels dialogism as a main source of meaning that conversation creates, his addressivity

and responsivity concepts further detail how social factors and rhetorical situations shape all discourse.

Paired together naturally since the address and response are both necessary parts of conversation, addressivity and responsivity still have their own separate roles, likewise to a conversation's two individual speakers. Social interactions promote understanding and meaning as the tutor and tutee interact. Bakhtin explains addressivity as the initial directing language force that anticipates another's response or interpretation. Though addressivity would naturally start the conversation, meaning actually begins during the response. To some degree, responsivity or response is "the activating principle" that founds "understanding" and "prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding" (Bakhtin 282). Bakhtin goes even further to stress that comprehension can only occur with the response. Placing meaning within the response positions the address as somewhat less important as a catalyst or initiator, leaving meaning in the response's hands. The separate response and address roles emphasize the importance of a two-way conversation to generate and develop meaning. The tutor and tutee embody this dialogic exchange as the tutoring sessions consist of these two necessary components, the address and response, which coexist as both tutor and tutee switch roles, productively developing or investigating the tutee's writing ideas.

Furthermore, Bakhtin's dialogic theory and addressivity/responsivity components could coincide with rhetorical reasoning, specifically audience theory. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford's "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy" explains how not understanding rhetorical situations can contribute to students' writing struggles. According to Ede and Lunsford, one aspect that "makes writing so difficult" is that the writer does not have "recipes," and "each rhetorical situation is unique and thus requires

the writer, catalyzed and guided by a strong sense of purpose, to reanalyze and reinvent solutions" (164). Furthering Bakhtin's emphasis that comprehending does not occur passively, Lunsford and Ede discuss many tutees' recurring issue: understanding their audience to make their writing reflect the relevant rhetorical situation.

Though students typically consider their writing's audience as the teacher who grades their work and might attempt to tailor their rhetorical tone accordingly, they still struggle with writing formally. Lunsford and Ede differentiate the influential awareness of a writer's addressed audience and invoked audience. "Writers who wish to be read must often adapt their discourse to meet the needs and expectations of an addressed audience. They may rely on past experience in addressing audiences to guide their writing, or they may engage a representative of that audience in the writing process" (Ede and Lunsford 166). The writing tutor is the representative that Ede and Lunsford describe since they help the tutee consider how to adapt their writing to specifically address a formal audience.

During the tutoring session, as the tutor and tutee use addressivity/responsivity dialogic approaches, the tutor can represent a tangible and present audience that assists students with writing academically, considering their future audience, which in most cases is their instructor. If the tutee still struggles since they have little knowledge about adequately writing with this future rhetorical audience in mind, the writing tutor can guide tutees with dialogic conversation. Writing tutors serve as knowledgeable representatives of the academic audience and can enlighten students about writing formally. The tutor can provide specific formal conventions and rules, discussing aloud how the audience might interpret the tutee's ideas and explaining the impacts of using a formal versus informal tone.

As writing tutors utilize Bakhtin's dialogic methods during the tutoring session, tutors and tutees can engage collaboratively, promoting tutees to have rhetorical agency. Since tutees come from various educational, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds, writing tutors encounter various tutee identities. Bakhtin's heteroglossia theorizes how multiple voices, perspectives, and social factors influence language and discourse. Bakhtin writes,

> But internal dialogization can become such a crucial force for creating form only where individual differences and contradictions are enriched by social heteroglossia, where dialogic reverberations do not sound in the semantic heights of discourse…but penetrate the deep strata of discourse, dialogize language itself and the world view a particular language has—where the dialogue of voices arises directly out of a social dialogue of 'languages.' (284)

Essentially, Bakhtin explains how true dialogic exchange does not occur with formal and highly polished rhetoric but rather happens every day as dialogue influences language's role instead of focusing on specific words. Dialogic exchange does not simply create meaning but reshapes how language is interpreted and reflects the student's situation and experience. With a writing tutoring focus, observing the student's writing fluency over their overall correctness encourages the tutor to reposition the tutee's thinking from singular grammatical errors and instead think about their overall content's meaning.

As heteroglossia explains why individual tutor and tutee perspectives influence learning during the tutoring session, Joseph Williams's "Phenomenology of Error" assesses how people perceive grammatical errors due to social influences. Williams claims that oftentimes approaches to grammatical correctness vary according to the individual's perceived societal status, such as

teachers versus students. This concept also extends to diverse student situations that have a particular cultural, socioeconomic, and dialect status other than Standard American English. Williams also specifically notes that the professional writer or teacher who anticipates reading a student's essay will intentionally expect and anticipate errors, finding many compared to a distinguished author's text. Williams provides reasoning for this contradiction and how to find fewer errors in students' work, explaining that student essays should be read "unreflexively" and receive the same ordinary kind of contract" that "other kinds of texts" earn (159). Therefore, since Bakhtin's heteroglossia encourages negotiable meaning among multiple perspectives, the writing tutor can approach writing errors differently.

For a tutoring session, the writing tutor can first practice erasing their preconceived misconceptions towards tutees of various backgrounds and practice considering content above all else when reading students' writing. Once the tutor and tutee have an established understanding of content using previous dialogic methods like addressivity and responsivity, the tutor can approach grammatical errors strategically, pointing out the most problematic errors rather than bombarding the student with every error present.

The tutor's attitude towards the tutee's writing should reframe the student to see errors as rhetorical choices that hinder academic communication. When the writing tutor provides dialogic feedback and collaborative dialogue that builds the student's strengths up, this positive reinforcement prevents them from feeling torn down about their writing's errors. Tutors can effectively and empathetically share academic rhetorical convention rules during dialogic exchange because the tutee feels like an equal contributor. As tutors engage with dialogic feedback and have conversations that target facilitating meaning over correctness, students can learn to exercise rhetorical intent and edit their writing to fit their rhetorical situation or purpose.

Since dialogic tutoring methods reshape students as active participants, this also reinforces writing tutoring's main goal—to instill confidence in students so that they realize they can effectively write alone.

Theory as Practice: Writing Tutoring Stories

[NOTE: Names are changed in the following section to protect identities.]

Cognitive Process Theory Insights and Peer Tutoring Benefits

Flowers and Hayes' cognitive-based writing theory proposed the writing process as a complex process, not a one-size-fits-all approach. The fact that the writing process looks different for everyone mirrors my own experiences as a writer and tutor of writers. I have noticed that I do not follow Flowers and Hayes's typical process order of planning, translating, and reviewing. Rather than consecutively completing each stage, I often move between them, returning to early stages as my writing develops. After brainstorming ideas and creating outlines, I begin forming sentences using my outline structure, but these sentences are far from finished when I write them. It is the most helpful when I go ahead and create a true rough draft, writing my ideas down first without worrying about each sentence having perfect grammar or clear ideas. I oftentimes make multiple drafts, traveling in and out of the brainstorming process, writing initial sentences down, and then returning to revise them.

Discussing our own preferred writing processes together, my English cohort members differ with their approaches, as some have mentioned that their translating process, when they write sentences down, coexists simultaneously with their revising process. More specifically, one peer mentioned that they cannot write the next sentence until they feel that the current sentence is finalized and done. Writing near peers who do not follow the same writing process that I use

solidifies Flower and Hayes's cognitive theory that the writing process is a recursive and individualized process.

Learning writing with a peer writing tutor also promotes flexibility during the writing process since students can practice writing outside of the typical classroom environment. I have seen firsthand as a freshman composition instructor and writing tutor how the classroom can stress students out. When I advertised the ASC during class visits, I emphasized to students that I was a writing tutor but also a student who was still learning just like them. In each class that I visited, I presented a slideshow with information about tutoring, and one slide that I kept every year featured the saying "Tutoring is Cool!" Despite the students' laughs at this slide, which featured a large smiley face, I always reminded the class that every student needs help sometimes, and this is okay. I told these potential tutees who made up the audience that even as a tutor myself, I found myself attending tutoring appointments. Emphasizing that I needed help as a tutor made a difference since it helped me prove that the tutoring space was a friendly environment. This also encouraged students to not feel shameful if they needed help themselves, discontinuing traditional views that the ASC was a lab where their writing needed to be fixed.

Vygotsky and Nordlof Inspired Writing Tutoring Practices

Comparing my own experiences using John Nordlof's cognitive and motivational scaffolding with tutees has helped me understand related sociocultural writing tutoring practices that work. These tutoring practices that have shown great tutee promise *include* scaffolded conversation*,* looping feedback, and reimagining the peer tutoring cycle. When writing tutors and tutees use a scaffolded writing process, the tutor can guide active conversation to help the tutee learn. Taking inspiration from cognitive and motivational scaffolding, scaffolded conversation is my own tutoring technique that I have used that incorporates Lev Vygotsky's

ZPD ideas. Tutors can facilitate conversation with a series of questions to implement scaffolded conversation with a tutee.

Essentially, scaffolded conversation works when a tutor uses preliminary questioning first, gaining a foundational context, and then uses further questioning to help the tutee achieve their assignment's main tasks. When the tutor asks these first guiding questions, they can become more familiar with the tutee, understanding their specific situation, including the course they need help with, the current assignment, plus specific writing needs they have if they can vocalize them. These initial scaffolded conversation questions establish the who, what, and where first. Then, the tutor employs subsequent questions that continue the conversation; these questions target how and why, which provide the tutoring session with further structure and help the tutor collaborate with the tutee. These how and why questions might allow the tutee to explain their current ideas, such as how they approached the current writing assignment, why they chose their writing topics, or why they feel currently stuck. Utilizing these questions can lead the tutee in the right direction, helping them come up with new ideas that they might not have considered before, or if they have already started writing, jumpstart the revision process.

Though scaffolded conversation employs questions to help the tutee learn, this method differs from traditional questioning approaches like the Socratic method that push and challenge a subject to know all the answers. Utilized throughout law courses and criticized for its "pedagogical ineffectiveness," the Socratic method "remains in its most traditional sense a means of rigorous critical inquisition to develop analytical skills" (Abrams 566-567). The Socratic method essentially serves as an exhaustive assessment exchange where participants prove their existing knowledge as they take turns challenging each other with questions. Socratic questioning is not comfortable and "attribute[s] to the general malaise and depression of modern

law students" (Abrams 566). In contrast, scaffolded conversation encourages the tutor and tutee to connect personally as the tutor empathizes with the tutee's struggles. Since the tutor and tutee work together rather than functioning as opponents, this partner dynamic creates a more welcoming learning environment as the tutee feels more willing to participate and less intimidated and pressured.

Scaffolded conversation establishes an even playing field as peer tutors and tutees learn together when they talk together. Though they both aim at finding a truth, the traditional Socratic method tests knowledge while scaffolded conversation works towards creating knowledge. When a tutor uses scaffolded conversation, they anticipate that the tutee will not know all the answers about their writing topic. The scaffolded conversation questions provide the tutor with the tutee's assignment context, such as the assignment's main goal or requirements and the tutee's current progress. Asking questions also informs the tutor whether the tutee might feel currently stuck; tutors can then revert to the brainstorming process, helping the tutee with further developing their writing ideas as the two talks through each task together.

Furthermore, scaffolded conversation can be easily adjusted to target various students' needs, because questions asked can simultaneously prompt cognitive processes and encourage students. For instance, I had a successful tutoring session with one tutee, Jaden, because I employed scaffolded questioning. After introducing myself, I started the session with learning about Jaden as an individual student, using preliminary questioning. I asked her the following questions about herself, her course and professor, plus her assignment's main task: "What is your name, and what are you currently studying?" "Which course are you taking, and which professor teaches this course? "What assignment do you need help with today?" Jaden then answered with her name and explained her situation: she had just begun her student teaching semester with

VSU's elementary education program, and she needed help developing and revising a first-grade lesson plan demo assignment.

Since I set aside time to personally meet Jaden first, we could instantly connect with our shared student teaching experiences, even though she was an elementary education major and I taught secondary grades. We even realized that we knew the same education professors, including the professor who was currently teaching her lesson planning class. Gaining this intel helped me adjust the whole tutoring session constructively considering Jaden's questions about the assignment and her professor's pet peeves, whom I knew very well. Between writing tasks, Jaden briefly spoke about her own student teaching progress and struggles, which I resonated with, so I also could provide her with empathy. These preliminary questions that started this scaffolded conversation broke the ice and settled Jada's nerves as a new tutee, plus gave me the chance to encourage her since she was obviously stressed from the moment that she first sat down.

After I comforted Jaden and proved that I understood her challenges, I continued questioning her about the lesson plan demo assignment itself, using how- and why-based questioning. The next questions I asked helped Jaden assess her current lesson plan rough draft and begin planning next steps: "Since I have only written middle and high school lesson plans, how does your professor want you to structure your first-grade lesson, and what is the lesson about?" and "Why did you choose this particular book for this reading-based lesson?" When the tutee answers questions that elicit reasoning out loud, this helps the tutor as the outside reader find true meaning and shows the tutee where holes exist in their writing. In this instance, I was confused why Jaden planned to read the same book for three separate lessons. Jaden then explained that reading the same book made lessons scaffolded and met first-grade reading

objectives, teaching students about a different story aspect each class that she read the book out loud. Gaining this new context, Jaden then could revise her lesson plan, making it more evident that she had covered main reading ideas and themes prior to the current lesson, while also considering her professor's specific guidelines. This scaffolded conversation, which commenced with personal questions and then transitioned into covering the actual assignment, gave me a new relationship with the tutee, as we constructively discussed the student's progress and got work done.

Another sociocultural method, feedback loops, can be implemented with scaffolded conversation. When a tutor uses feedback loops, they provide thorough and ongoing feedback during the tutoring process while also engaging cognitive and motivational scaffolding. According to the George Lucas Educational Foundation's (GLEF) website, *Edutopia*, "a feedback loop is a process of checking for and affirming understanding that is specific, non-evaluative, manageable, and focused on a learning target" (Meredith). Looping feedback helps tutees acknowledge their current progress and also receive encouragement about what they could do better. When I tutored writing, I provided ongoing feedback so that students would not feel overwhelmed from their present and, most often, underdeveloped skills. When I reminded them that they were doing well, students seemed encouraged and more motivated. More specifically, writing tutoring can intimidate some tutees since it can seem exposing when the tutor reads what they have written, especially if the tutee feels insecure from their poor grammar and lack of formal writing conventions. In *Embedded Formative Assessment,* Dylan Wiliam provides three principles for providing students with effective classroom feedback that I have implemented during previous tutoring sessions. These principles include making feedback "more work for the recipient," "focused," and "relat[ed] to the learning goals shared with students" (Wiliam 7-8).

Combining Wiliam's effective feedback principles with Nordlof's cognitive and motivational scaffolding, I have engaged tutees, simultaneously encouraging them while helping them also recognize their ZPD progress.

When I tutored international students at VSU's Center for International Programs, I used feedback loops with a Spanish-speaking international student, Marco. However, Marco's language skills were not the problem since he attended a U.S. high school during a foreign exchange program and acquired strong English competency. Marco needed help with his writing like other native English-speaking freshman VSU students. Marco's English 1101 paper required him to read dense article sources and synthesize their main arguments. Since Marco mostly wrote his papers beforehand, each tutoring session I reviewed his work and gave him suggestions targeting either clarity or improving his shallow analysis. Dylan Wiliam mentions that "feedback should be more work for the recipient," mainly advising that teachers should make written feedback more direct, asking the student three questions no matter "how good or bad [the] work is," that students are required to answer" (8). Fortunately, since face-to-face writing tutoring requires immediate response, the writing tutor can engage the tutee with effective feedback and implement the initial scaffolded conversation questions—who, what, and where—and continue further with asking how and why.

For Marco's session, since he had already written his paper, we established the following scaffolded conversation questions rather quickly, reviewing over his content: Who is your professor? What assignment are you working on? And what are the assignment's main requirements? Instead, I asked the "why" question when providing effective feedback after reading his rough draft: "Why did you group these articles together, and why did you choose these specific arguments made in each?" Following Nordlof's cognitive motivation, utilizing

questions helped me understand Marco's thought process while Marco could see where his writing was not as clear as he first thought.

After establishing Marco's rough draft holes, I redirected the feedback loop with Wiliam's second effective feedback principle. Especially if a student already expresses their writing insecurities out loud, a student can feel overwhelmed when the tutor begins listing out everything that they need to correct. Marco, who ironically spoke excellent English, always emphasized before I read over his work, "Just letting you know, my writing is probably not that good. I wrote this when I got home really late last night from theater practice, so I hope my ideas make sense." Feedback loops should incorporate effective feedback since overwhelmed students with busy schedules already seem self-conscious about what the tutor thinks about their writing, whom they view as a writing expert. Dylan Wiliam's advice that focused feedback is more effective because "less is often more" is helpful since focusing on "one or two areas that need to be fixed" can allow students to digest "specific and scaffolded advice" easier (8). While reading Marco's paper, I targeted higher-order concerns like if his content answered the assignment prompt rather than lower-order mechanics-based concerns such as missing commas. Since the writing tutors previously discussed higher-order versus lower-order concerns during weekly training meetings, I could then provide Marco effective feedback accordingly.

Feedback loops should also establish specific goals that target the tutees' ZPD and help them grow. Writing tutoring's main goal includes tutees developing the necessary writing skills over time so they can gain confidence and write independently. When the writing tutor uses effective feedback and creates learning goals during a session, this practice allows tutees to learn how they can self-assess and revise their own writing. The third effective feedback principle gives the tutee more ownership since "feedback should relate to the learning goals" that the

student already knows (Wiliam 8). Continuing the precise feedback principle, tutors "should only focus on th[e] criteria" areas that they mentioned previously rather than addressing too many additional issues at once (Wiliam 8). I used this less-detailed feedback loop when I asked Marco about a problematic sentence, "What's wrong here?" Since Marco knew that his weak points included not naming his sentences' subjects or not using consistent verb tenses, providing vague feedback associated with previous goals helped him recognize these problems himself. Over time, feedback loops helped Marco locate his writing errors before I noticed them, giving him the confidence to independently double-check and revise his final draft.

When Marco successfully found the same errors that I mentioned before, I then used motivational feedback, expressing praise or motivation with phrases like, "Yes! Exactly, that's what stood out to me too!" or pointing out already correct sentences: "You did a great job here explaining this topic; I understand the argument you are making." Marco, surprised, then expressed gratitude, exclaiming, "Really? You think so? I am so glad!" When receiving motivational feedback, Marco's big smile reflected his relief that I understood his ideas, and he seemed less embarrassed when I read his paper further and found sentences that needed corrections. Without feedback loops, tutees might feel defeated or tend to give up easier. Redirecting tutees to grow from their ZPD and use the writing skills they already know can make their views towards writing less daunting overall. Feedback loops create progress since they simultaneously further the tutor-tutee relationship with productive criticisms and encourage empathetic conversation.

Another tutoring strategy, reimagining the peer tutoring cycle, reconceptualizes the existing peer tutoring cycle that outlines the steps that a tutor should take, including greeting the tutee, assessing the tutee's needs, sharing effective learning strategies, reflecting on the session,

and scheduling a future tutoring appointment. This tutoring cycle strategy leverages the tutor-tutee relationship with scaffolding approaches. The writing tutor still consistently oversees the tutee's writing process each session, but the writing tutor's interventions lessen more and more as the tutee progresses past each task or writing stage. The tutor reduces their assistance over time until the tutee can write independently and take complete control. Providing this peer cycling practice makes the tutee a more confident writer as their skills progress since they realize that they need less help from the tutor.

The reimagined peer tutoring stages begin with the most tutor support and conclude with the least support: *out-loud brainstorming*, *structured brainstorming*, and *written practice*. It is important to note that these stages do not occur during one tutoring session but across several sessions. Each stage lasts according to the individual tutee's progress, and once a student reaches the final stage, written practice, these stages can be recycled for future writing tasks. Typically, once students practice and successfully master the stages once, they can write independently with the tutor present and overseeing their progress.

During this reimagined tutoring cycle model's first stage, the tutor provides heavy assistance, interacting with the student the most during an out-loud brainstorming discussion. The tutor and tutee conversation might split 70/30, with the tutor leading the discussion and the tutee contributing intermittently. This brainstorming can target an assignment prompt or main question. After establishing basic topics and concepts and allowing the tutee to lead the brainstorming process, the next cycle stage begins—structured brainstorming. This second brainstorming step allows the tutor and tutee to equally contribute, 50/50, and equally discuss how to effectively arrange the initial brainstormed ideas. This step can be written or initiated using the scaffolded conversation method. The third and last step, written practice, then allows

the tutees to transform their beginning brainstormed ideas into complete sentences and paragraphs, developing a complete essay. The tutor supports the tutee the least, 10/90, allowing the tutor to step back and observe as the tutee writes without any direct help.

For students who do not typically write outlines, freewriting or rough drafting can replace the second structured brainstorming step. Rather than discussing potential outline structures with 50/50 contribution, the tutee can begin with complete ownership and begin free writing their ideas without worrying about overall organization. Then, once the student completes the freewriting stage and creates a rough draft, the tutor can then skip to the first 70/30 stage, out-loud brainstorming discussion. The tutor can discuss the students' ideas with the tutee and help them determine whether their writing ideas align with the assignment's main prompt. After the student discusses the ideas they wrote down with the tutor and grasps what their writing needs, the tutee can enter the last 10/90 step, written practice. The tutee can then begin writing without help but still consider the tutor's previous feedback and receive input from the tutor when needed.

One semester, I used peer cycling practice with a regular tutee, Christina, who attended tutoring sessions each week. Christina needed to improve her writing skills so that she could pass the English GACE, Georgia's education-based writing exam. As a secondary education major, I also had to pass the GACE the semester before, so I understood why Christina felt intimidated—this exam was a timed writing test. Since the required argumentative essay overwhelmed the tutee, we first focused on the first peer-cycling practice step. We targeted her brainstorming abilities, strengthening these skills with out-loud conversation. I knew that once Christina could comfortably talk through prompts on the spot and practice providing possible arguments, the argumentative writing section would feel less intimidating.

This first brainstorming step took about two weeks of Christina attending twice a week, as I took the lead providing 70/30 support. Implementing scaffolded conversation to tackle out-loud brainstorming first, we discussed how she could structure her ideas. Combining oral discussion and written bulleted outlines, I further relinquished my support, giving Christina more control over ordering her ideas. With 50/50 contribution, I reminded Christina how to structure each argumentative essay paragraph, but she provided her own main ideas and content within the structure. Lastly, I removed all previous pre-writing support, giving Christina the most responsibility with 10/90 support as she developed a completed essay. By the end of the semester, the student was completing GACE writing section simulations alone using the writing skills she had learned and built with me over several weeks.

Each 10/90 support tutoring session, I administered a practice exam and randomly chose an argumentative essay question from the GACE study guide, set the clock, and Christina started writing. Christina took this timed writing exam herself, but I remained close to oversee the process and facilitate transitions. I provided 10/90 support since I observed Christina's writing process from a distance, only interfering to provide updates about how much time she had left. I noticed that since the student fully knew and understood each writing process step, she had newfound confidence and felt more prepared to take the English GACE. Although I never left the situation completely and provided minimal support, Christina realized that she could write an argumentative essay alone. Using this reimagined peer tutoring cycle assured the tutee that she was ready to face the GACE exam, plus prepared her more to write in the future. Through using scaffolded conversation, looping feedback, and reimaging the peer tutoring cycle, I shifted the tutoring session from a one-way transfer of information to a collaborative partnership that allowed me to foster relationships with tutees and help them become stronger writers.

The ASC's Inclusive Environment and Deaf Writing Tutoring Practices

Kenneth Bruffee's collaborative learning emphasis highlights students' need for an effective learning environment. At the surface level, a writing center's sense of inclusivity begins with how students perceive the physical tutoring environment and continues to how the physical layout encourages collaboration. When students have an effective environment for tutoring, writing tutors can help students learn academic normal discourse and access resources for adapting to students' needs.

As of 2024-2025, the current Academic Support Center layout promotes Bruffee's inclusive ideas that encourage peer review and collaborative workshopping. Since the Academic Support Center is located on the 2nd floor, or main floor, of Odum Library, students can walk straight from their class, down the main mall walkway, and walk up the library's main steps. Once inside the library's middle lobby area, students first face a main circulation desk and can see an open section with many tables and study spaces to the left. Looking right, students can see the ASC's main front desk and entire ASC main space where tutoring occurs. The ASC space is open and not concealed behind any wall or door, allowing students to walk through the main area where tutoring appointments occur even if they are not attending an appointment themselves.

Furthermore, the ASC physical layout promotes sharing the normal discourse that students must learn through the way that the seating is arranged. There are various small tables, meant to support two people, with one chair across from another encouraging one-on-one conversation. These small tables remind the tutee that they are receiving one-on-one assistance and undistracted focus from a peer. Larger tables include chairs for four students with two seats on each side, promoting larger tutoring sessions or allowing students to work as a group. In the ASC's center, students can sit at higher-up tables that have embedded charging ports with four

seats on each side that face each other. Around the physical columns that go through the ASC to support the building, four desks that each station a computer further support students and tutees who need internet access. Additional computers are lined in a row up against the main wall that faces the ASC front desk, allowing students to work individually or receive help from a tutor beside them.

Upon first glance, the current ASC's physical layout is an inclusive and wide-open space that signals that all students are welcome. However, the writing center can still take additional steps to increase their functional inclusivity, such as integrating multimodal means for learning transfer and tailoring tutoring training methods that consider VSU's students' reoccurring needs. Since VSU offers an ASL/English interpreting undergraduate program, a Master of Arts for Teachers in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education, a fifth-year program in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education, plus a Language Residential Learning Community, Deaf and Hard of Hearing students were tutee populations that I often tutored. I learned very quickly that tutoring writing using transfer and tutoring writing in general might not always look the same for everyone. Utilizing additional technological resources during tutoring sessions and having empathy-centered tutoring training are ways that the ASC can continue to accommodate these students.

Nowacek's multimodal transfer techniques, especially utilizing technology, increased learning for my deaf tutee, Maria. Before tutoring Maria, I did not have any prior experiences tutoring writing to a deaf student. The main hurdle that I encountered with Maria was that she did not bring an interpreter with her to the tutoring session. We wrote on paper and used gesturing to converse back and forth. Although I still had some difficulty communicating with Maria, I still tried to use the same transfer writing techniques that I implemented with other

tutees. I gave Maria time to think about how she might go about answering her assignment's main question or task, but she was unable to reflect on her usual writing process because she did not have a solid writing foundation. Rebecca Day Babcock explains that Deaf students have similar challenges to ESL students with adjusting to Standard American English grammar and that they also learn best with visual instructional modes. Maria faced these same learning challenges, so I knew that I needed to adjust the transfer instruction that I had used previously with hearing tutees.

Since Maria's ASL grammar knowledge influenced her unclear writing and frequent fragment sentence usage, my focus shifted towards helping Maria form ideas and then demonstrating how she could take these ideas and create complete sentences. However, after tutoring Maria over many semesters, I noticed that writing assignments from her art perspectives course came easiest to her. More specifically, Maria paid closer attention and was less prone towards giving up when assignments contained a visual element such as an image or a video. Babcock explains that for obvious reasons deaf students are visual learners. After interviewing a Deaf student, Babcock reported further why this student found visual-based instruction the most helpful. One Deaf student said she was a "visual learner" since "texts that are direct, express emotion," and feature pictures help her "mentally visualize the information" (174). I found that Maria learned similarly, and she had an easier time brainstorming when she wrote about a picture or video.

The bulk of assignments from Maria's art perspectives course were visually centered; students weekly chose an art piece to describe and analyze. Students were also required to critique how their art piece reflected the artist's period, guess the artist's message, and provide their opinion towards the piece itself. Along with the students' art critiques, the assignments

required active peer engagement, which occurred on Microsoft Teams, where students posted their written assignments. Since the class could view each other's art pieces and responses, Maria could view her peers' work as models for how to complete the assignment before completing her own. The assignments also included Maria by default since she could type to her peers and communicate easier with them. After observing Maria's success with this visually centered class, I believe that the ASC can train future writing tutors to understand strategies that help Deaf and Hard of Hearing students and utilize their visual learning style.

Dialogic Tutoring Methods

Mikhail Bakhtin emphasizes that dialogic approaches require two sides—the address and the response—to create meaning, reflecting how the peer tutoring situation should also require equal participation. In my own tutoring sessions, I have noticed that incorporating intellectual exchange shifts tutoring from feeling remedial to the student and more constructive. I made the tutoring session a collaborative space when I helped my tutees view their writing as an ongoing conversation. This discussion method encouraged students to consider multiple perspectives, like their rhetorical audience, and approach revision with me as a collaborative effort. One of my tutees, Luke, attended writing tutoring at VSU's Center for International Programs since he needed help writing his Gilman Scholarship application with the hopes to study abroad in France. Luke attended sessions regularly because I utilized dialogic conversation, making each tutoring session feel more like a partnership and less transactional.

Since Luke needed to write and revise three different essays, I first familiarized myself with the requirements for one essay, the Follow-On Service Project Proposal. This essay asked applicants to propose and outline a service project that would increase others' awareness about studying abroad and the Gilman Scholarship. Luke planned to host a writing workshop event for

his community project so that VSU students interested in studying abroad could receive help with writing the three application essays. Luke had several promising ideas, such as opening each workshop with a presentation about his own studying abroad experiences and even partnering with the ASC and English graduate tutors to provide on-demand writing help. Luke planned to hold two writing workshops. The first workshop would give students brainstorming opportunities and begin the drafting process. During the second workshop, students could then continue writing their essay drafts and revise their work. Though Luke had creative ideas, there was one problem: his content was somewhat informal, unclear, and unorganized.

To target Luke's main issues, I first utilized Bakhtin's idea of meaning as an ongoing conversation, prompting Luke to consider the multiple perspectives that could engage with his application essay. I asked basic and obvious questions, such as "Who will read this essay?" I wanted to remind Luke why formal writing was important so that he could stand out from other applicants and impress the Gilman Scholarship reader. After reminding Luke about the audience, we then discussed possible confusions or anticipated questions or that the Gilman Scholarship reader might ask.

When Luke explained his community project, he compared how his workshop would function similarly and differently than other VSU international-based group functions. As an outside reader unfamiliar with VSU's current international meetings, I could imitate Luke's real Gilman reader audience. I specifically asked questions, such as "If I am a Gilman scholarship essay reader, would I know about this VSU international program function?" and "What questions could you anticipate the Gilman reader to have, and how could you be more specific to prevent these questions?" These specific questions worked more effectively instead of stating, "This paragraph is unclear," encouraging Luke to see the writing process as dialogic. This

dialogic discussion gave Luke the chance to discuss his current writing openly with me so that I could help him clarify meaning and consider his Gilman Scholarship reader audience.

Since dialogue interactions co-create meaning, I intentionally spoke with Luke as another thinker involved rather than distantly addressing him. When I suggested improving his word choice or revising a confusing sentence, I also asked for Luke's opinion: "What about using words like this instead? How could you rephrase this idea to be clearer?" I used follow-up statements with these suggestions to remind Luke that I was not dictating the revision process and that his input was valuable: "You could explain this better than I just suggested. What are some ways that you could rephrase this sentence to emphasize the main point that you want the Gilman reader to notice?" I continued this conversation, asking the student to explain their reasoning with questions that restated their main points: "Okay, so the writing workshop is a great idea, but why is this project specifically meaningful to you?" Luke then explained to me how attending tutoring with me was super helpful for him during his Gilman writing process. Our conversation also helped Luke realize that his writing workshop would guide future applicants through the writing process in a similar way since they could receive help from other peers.

While tutoring Luke, I also considered Joseph Williams's approach that errors can be socially anticipated and prioritized along with the writer's final product. As I read Luke's writing, I did not specifically focus on errors, removing focus and judgement towards Luke's grammar mistakes. I redirected how I read each paragraph, tackling content clarity first without mentioning every grammar mistake I noticed. I reiterated some audience-related questions to help Luke consider how the Gilman reader would perceive his proposal if he revised his essay, replacing informal conventions with formal wording. For example, I showed Luke how using

direct, confident statements about his project rather than sounding unsure would strengthen his writing: “If you were a Gilman reader, how would you feel differently about the applicant’s project if you heard them say ‘I plan to host two writing workshops’ versus ‘I think that I will host some writing workshops’?” After tackling tone, I also explained the importance of capitalizing proper nouns like club and group names.

Since the tutee actively engaged in conversation with me during the tutoring process, I noticed that his confidence grew in later sessions. When I read his other two essays, Luke took initiative, pointing out corrections and explaining how he would correct them before I noticed them first. When I prioritized meaningful conversations over finding errors, my tutoring sessions with Luke transformed into a shared effort that helped him finetune his writing ideas to consider his rhetorical audience and learn how to initiate the revision process himself.

CHAPTER III

Environment Context—VSU's Tutoring History

Using a qualitative approach and interviewing several VSU writing tutors and staff from all three generations, this chapter provides an overall description of the Writing Center, the Student Success Center, and the Academic Support Center to show how writing tutoring has evolved over time. The following sections outline these changes, starting with each writing center's environment and ethos, which includes each tutoring center's establishment, institutional support, physical space, advertising, and ethos characteristics. Each generation's section also entails the tutoring center's daily operations, including tutor-staff support systems such as hiring and training processes, the writing tutor's expected role, and how VSU students received tutoring services.

The Writing Center

Environment and Ethos

When VSU decided to renovate and expand West Hall, writing tutoring services were initially located in Pound Hall on North Campus. After the renovation project was completed in 1989, writing tutoring operations relocated to West Hall, and The Writing Center was established. Since the English Department head, Tom Dasher, was "really interested in composition" at the time, he provided administrative

Fig. 2. West Hall Prior to Restoration, 1960s. *Source: Valdosta State University*

support to “get a writing center started” (Participant #8). Additionally, the previous vice president of academic affairs, Louis Brown, also backed this writing tutoring idea. The Writing Center was “part of the English department, not a separate entity” (Participant #7). A staff member who joined The Writing Center in 1995 explained how tutoring services did not technically fall under Student Success Services like VSU’s current tutoring center, the ASC. This new tutoring space was within one of the campus’ main computer labs, conveniently located across from the VSU English Department.

Though easily accessible on VSU’s main campus, to increase awareness about writing tutoring services, writing tutors attended class visits, which allowed news about tutoring to spread further by word-of-mouth. Writing tutors and staff also printed bookmarks that featured “writerly quotes” from authors like Ernest Hemingway and tutoring information that were distributed in classes and placed in students’ bags when they bought textbooks from the bookstore (Participant #7). Additionally, since The Writing Center was now centrally located, students and faculty could easily stop by between classes to attend tutoring or use the computers. When asked how students learned about writing tutoring, one prior tutor recalled, “I’m sure it was literally proximity, because The Writing Center was across the hallway from the English department” (Participant #9). As students used the computer lab to print, they also learned about writing help simply from being present in the space near other students attending tutoring.

The Writing Center computer lab featured a printer at its entrance and about 25 computers that lined the walls around the room. One previous writing tutor explained how students and faculty shared the space: “This space was a computer lab, so immediately when you walked in the door was the printer. It was also the printer that faculty would use, so there were always professors who were coming in and printing things, some of them cursing because it

didn't print what they wanted" (Participant #9). In the middle of the room, there were two large square tables that held reference material where two student pairs could receive writing help. An additional office space directly next door provided a separate space for writing tutoring to occur, plus served as the main recordkeeping area.

The Writing Center's computer lab and additional office areas were functional and an asset to students and faculty, but this early tutoring generation was missing a distinct tutoring center identity. Since the two main computer labs on campus were in Odum Library and The Writing Center, the student body tended to view the tutoring space as a computer lab. However, the Writing Center's small space reflected the organization's tight-knit community.

Having the English Department within proximity and tutoring staff located nearby the tutoring center formed the tutor-staff support system. One writing tutor recalled that although there was no "formal support system" among the staff, the writing tutors "worked really well together no matter who was scheduled on shift" (Participant #9). When writing tutors had any questions or concerns, the director's office right across from The Writing Center signaled an open-door policy. A tutoring staff member explained the overall atmosphere among staff members: "It was almost like a family. It was a very small staff. We might have had eight people total who did the work, so it was small and cohesive" (Participant #9). Tutoring services were also small, as The Writing Center's partnership with the English Department made tutoring options limited to computer and writing help.

Daily Tutoring Operations

During the 1980s in Pound Hall, students needed writing tutoring as they faced transitions with technological advancements. One staff member who experienced The Writing Center's switch from Pound Hall to West Hall noted what writing tutoring initially looked like in

the early years: “Students wr[ote] their papers over 2 periods in the writing centers, while their teachers paced the room and answer[ed] questions” (Participant #8). Additionally, students learned basic Word processing tools like spell check and copy/paste to make editing easier. “Writing moved from like 305 to 500 words written in class to longer essays that were at least drafted a little bit” (Participant #8). By the 1990s, the integration of Word processors, computers, and extended essays meant that the West Hall computer lab location continued to serve students’ technology and writing needs.

Undergraduate students were the main writing tutors hired to assist students. One staff member explains the hiring requirements for the undergraduate writing tutors: “Most of the writing tutors were English majors, but that was not a requirement. They were nominated by a faculty member or expressed interest and then received a letter of reference from a faculty member” (Participant #7). Even though writing tutors did not have to major in English, students were required to complete a tutoring training course. During this “tutor preparation course,” students covered pedagogy, approaches, and readings that they met weekly to discuss (Participant #9). Overall, this tutoring training emphasized that when the writing tutor provided writing help, the tutees still needed to complete their own work.

The writing tutor’s expected role was twofold—helping students write their own papers and teaching students how to use computers for formatting their writing. Since writing tutoring did not occur on an appointment basis, students frequently walked in when they needed help. Tutees also typically received tutoring later in the writing process, meaning they already had an established essay. Writing tutors could review students’ writing, but they also answered quick questions about grammar or MLA formatting. While most tutoring was “face-to-face,” The Writing Center “experimented with using new modes, which was a synchronous writing

environment to do tutorials" (Participant #7). To avoid writing tutors and tutees emailing back and forth to simply receive corrections, the online synchronous writing platform encouraged students to ask quick questions about their writing without having to ask in person.

When students came to The Writing Center to work on the computers in person, when problems occurred, writing tutors were there to troubleshoot. One writing tutor explained the writing tutor's side role as providing "de facto tech support for the computers" (Participant #9). With new technology making formatting essays a less arduous process, students had to learn to navigate applying MLA formatting to their writing using the computer. Yet, with these new technological advancements, students still ran into issues. A prior writing tutor explains how writing tutors assisted students with the computers:

> A student might be working on a paper and might have a question about formatting. We did have students in there who never saved, and we would have power surges every once in a while. People learned the very, very, very, very hard way that you need to save and save often. This was just an interruption, sometimes of writing center tutoring, because there might not be someone else available to help troubleshoot. (Participant #9)

Additionally, writing tutors' main administrative task was to complete tutor report forms for tutees who needed more help than asking a simple question. After the tutoring session, three copies were created and sent to the student's instructor, given to the writing tutor, and filed in the side office record-keeping area. Keeping track of tutoring sessions gave evidence to the tutee's instructor that they had attended tutoring and allowed other writing tutors to "pull up [the tutee's report form] and see what had been worked on" (Participant #7). Having these tutor report forms on hand helped inform future writing tutors if they had not previously tutored the student before.

This way, writing tutors could pick up where the student left off and understand the student's needs and progress.

Student Success Center

Environment and Ethos

In 2006, Valdosta State University's Writing Center relocated and transformed into a new Student Success Center. The Writing Center's director was "asked to direct an experimental office that was a grant-funded office from the Georgia Board of Regents" (Participant #6). The grant's initial plan was to combine several student-based services in one location—tutoring, counseling, job opportunities, and advising. This plan to provide a more efficient one-stop-shop for student success services was off-campus in the home of VSU's former President Bailey, VSU's present-day Honors College building. Unfortunately, this new plan and location did not work, as the building's several separate rooms "made the tutors congregate in little areas, and they didn't interact as much" (Participant #6). Without wide open spaces, students were isolated from one another. One staff member mentioned flaws with the grant's initial plan and the SSC's resulting mission:

Fig. 3. VSU's Student Success Center in Langdale Hall. *Source: Valdosta State University.*

> It was a huge idea that didn't work. First of all, the counseling center backed out immediately because there were privacy issues. And the [sic] advising were given funding to hire and train 30 graduate students to be advisors and then lend them out to all of the departments on campus. I had hired 2 professional advisors to train and manage the 25 graduate students, and those professional advisors received a lot of pushback, but once

> they saw that the graduate students actually did a fabulous job with their students, they asked to keep the program going. So, the student Success Center had a three-pronged approach that quickly became two-pronged. (Participant #6)

Supporting advising and tutoring services, the SSC provided one of the main advising departments on campus along with the Oasis Center for First Year Programs. The grant also expanded the tutoring content areas offered since previously The Writing Center only provided writing tutoring. VSU students could receive tutoring for math, science, and foreign languages together under one roof with writing help.

The SSC's advising and tutoring services were relocated to Langdale Hall, one of VSU's main student dormitory buildings. This new Student Success Center featured two floors of "wide-open spaces with plenty of computers for people to work on" (Participant #6). The SSC utilized Langdale Hall's previous upstairs annex multipurpose space to make room for offices, a conference room, and a common space. An external door was added to provide another access point for students to come into the SSC from outside the building without having to go through the dormitory. With SSC staff offices upstairs in the annex, writing tutoring occurred on the first floor. Tutors and tutees could work together at any of the many tables located throughout each floor and could access whiteboards or computer stations against the walls.

A previous writing tutor explained the SSC's space: "The writing center itself was 2 floors. Most of the writing tutoring took place on the 1st floor, and it really depended on what [tutors and tutees] needed; there was an area in the back with a whiteboard. So, if you needed some visual aid that was available" (Participant #3). Another writing tutor recalled that the SSC's open space allowed for tutors to collaborate with one another. "[The SSC] was a very open and collaborative setting" (Participant #10). The SSC's open and accessible environment

helped create an interactive and dynamic learning environment where writing tutors had various resources and peer support to further support tutees that walked in the tutoring center's doors.

Although students could easily access the SSC from where they lived, SSC tutors and staff made a continuous effort to advertise tutoring services to VSU students. Writing tutors spread the news about tutoring through class visits, passing around flyers and brochures about tutoring services, and connecting with tutees during tutoring sessions. SSC staff also contributed to advertisement efforts as well through class workshops and sending mass emails about the SSC to faculty, staff, and students. An SSC staff member details how staff participated in advertising: "We advertised through the e-mail system to all faculty, staff, and students. The assistant director and I would actually visit classes upon invitation and do entire workshops on study skills: how to work smarter, not harder. We also created flyers and brochures, and those were handed out during class visits" (Participant #6). Advertising contributed to the SSC's overall ethos since students were reminded that peers on campus were readily available to support them.

Other contributors towards students' perception of the SSC included the tutoring center's name change and official mission statements. The tutoring center's name shift from The Writing Center to the Student Success Center signaled to students that they could receive academic support related to various content areas besides writing tutoring. Taking tutoring out of the organization name and emphasizing student success also reflected the tutoring center's two-pronged approach for providing tutoring and advising services.

Additionally, the SSC's official handbook outlined two main statements related to the SSC's role and mission: "The Student Success Center acts as a compass to help students navigate their college careers and get a bearing on success through tutoring, advising, and on-campus job opportunities. Our mission is to increase student retention by supporting students at any level and

ability in their coursework, job experience, and major and career planning, thereby fostering in them the determination and drive to graduate on time and lead fulfilling lives" (SSC Handbook 3). The SSC's first statement frames the tutoring organization's role as a "compass," redirecting and solidifying student achievement through academic and tutoring support. This statement also mentions how the SSC provides tutoring, advising, and campus job opportunities, reiterating the SSC's aim to foster both tutors' and attending tutees' academic development. The second statement summarizes the SSC's main mission to prepare students for the future, as tutoring services will help students develop the necessary skills that they need to graduate and then lead successful lives. Overall, these statements encourage students to work for or receive services from the SSC, as the program hopes to support them and their growth during their college careers.

Daily Tutoring Operations

When VSU students came to the SSC for writing tutoring, they could receive tutoring online or through in-person tutoring sessions. Students could upload their essays to the online program, Ask Online, where writing tutors could review students' work and respond with written feedback. This online tutoring option was not as popular, since writing tutors preferred one-on-one sessions and instructors typically recommended in-person writing tutoring to students. Students could attend in-person tutoring sessions that ranged from thirty minutes to an hour. However, "tutees [could] only schedule appointments for the same subject twice in any given week" (SSC Handbook 23). The SSC used several online scheduling systems, but students could also call the SSC or make an appointment with the SSC front desk secretary.

To ensure that writing tutors could provide VSU students with sufficient writing support, SSC staff had several hiring requirements. Similarly to previous hiring procedures, writing tutors

needed one or two letters of recommendation from faculty that could attest to their strong writing abilities. Some instructors also recommended that students apply to tutor. One previous writing tutor mentioned how they were hired this way: "I was hired because I've just always been interested in writing, and I had been encouraged by my English professors to apply (Participant #3). Along with providing faculty recommendations, potential writing tutors were required to provide an academic writing sample and complete an interview with tutoring staff.

An SSC staff member explained that writing tutors did not necessarily have to major in English to get the job: "We solicit recommendations from faculty, and they don't necessarily have to be writing faculty or English faculty. Potential tutors can be great writers in any field" (Participant #6). Because the SSC supported multiple tutoring content areas with writing tutoring, hiring writing tutors regardless of their major contributed to the SSC's broad academic support approach.

Once hired, students also completed a mandatory training course. According to the SSC handbook, training consisted of "6 hours of in-person training, 4 hours of supplemental training, and 25 hours of tutoring experience" (SSC Handbook 20). New writing tutors had to complete 10 training hours for the first three semesters that they tutored. A writing tutor explained this training period: "There was kind of an apprenticeship, and I did some [tutoring] sessions and got some feedback or reflected on them. And then I sort of like got my badge, right?" (Participant #10). Initially, students had to pay to complete the training courses but were also paid to tutor, so the SSC director decided to drop the writing tutoring course and still have students read writing center literature. An SSC staff member recalled how this training course transitioned into weekly training meetings:

> I distilled [writing center literature] down a lot. [Writing tutors] still had weekly meetings where we did a lot of troubleshooting. People wrote in these meetings, and we would look at lots of sample writing from students and practice giving feedback. We talked about writing strategies that cut across disciplines, and so especially ways to organize and [develop paragraphs] with PIE: point, illustrate, explain [to] have a main point supported by details and analysis. (Participant #6)

During weekly training meetings, writing tutors gathered to discuss how to assess students' writing, interact with tutees, and learn writing techniques that could apply to various subject areas. Completing writing tutoring training supported writing tutors' main role— teaching students how to write independently.

Differing from VSU's previous writing center, The Writing Center, students did not always have a completed essay when they arrived at tutoring. The SSC writing tutors had to adapt when some students were in the early stages of the writing process, avoiding writing students' papers for them. One tutor emphasized that writing tutors wanted to make "sure that students were walking back out of [the] door with some good skills" (Participant #10). This tutor also explained that since the SSC was a third socio-academic space for learning outside the typical classroom space, tutors needed to set boundaries with tutees as their peers. Rather than proofreading or editing the tutee's essay for them, writing tutors worked to guide tutees through the writing process, encouraging tutees to spot mistakes themselves and understand how to fix them.

Along with providing writing, writing tutors' additional duties included completing administrative tasks like tracking their schedules and filling out session reflection forms. Writing tutors continuously checked their schedules to see whether tutees would attend during their

scheduled hours and complete session reflection forms once the tutee left to reflect how the tutoring session went. If writing tutors completed additional training, they could become higher-level tutors who had additional responsibilities. An SSC tutor explained their additional duty as a higher-level writing tutor: "[The SSC] got CRLA certified while I was there, and I think I did become like a Level 5 tutor. And part of that was providing trainings for other tutors" (Participant #10). With CRLA certification, the SSC could differentiate writing tutors of various levels, giving them tasks associated with their skill levels. This level system also gave writing tutors an incentive to complete additional training so that they could increase their level title.

Tutors also completed reflective letters each semester. Tutors were also asked to recall their previous semester tutoring and "write a reflection" that detailed "specific stories of sessions that challenged [them], sessions that were successful," and answer other questions like "What's your favorite strategy?" (Participant #6). Completing these reflections at the end of the semester allowed writing tutors to identify tutoring patterns, providing administrators with content to use for students' recommendation letters and overall tutors' progress.

The SSC's support system consisted of writing tutors collaborating with tutoring staff, other writing tutors, and tutors from other content areas. Tutoring staff supported tutors daily since their location on the second floor meant that tutors could easily reach them when they had questions. Additionally, before each semester, tutoring staff led large training days for tutors of all content areas to come together and discuss tutoring practices. One staff member recalls this training tradition: "We always offered training at the beginning of the semester," and "we got together, and we all had lunch together, and I would cater it… but [the training] was really about team building" (Participant #6). Pre-semester training days were one major way that tutoring staff supported returning and new tutors so that returning tutors could meet any new tutors.

These beginning training days helped the group meet one another, and established tutors could show newly hired students how to tutor. Regardless of subject area, the large tutor group would practice role-playing common tutee scenarios as veteran tutors acted like the problematic tutee and new tutors practiced navigating the session, receiving feedback from the whole group on what went well and how they could improve.

Since writing tutoring and tutoring for other content areas occurred in the same open space, peer tutors supported one another regardless of their major or subject area. One tutor described the environment as egalitarian since, despite students' levels, roles, or subject areas, there was an overall feeling of togetherness and support: "There were veteran tutors who we really respected, and [we] would go to them with questions. …I remember leaning on one veteran tutor in particular until she graduated, and then I remember becoming a veteran tutor" (Participant #10). In addition to staff, writing tutors had a peer support system and could rely on experienced writing tutors if they ran into a problem. Since the SSC cultivated a collaborative environment with its wide-open tutoring space, writing tutors could easily work together and not experience successes and challenges alone. This SSC community enriched students' writing tutoring skills and strengthened long-lasting friendships that defined this generation as a supportive place to tutor.

Academic Support Center

Environment and Ethos

In 2018, the Student Success Center was renamed and relocated, creating the Academic Support Center. The SSC name change resulted from VSU's need to designate the tutoring center from other student service-based organizations on campus. Since VSU created a new student success division, many people would call the vice president of student success services

rather than the Student Success Center when they needed writing tutoring. One staff member explained that "as things evolved," the tutoring organization fell "under the division of student success," and the name "Academic Support Center [happened] because people got confused" (Participant #6). Now the ASC tutoring operations moved to Odum Library, right in the campus center. The same staff member who witnessed this move from Langdale Hall to the library discussed how this transition influenced the ASC's overall atmosphere and campus role: "I've described our tutoring services and built the atmosphere as the front porch of the university, welcoming people in and having casual conversations" (Participant #6). This physical relocation made the ASC more approachable, which made attending writing tutoring less intimidating and easier for students to find.

Fig. 4. The Academic Support Center in Odum Library. *Source: Gladwin Vaughn Architecture.*

Currently, as the ASC still stands, students can walk straight from VSU's campus mall between classes and reach Odum Library's main entrance. After ascending the library's front steps, students face the main front desk; if they simply look right, they can see the ASC's open space. Not concealed behind a front door or enclosed wall, the ASC space spans across a large room over the main second floor. There are several different seating areas that support one-on-one tutoring sessions and larger study groups: small tables with two chairs and larger tables with four or more chairs float throughout the middle of the space, high-top tables with highchairs provide charging areas and more face-to-face opportunities, and a computer station surrounds the building's supporting columns.

Additional seating opportunities line the walls, where students can sit with a group in cozy booths; computer stations placed against another main wall also allow students to work independently or partner with a tutor. One staff member explains the current space's functionality:

> We have a great space. One of the things that's really helpful is that we have a whole bunch of different seating choices for students, so we have high tops that have a spot where they can put their laptop. If they're working on a paper, they just bring it right with them or a tablet. We have computers right there if they want to jump on and sit with a writing tutor to go over their paper. (Participant #4)

Although primarily open, the ASC wing contains individual study rooms enclosed from the space but still connected with surrounding clear glass walls. Students can see inside the study rooms from the main space, but these enclosed study room spaces enable tutors and tutees to escape the noise when the main area gets too loud.

Even though the tutoring center was now more centralized, the ASC still considered that some VSU students still might not know about the free tutoring services available. Since its beginning, the ASC has made conscious efforts to advertise around campus, ensuring that tutors and staff inform students about writing tutoring opportunities. Writing tutors typically divide and conquer, taking turns visiting several first-year English courses like ENGL 1101 and 1102. During these class visits, writing tutors present information about the ASC, explaining how students can receive writing tutoring. One writing tutor explained these common advertising methods that the ASC has used: "Professors often advertise the Academic Support Center. Emails go out from [the Coordinator of Tutoring] and [the Office Manager] in the Academic Support Center. And tutors also attend presentations in classrooms where they come and explain

to students about the Academic Support Center" (Participant #2). Another ASC staff member explained additional ways that the ASC has promoted writing tutoring:

> We send out emails occasionally to our staff and student group. We post to our social media platforms occasionally. We try to get [tutor and facilitator] interview[s]. We'll do highlights of profiles over some of our tutors and facilitators as well… In the past, we've posted electronic advertising slides to our shared advertising system around campus. We have TV sets around the library and … other student areas that display those ads. (Participant #4)

These various advertising methods—from in-person class visits to digital advertising approaches—prove how the ASC consistently reaches out to students.

Along with dedicating resources towards advertisements, the ASC's chosen rhetoric—mission statements, slogans, and tutor-staff mantras—reflect the ASC's efforts to designate themselves as a non-intimidating environment, encouraging students to view tutoring services as casual, friendly, and productive. Overall, the ASC's main mission statement, "Creating the Conditions for Connections," reiterates what writing tutoring should accomplish: the tutor should never do the tutee's work for them but rather provide them with the necessary writing skills so that they can become an independent writer (Peguesse et al. 12). One staff member explains the reasoning behind this ASC mission statement:

> We are a conduit to allow students to move toward academic success and competence. Our main goal is to provide paths and opportunities for students to become more academically confident [and] stronger. We try to give students a variety of tools and opportunities…because not everybody responds to everything the same way. We want higher retention rates. So, I think the institution obviously wants people to be successful

to graduate and to move on, and tutoring helps to support that larger institutional goal by providing that confidence. (Participant #5)

The ASC also methodically utilizes the acronym "PAL" when referring to the tutors themselves and writing about tutoring's peer-centered learning emphasis. "PAL" stands for "Peer Alliance Learning," suggesting that students should view writing tutors as friendly peers who guide the learning process: the tutee's pal. The ASC also uses the catchphrase "Need a PAL? Just ASC!" (Peguesse et al. 12). This phrase helps students remember the ASC's name with this play on words for "ask" and reiterates the "PAL" acronym, which allows the tutee to perceive writing tutors as friends who are ready to help. Since the ASC emphasizes the acronym "Peer Alliance Learning," the ASC also reframes the tutor's relationship as an ally of the tutee, highlighting the mutually beneficial peer partnership.

The ASC incorporates mantras that allow writing tutors to remember how to navigate various tutoring scenarios and potential challenges with tutees. When writing tutors needed to be upfront with tutees about their writing or progress, they referred to the phrase "Clear is Kind" (Peguesse et al. 12). This phrase from tutoring training reminded tutors that they needed to clearly communicate concerns with the tutee in a friendly way without making the session unpleasant. Another acronym, the "B.I.G." principle emphasizes that when a writing tutor "establishes a clear boundary, maintains integrity, and offers some generosity," they establish necessary boundaries with tutees (Peguesse et al. 12). Continuing this idea of empathetic communication, the B.I.G. principle signals to the writing tutor that they need to uphold boundaries and tutoring's main goal of having the student complete their own work. While "Clear is Kind" and the B.I.G. principle remind writing tutors to stay firm with tutees, these phrases also emphasize that the tutor should maintain a peer connection, building rapport with

the tutee to effectively engage collaboratively. Additionally, these phrases contribute to the ASC's environment ethos since the writing center shows their priority and commitment to fostering equal-peer relationships.

Daily Tutoring Operations

Since the ASC is a wide-open space where students attend tutoring, study alone, or walk through to get to the other side of the library, peer tutors could easily blend in with other students. However, writing tutors are expected to connect with students, guiding them through the writing process and helping them learn crucial writing skills instead of marking up their paper as an editor. The ASC writing tutor's expected role includes actively engaging tutees with open conversation about their writing, helping them develop ideas for their writing, and then explaining their writing errors to them so that they can learn how to revise their own work. According to ASC policy, writing tutors must also complete session reflection forms to document how each tutoring session went and, in prior years, complete a set number of training hours.

Up until the 2024 fall semester, the ASC hired both VSU graduate and undergraduate students as peer writing tutors. These undergraduate and graduate writing tutors worked part-time, pre-scheduling their 7-8-hour-per-week availability before each semester started. Since students scheduled prior appointments or could attend walk-in appointments at any time, this policy required that tutors stay in the ASC during their tutoring hours. If tutees did not show or attend their scheduled tutoring appointment, writing tutors were still paid for being present during their scheduled hours.

However, shortly after the previous ASC director left, the ASC adopted a new tutoring platform, Knack. Through Knack, all tutors, including writing tutors, would only be paid based

on their completed tutoring appointments and not their set hours. Thus, for all the hours writing tutors would be present in the library, students would not be paid if they had no appointments. Inevitably, many undergraduate tutors did not apply to be Knack tutors the next semester, leaving English graduate students to take over, whose graduate assistantships required them to tutor. In addition, the Knack platform provided VSU students with the option to receive online tutoring with professional Knack writing tutors. An ASC staff member explains the current ASC and Knack partnership: "Currently the [sic] tutoring is actually not directly housed under [the ASC director]. The tutoring is now done in partnership with a company called Knack. So, Knack actually now hires VSU students and manages them and pays them to provide one-on-one training to other VSU students" (Participant #5). One problem with Knack directly hiring writing tutors is that there are fewer tutors and, as a result, less availability for students who need tutoring on a walk-in basis.

Despite these changes, ASC staff members explained that the writing tutor hiring process has remained the same for undergraduate students who apply. One staff member explains the ASC's current hiring process for evaluating potential writing tutors:

> We do require that all writing tutors come in with at least English 1101 and 1102. All writing tutors have to have two letters of recommendation from faculty who can attest to their writing. So, if they send us something from somebody in a math class and they're talking about their ability to, you know, solve formulas and equations, we're going to say that that, you know, unfortunately it's great, but we need somebody who can talk to you about your skills as a writer. And so that's regardless of where they come from. It has to be an academic paper submitted to a college professor for a grade, and it has to be a minimum, you know, three to five pages at least. And it has to show evidence of maybe

not perfect mastery of the writing process but understanding of the process and things like that. (Participant #5)

Before the ASC switched over to Knack tutoring, the writing tutors typically met with the ASC's director for weekly training meetings. During these meetings, the ASC director opened her office to writing tutors, leading training sessions about various writing skills utilizing articles about writing tutoring strategies and reviewing student writing samples. This weekly training meeting also allowed writing tutors to discuss their current tutoring sessions' highs and lows. The ASC director and fellow writing tutors could then discuss successful tutoring strategies and suggest solutions for difficult tutees together. An ASC writing tutor who attended these weekly meetings recalled:

> So as far as training is concerned, we had, I think, a three-day training period before the semester started. We were trained in various aspects of tutoring, not just writing, but the writing tutors did meet with the director separately to kind of go over some of the expectations and some of the strategies that we would use as tutors. There are a lot of, like, guidelines that we were expected to follow. Phrases such as "sit on your hands," meaning don't go overboard trying to make the student's assignment your own or try to do the work for them. The general training mindset was mainly about teaching the writing tutors not to write for the students and simply being there to help guide them in the right direction and help them uncover the writing on their own rather than doing the work for them. (Participant #1)

During this writing tutor's tutoring experiences pre-Knack, writing tutors needed to balance providing students with constructive feedback while also ensuring that students had agency over their own work. This main ASC training principle highlighted that writing tutors needed to "sit

on their hands," or not correct students' work, but have students actively engage with their own work, which supported their writing process rather than writing product.

Additionally, writing tutors also attended either two to three days of training, depending on if they were new or returning tutors, before each fall and spring semester. Rather than providing writing tutoring methods as a sole focus, these training days provided general tutoring training that applied to each content area. These training days brought all the ASC tutors together with team-building activities, tutor-tutee role-playing practice, and workshops over various academic coaching skills such as time management, study skills, and semester-at-a-glance planning. One staff member discussed this past group tutoring training practice:

> So, from 2006, when the [Student Success Center] started up until 2023, when it changed, you know, the writing tutors were required in addition to just hiring, you know, we always had training, right. So, we had training before the semester. All our tutors got together and did group training. So, it was more general. It wasn't specific to writing, but [it was] more about the tutoring process (Participant #5).

According to an ASC writing tutor, writing tutors do not currently receive consistent writing tutoring training as of the spring 2025 semester.

A writing tutor who was hired the same semester that the ASC partnered with Knack disclosed her training experiences: "I didn't really receive any training. I had kind of like an informal 10-minute conversation with [a lead tutor]. And that was about it. Just kind of figure it out as you go along, kind of thing" (Participant #2). However, since the ASC's main writing tutors are English graduate students, most have writing tutoring or teaching-related experiences. For instance, this same writing tutor explained that although she had limited experience tutoring at VSU, she had previously tutored writing with another tutoring platform, Tutor.com. When

asked how many semesters they had tutored writing, this tutor answered that they had tutored writing “at VSU for two semesters and a couple of additional semesters on Tutor.com, but nonrelated to VSU” (Participant #2). Although this new ASC writing tutor was hired because of her previous online tutoring experiences, it would have still benefitted the student to receive in-person tutoring training to learn valuable collaborative learning techniques and connect with other ASC members to have a strong support system.

Without structured training, future writing tutors could struggle to guide students rather than fixing their work for them, which has been a central goal of the ASC. Although experienced tutors could learn to adapt, new tutors could miss learning about key collaborative tutoring strategies that ensure that the tutor and tutee equally collaborate.

CHAPTER IV

Methodology Overview

For this thesis, I determined that a qualitative research approach would work best since this project gathered categorical data from individuals in VSU's three writing centers. I chose to utilize narrative approaches and describe each writing center setting, plus detail the experiences of staff members, tutors, and tutees that conducted tutoring in each setting. Therefore, my methodological approach, a qualitative study, aligned most with my research objectives.

Research Project Design

A qualitative-based design appropriately structured this project's research. Since I collected data from historical artifacts and individual interviews, this study type provided a closer look at each tutoring community's history and participants' personal and shared experiences. This qualitative approach showed the various social relationships, writing center community dynamics, and individual behaviors and roles of writing center tutors and tutoring staff. As I collected and analyzed official artifacts like writing center manuals, I observed the writing community from a distance, and narrative-based data best outlined how VSU's writing center has evolved over time. Since conducting interviews was necessary to understand writing tutors' practices and writing center staff members' views, the qualitative data was analyzed accordingly. The main data analysis approach included identifying patterns, such as differences and similarities between the daily operations of VSU's three writing center communities. After finding these common trends from participants' responses, I could then conclude the most influential sociocultural environmental aspects and tutoring methods. Overall, a qualitative

approach, which made this data analysis method possible, helped me answer how VSU's writing center's sociocultural environment has evolved and determine how VSU's current writing center could improve.

I used a structured episodic method for my project's interview structure. Episodic interviewing encouraged my participants to use deep reflection so that they could recount specific episodes or past events. Joseph Maxwell's *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* explains that interviewers should "ask about *specific* events and actions, rather than posing questions that elicit only generalizations or abstract opinions, because a useful interview structure utilizes a participant's "'episodic memory,' an important and distinct neurocognitive memory system" (103). My interview method also adhered to a structured approach, meaning that I used pre-selected question topics with a pre-determined order.

Uwe Flick's "Episodic Interviewing" in *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image, and Sound* inspired the episodic interview steps used during this study. Flick explains how, according to "narrative psychology," an episodic interview structure begins with initially outlining "'how everything started,'" then relevant narrative events are selected to present a "progression of events" or "'how things developed,'" and then the interview concludes with "the end of the development" or "'what became'" (Flick). The structured episodic method that I followed featured nine steps related to Flick's major interview characteristics, which are as follows: Step 1: Introduction and Preparation—Orient the participant with topics that will be covered, including the research purpose and nature of questions. Step 2: Contextual Prompts—Ask preliminary questions to get to know the participant and establish how the research topic relates to their current profession or life. Step 3: Eliciting Specific Episodes—Ask the participant the main interview questions so they can recall memorable experiences. Step 4: Following Up for

Details and Context—participant answers follow-up questions that provide specific details or establish context. Step 5: Encouraging Reflection on Writing Center's Progression—participant discusses how the writing center has changed over time. Step 6: Comparing Episodes Across Generations—participant discusses how tutoring practices or students' needs have changed and how VSU's writing center could improve. Step 8: Concluding With Open Reflection—participant adds any additional insights or comments, and Step 9: Closing and Thanks—participants are thanked for their time, and the interview concludes.

Selection of Research Participants

My chosen research participants were student peer writing tutors and writing center staff. I selected and interviewed five current or former writing tutor participants total from VSU's The Writing Center, Student Success Center, and Academic Support Center. I also interviewed five staff members total from each writing center generation. Although some writing tutors and staff members interviewed were no longer employed, there were a few participants who were still employed at Valdosta State University at the time of the interviews.

Previous VSU writing center directors provided me with access to past writing center records of peer writing tutors who would be beneficial to interview. These tutor participants were recommended based on their successful tutoring performance and involvement with their tutoring program. Additionally, all participants chosen were known to have clear opinions about the most effective writing tutoring methods and how the writing center environment could be improved. In addition, the staff participants were also chosen based on their participation and experiences with the tutoring center's operations.

Adhering to the IRB's consent process ensured that all participants volunteered their efforts. The consent process included providing each participant with an initial email that clearly

explained my thesis study in lay terms, including my main research question, objectives, and purpose. Before each interview began, I also clearly read an IRB consent statement that officially outlined my study's overview. This consent statement reiterated that participants' participation was voluntary but that they could choose to stop participating at any time without facing any repercussions.

One-on-one interviews were my main strategy for gaining data about each participant. Whether participants participated in in-person interviews or virtually, I consistently used the Microsoft Teams platform to record each meeting and produce interview transcripts, which are provided later in this project's Appendix A. To recruit each participant, I sent a recruitment letter over email, which is included in Appendix B.

Ethical Considerations

This study's participants were not identified by name and were made aware that their data would not be identifiable. This study also permitted minimal risk to the participants and did not reasonably place them at risk for criminal or civil liability, negative stigmatization, or hinder their financial standing, employability, insurability, or reputation. Therefore, the research topics discussed in the interviews did not discuss or reveal private or sensitive information. To ensure that participants were protected throughout the research process, their consent was verified with the reading of an IRB consent statement, along with the reminder that they had the free will at any point to withdraw from the study. Additionally, using Microsoft Teams' electronic automated chat transcripts, ensured that data was honestly collected, and participants' statements remained truthful and not manipulated. To reduce privacy-related risks, the recorded interviews were deleted upon creation of the transcript. As part of the consent process, participants were also informed that the recorded interview would be deleted once transcribed. Along with my

participants' voices, my voice was included in each interview recording and a part of the permanent transcript. I stored the transcribed material on a password-protected data storage device and kept the files in my office in a locked drawer. Also, I complied with federal regulations for data collection and plan to keep data records for three years after the research's completion.

All participants were informed that the potential risks that existed when they contributed to the study were minimal. The minimal risks that participants could have experienced involved psychological and social risks rather than economic risks. Psychological risks may have included discomfort with being interviewed, but this risk was mitigated because the interview questions were not personally invasive or sensitive but based on tutoring experiences (see the interview questionnaires in the "Data Collection" section below). Interviewees were assured anonymity, and the data used for this thesis will not be released to the public. Since participants did not discuss or reveal financial information or data related to their employment, there were not any economic risks when participating in this study.

While there were no direct benefits that the participants were likely to accrue while participating in the study, participants' willingness to provide insight to the study will benefit not only writing center research and tutoring development but also continuing VSU students' success. Since completed, this research study will improve tutoring practices and enhance the writing tutoring environment so that future writing tutors can best meet tutees' writing needs within the context of VSU.

Data Collection Methods

My research protocol included asking my tutor and staff participants interview questions. Each participant was asked to provide relevant information about their prior or current role in

VSU's writing center. More specifically, each tutoring participant was asked to discuss nine opening questions related to their writing center role(s), such as how many years they tutored, provide details about their major since not all writing tutors are English majors, and outline their current profession or future professional goals if they were currently a student. Some example topics for these sections included how writing tutors were hired, any institutional policies that were required of them when they were employed, and which peers or staff provided them with support. Writing center staff members also answered similar questions, except their questions were directed more towards their institutional and organizational roles. Staff participants first answered eight opening questions about their previous employment history. For instance, each staff participant discussed questions related to their writing center role(s), how many years they had worked the role(s), hiring processes for writing tutors, and how VSU writing tutoring contributes to student success. These questions allowed staff members to provide details about their specialized area of employment.

Tutors and staff members also answered 12 question sections that related to their own writing tutoring practices and about the environment that they worked within. There were ten directed questions and two open-ended questions for tutors and staff. During the Microsoft Teams meetings, each tutor answered the same tutor questionnaire, and each writing center staff member answered the same staff questionnaire. These interviews between myself and each participant were recorded and transcribed with an automatic speech transcription tool on the Microsoft Teams platform. Once all the interviews were completed, interview transcript copies were then added to this thesis project in Appendix A, and the data was organized into relevant tables to highlight comparisons and contrasts between VSU's three writing center generations.

As the sole interviewer, I followed the IRB guidelines and protocol for conducting interviews. Each interview included discussing set research questions asked from the relevant interview questionnaire. The interview questionnaire sheets, Questionnaire #1 for tutors and Questionnaire #2 for writing center staff, which feature direct and indirect questions, are included below:

Questionnaire #1: Tutors	*Questionnaire #2: Tutoring Staff*
Opening Questions	**Opening Questions**
1. What is/was the name of your writing/tutoring center? 2. How many years or semesters have/did you tutor(ed) writing? 3. As a writing tutor, do/did you have any additional roles or duties in the writing center? 4. What made you want to become a writing tutor, and how were you hired? 5. What is/was your major when tutoring? 6. What courses did you support? 7. Which students did you tutor writing (ex: a specific class, a variety of students, etc.)? 8. How did these students learn about writing tutoring services? 9. What makes writing tutoring beneficial or important to you?	1. What is/was the name of the writing/tutoring center you work with currently or/and have worked with? 2. How many years did you work for each? 3. What is your current job position and positions you have had? How many years have you worked for each? 4. During the hiring process, how are writing tutors typically hired, and what qualifications should an ideal writing tutor have? 5. What tutoring disciplines does your tutoring/writing center support? Have these services shifted over time? 6. How do students receive writing tutoring services? 7. What steps does the tutoring center take to advertise writing tutoring services for students? 8. How does writing tutoring contribute to VSU student success?

Direct Questions (10 questions)	Direct Questions (10 questions)
1. What writing tutoring training did you receive before becoming a writing tutor? As a writing tutor, did you complete further training through meetings, classes, or training sessions? How did these training sessions help you assess and adjust your writing tutoring effectiveness?	1. From an institutional perspective, what are the main goals of the tutoring/writing center? How do these goals align with the day-to-day tutoring operations and services provided to students?
2. Can you discuss the main goals of the writing center where you work/ed? What are/were your professional goals, and how did these goals influence your writing tutoring practices?	2. Can you explain your main responsibilities and how you contribute to the tutoring/writing center? Please include any additional roles you have that further support the program.
3. Can you explain your approaches for tutoring a student writing? Please run me through how a typical writing tutoring session with you would go.	3. How does the physical tutoring environment promote efficiency and productivity for writing tutors and tutees who attend tutoring sessions? Have there been any major changes in the tutoring center's environment and structure in terms of the building itself, services provided, and levels of engagement?
4. How do you explain the writing process to students? How do you encourage students to work with you on their writing? What have you learned from the students you've tutored?	4. How does the tutoring/writing center navigate students' sociocultural factors, welcoming tutees of various backgrounds and identities (ex: freshman students, graduate students, international students, students with disabilities etc.)? What programs or strategies are in place that promote inclusivity in the writing tutoring environment?

5. During your time tutoring, how would you describe the tutoring environment? Did you find this tutoring environment efficient?	5. What major institutional changes have impacted the tutoring/writing center's focus or ability to meet students' needs? Have students'/tutees' writing needs shifted or stayed the same, and how has the tutoring center made adjustments to support these needs?
6. How did you adjust your writing tutoring approaches to support various students? Consider how sociocultural factors such as a tutee's background or identity impact your tutoring sessions: freshman students, graduate students, international students, students with disabilities, etc.	6. What are the institutional policies or administrative duties that writing tutors are expected to follow and complete? How do these duties support the writing/tutoring center's effectiveness?
7. What writing needs did you see most often? Did students' writing needs stay the same or change over time?	7. How does the tutoring/writing center provide writing tutors with peer and staff support(s)? How does the program promote tutor and staff cooperation and collaboration?
8. What institutional policies or administrative tasks were you responsible for following and completing as a tutor? How did these duties impact your writing tutor role?	8. The writing center/tutoring center usually highlights the importance of social collaboration and tutors connecting with tutees during the writing process. How are writing tutors trained to tutor so that collaboration is implemented during tutoring sessions? Could you share some writing tutoring training practices that help tutors focus on engaging with the tutee throughout the writing process, rather than the tutor only focusing on the final writing product?

9. During your employment, can you please explain the peer-staff support system writing tutors have/had? How do/did tutors and staff members collaborate with one another?	9. Based on your observations, do writing tutors typically study English and literature? If not, how do you ensure that peer tutors of other disciplines have the same writing skills as peer tutors who study English? **For the writing center that **does not** include writing tutoring with other tutoring subjects: What are the benefits of separating writing tutoring from the other tutoring subjects? What are some drawbacks of separating the two? **For tutoring centers that **include** writing tutoring with other tutoring subjects: What are the benefits of not separating writing tutoring from the other tutoring subjects? What are some drawbacks of combining the two?
10. How has your academic major impacted or influenced how you tutor writing?	10. What should writing tutoring look like? How are the writing tutors evaluated for success? Is there data or feedback that is assessed to measure writing tutoring effectiveness?
Open-Ended Questions (2 questions)	**Open-Ended Questions (2 questions)**
11. In your opinion, how have writing tutoring methods changed during your time tutoring? Also, did the writing tutoring environment change?	11. During your employment, how has the tutoring/writing center changed over time? Also, how has the writing tutor's role changed, such as how the writing/tutoring center approaches how writing tutors tutor writing?
12. Based on your experiences, what could the writing center and future writing tutors do to make tutoring services more effective? How could the writing center's environment improve to support tutors and students?	12. During your involvement with the writing center, what are some administrative challenges that the writing/tutoring center has experienced (employees, institutional support, resources, etc.)? How could these challenges be improved or addressed?

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Analysis, and Limitations

Discussion and Analysis

The following bar charts visually display the findings based on participants' responses across all three writing center generations. The bar charts were created based on trends displayed in the detailed data charts in Appendix C. The three bar charts correspond to each findings section detailed in "Chapter 6: Interview Trends and Findings:" The Writing Center's Environmental Impact, Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring, and Overall Suggestions for Improvement. The different bar colors in each bar chart represent their associated findings category: The Writing Center's Environmental Impact is green, Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring is blue, and Overall Suggestions for Improvement is red. The Writing Center's Environmental Impact bar chart uses two shades of green to further categorize the environmental findings: dark green indicates findings related to the writing center's ethos, and light green indicates findings related to the writing center's physical environment.

Each bar chart displays bars that show the number of participants that contributed to each finding. Findings were determined by participants specifically mentioning the finding or providing responses that supported each finding. For instance, in Fig. 6., for finding "B" (Writing Process Emphasis), one SSC writing tutor mentioned specifically that she asked the tutee to explain their writing process (Participant #10). However, one staff member from The Writing Center said, "[Computer Word processing] made editing easier. It made writing more of

a process than a one-shot production," suggesting that with The Writing Center's new technology resources, students could view writing as a process instead of a final product. Because both responses mentioned writing tutors emphasizing the writing process during tutoring, they were both counted towards this finding's total.

The total number of participants for each bar chart totals ten since responses were only collected from ten participants. The top of each bar displays the number of total participants that contributed to the finding. The bar chart key includes a capitalized title(s), showing the specific category that relates to the specific findings. The bottom of the bars, labeled A, B, C, etc., corresponds with each bar chart's key, and the key lists the findings that each letter represents. For instance, in Fig. 5., the dark green "A" bar shows that across all three writing centers, 9 participant responses concluded that face-to-face advertising methods impact the writing center's ethos or how students perceive the writing center. These three bar charts, which display this thesis' findings, are displayed below:

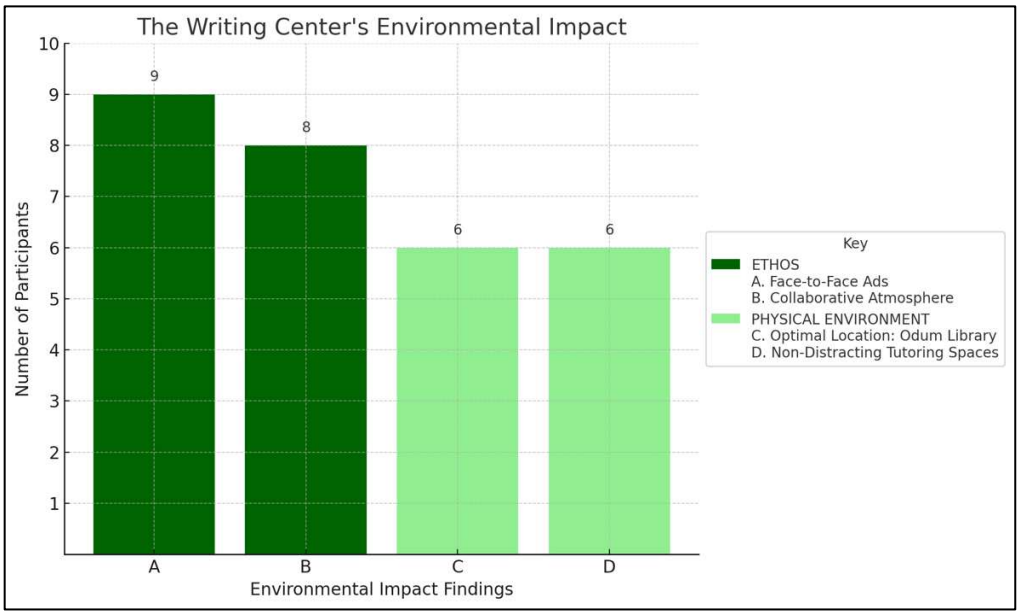

Fig. 5. The Writing Center's Environmental Impact Bar Graph. *Source: (Own work).*

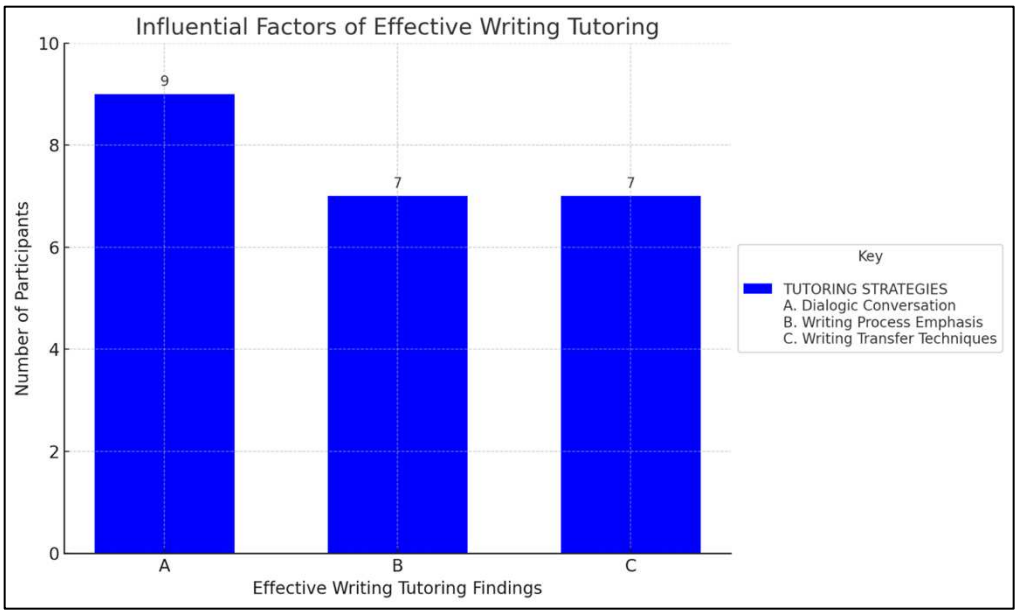

Fig. 6. Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring Bar Graph. *Source: (Own work).*

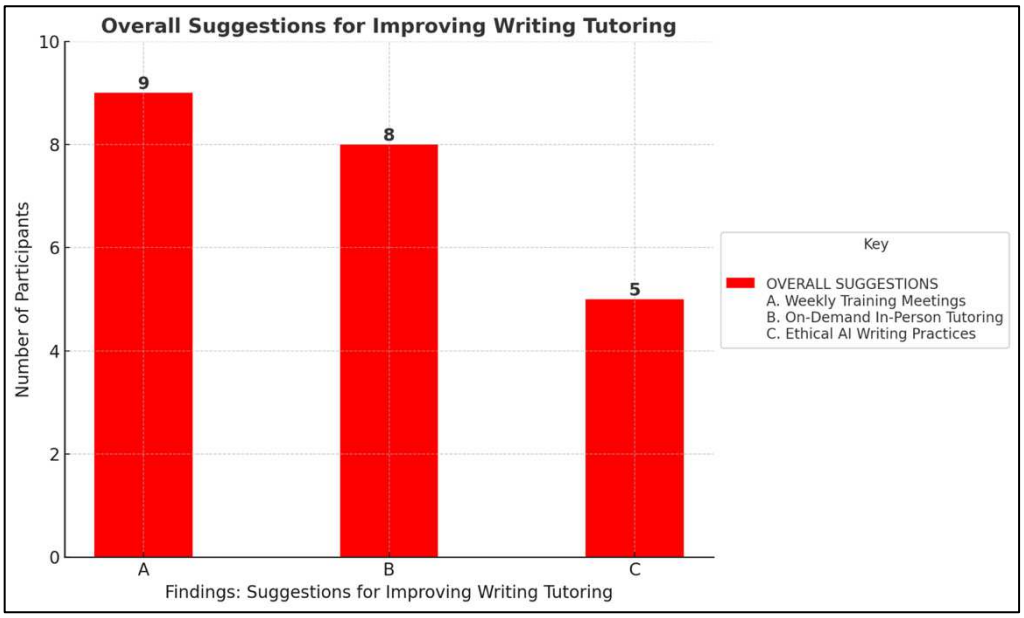

Fig. 7. Overall Suggestions for Improving Writing Tutoring Bar Graph. *Source: (Own work).*

Research Limitations

While conducting my research, the main limitations that I faced related to time constraints and participants. Since I had never completed an IRB-approved project before, I had not accurately anticipated how long the beginning IRB approval process would take before I

could start interviewing participants. After outlining my thesis and completing the necessary IRB documentation in Spring 2024, I received IRB approval in Fall 2024 (Appendix D). By the time my project received IRB approval, I knew that I had limited time to conduct interviews. To complete my thesis by April 2025, I still needed to gather and analyze my interview data, plus report my findings.

When I initially planned my project in Spring 2024, I had a larger participant sampling size from each writing center group. I started with 24 potential participants total, preparing to interview four writing tutors and four staff members from each generation. After discussing my timeline with my thesis chair, I realized that I needed to cut my interview participants in half so that I would have time to fully report on each. This was a tough decision to make since I knew that this smaller group of 12 participants would not accurately represent each generation like a larger group. Fortunately, since many staff participants had worked within two or more writing center environments, this somewhat resolved this issue. Referencing these additional insights from staff responses about their time in other writing center generations provided a more comprehensive view of the writing centers that had fewer participants.

As I started the process of gathering my 12 participants, I would later run into issues with scheduling or conducting three interviews as well. During the participant recruitment and scheduling process, I had challenges with getting in touch with two of my participants—one tutor from The Writing Center and one staff member from the SSC. Although I reached out to the tutor participant from The Writing Center and they agreed to participate, I did not receive a reply when I tried to schedule their interview. When I contacted my second SSC staff participant, I received a reply, but this participant declined to participate. Because I adhered to the IRB guidelines and standards for consent throughout the entirety of this project, I did not pressure

anyone to participate, so I could only use information from ten participants. Once I scheduled interviews for these available participants, I also ran into one challenge during the interview process.

Unfortunately, I could not conduct a recorded interview with my second staff member participant from The Writing Center, participant #8, because he did not schedule an official interview meeting with me. However, after he received my first IRB recruitment email, this staff participant replied with information about his time at The Writing Center. To navigate this issue, another staff member from The Writing Center read this email at the end of her recorded interview. This staff member stated in the recording that she was reading participant #8's information, who provided his response over email. This provided me with participant #8's responses in transcript form so that I could include these responses in the final appendix transcript of this thesis and cite them appropriately throughout this project (Appendix A).

To complete my thesis by the deadline, I had to reduce the number of participants that I interviewed, which ultimately limited the scope of my findings. However, even if I had interviewed all 24 participants like I had originally planned, my findings could be limited since I did not interview any tutees who received writing tutoring. Including tutees' responses would have strengthened my findings since this additional perspective would show how VSU students feel about the writing tutoring services they had received. However, I combated this lacking tutee point-of-view issue with my episodic interview structure. Using an episodic interview structure, which encouraged participants to recall specific episodes with tutees, gave some additional insight into tutee experiences.

Reflecting on my thesis overall, having a deeper awareness of time constraints and anticipating potential issues with obtaining participants would make a similar project run

smoother next time. Now fully understanding what the IRB process entails, I would plan further ahead and know how to complete the IRB documents accurately. Since I had a period of sending my IRB documents back and forth to edit them based on feedback I received, next time I would know what the IRB expected and what could prevent my project's approval. Knowing these details would leave me with more time to interview more participants. During the participant recruitment process, I could then dedicate my time to finding additional participants to replace any individuals who could not participate.

Despite the various limitations that I encountered while completing this project, this thesis provides valuable insights into sociocultural writing tutoring and how VSU can further improve the ASC and writing tutoring services for students. However, future research about VSU's writing centers and writing tutoring should occur over a longer timeframe to provide a more representative sampling size of participants and address potential challenges during the research process. Having more participants would provide a more in-depth understanding of steps that VSU can take to improve writing tutoring, and future projects could successfully build upon the foundational findings I provided in this thesis.

CHAPTER VI

Interview Trends and Findings

Participants identified characteristics of an ideal writing center as their responses highlighted how VSU's writing tutoring program has evolved over time. The following findings showed trends across all VSU's writing centers with the three major categories: The Writing Center's Environmental Impact, Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring, and Overall Suggestions for Improving Writing Tutoring. These findings emphasized how writing tutoring at VSU has changed and stayed consistent, providing writing tutor and staff opinions about their writing center's physical environment and atmosphere, writing tutoring methods, and how VSU could improve writing tutoring.

The Writing Center's Environmental Impact

All three generations' responses shared the following commonalities about the writing center's environmental impact: an effective writing center cultivates a welcoming ethos when writing tutors and staff use face-to-face advertising methods and writing tutors work together to create a collaborative atmosphere. Additionally, the ideal writing center's physical environment operates best in Odum Library since students need additional non-distracting tutoring spaces. As writing tutoring transitioned from The Writing Center to the SSC and later the ASC, environment and location changes over time allowed VSU's tutoring organization to get closer to meeting these goals. However, since most participants had differing responses regarding their writing center's efficiency, including the current ASC, these varying opinions proved VSU's writing tutoring environment still has room to improve.

Face-To-Face Advertising

Most participants' responses emphasized that prioritizing advertising continued consistently across all tutoring generations. Although advertising methods advanced with technology—from the Writing Center's tutoring bookmarks to the ASC's campus-wide TV advertisements and social media posts—class visits and word-of-mouth methods were the top advertising methods mentioned. A staff member who witnessed all three generations' advertising methods recalled how class visits were a reliable advertising method for writing tutors to spread the news about writing tutoring services: "Even back in the writing center days in the early 2000s. Class visits were always the most effective way to get students to come visit, so we've kept that throughout the 16 years that I was there. So, class visits were #1" (Participant #6). Class visits were the most effective advertising method across each generation since writing tutors could tag-team visiting multiple classes and explain how writing tutoring worked to multiple students at once.

During class visits, writing tutors introduced themselves, explained what students should expect during a tutoring session, and the benefits of writing tutoring. Writing tutors also explained where the ASC was located and even ran students through the process of signing up for a tutoring appointment. In-person class visits supported Lev Vygotsky's and John Nordlof's ideas that establishing strong relationships upfront can make effective cognitive and motivational scaffolding approaches easier to implement later. Because writing tutors met various students face-to-face across campus, these initial meetings allowed writing tutors to personally introduce themselves to students. Students could then feel closer to the writing tutors and view them as fellow peers that they could easily schedule an appointment with later.

During the early generations of The Writing Center and the SSC, tutoring staff also conducted class workshops that provided each tutoring program additional opportunities to advertise writing tutoring. The Writing Center staff held class workshops about Word formatting in the computer lab, and the SSC staff visited classes to discuss various study skills. One staff member from The Writing Center mentioned how the computer lab hosted class workshops: "So, we did orientations for almost every [Composition] class on how to use Word, how [sic] to set up papers. I mean really basic kind of stuff, because at that time there were no computer classrooms" (Participant #7). This Writing Center staff member also mentioned how these informative Word class workshops were conducted just as regularly as one-on-one writing tutoring sessions. As students learned how to format their papers alongside their classmates, they could familiarize themselves with The Writing Center location, helping them remember where to return if they needed further writing help. When SSC members visited classes across different course classrooms, they could also inform each course instructor present about tutoring, sparking more word-of-mouth advertising. Therefore, English faculty greatly promoted writing tutoring to students, further strengthening faculty and student connections around campus.

Collaborative Atmosphere

Continuing the idea that face-to-face advertising methods used student connections to further the writing center's ethos, many participants mentioned that when the writing center fosters a collaborative atmosphere, the environment feels more welcoming. Throughout the iterations, participants' responses concluded that the writing center's sense of community, which included writing tutors and staff, greatly contributed to an overall inviting environment. Although one writing tutor mentioned that The Writing Center had a "tight-knit staff" and the writing tutors "worked really well together no matter who was scheduled on shift," the

atmosphere "was not very cozy" (Participant #10). Since the Writing Center served as one of VSU's primary computer labs at the time, cultivating a welcoming atmosphere was not a crucial focus. Since many students went in and out for various computer needs or attended group instruction sessions with their class and instructor, students viewed the computer lab as a more productive atmosphere.

However, the SSC and ASC explained that close tutor relationships positively influenced their writing center's atmosphere within larger spaces. One SSC writing tutor connected her positive tutoring experiences with the SSC's overall friendly atmosphere. Painting the SSC as a second home, this tutor elaborated that tutoring near her peers fostered a welcoming atmosphere: "I really love[d] the work I did, but for me it was like my home on campus. Like my coworkers were some of my best friends on campus" (Participant #10). The SSC's open layout encouraged tutors to interact and collaborate as they held tutoring sessions near each other, creating a more laid-back learning environment. Since several tutors worked alongside each other, writing tutors felt that they belonged in the SSC's tutoring community. This inclusion extended to other VSU students as tutees since writing tutors were also peer tutors.

ASC participants agreed that tutor collaboration also cultivated a casual and inviting tutoring atmosphere. One writing tutor explained how the writing tutors' close relationships made the ASC feel more welcoming and encouraged students to attend tutoring:

> The tutoring environment at the Academic Support Center was very informal, at times friendly. Almost a family-like atmosphere. The section of the library that the writing tutors and other tutors would congregate at would have a lot of discussions back and forth… I know some people who were friends with tutors, and they would sometimes hang around while the tutors were on the clock, not distracting them, but…because the

> library is kind of an open space. And then those friends would see how easy and non-judgmental tutoring actually was, and then they would end up using the tutoring services. (Participant #1)

Since the ASC's writing tutors knew each other and engaged with their tutees well, other VSU students perceived the tutoring space as inviting and writing tutoring as less intimidating. As students engaged with one another around the ASC area, these various student gatherings signaled to outside students that the writing center provided peer-based services.

Because this previous tutoring environment emphasized collaboration, the ASC aligned with Kenneth Bruffee's argument that a socially supportive academic environment helps students find success. Bruffee argues that friendly and casual peer relationships are important in the writing center as they help the tutor spread information about academic discourse to the tutee. The ASC's collaborative environment made the atmosphere more inviting to students so that students would be more likely to receive help. Once students signed up with a writing tutor, they could access academic insider information, such as learning about instructors' preferences. However, currently, with the recent Knack system, there have been fewer tutors who congregate in the ASC's open space. The ASC must consider how they can resolve this problem of having less student engagement so that they can revive the previous collaborative atmosphere. If the ASC aims to make their space collaborative again, writing tutors can then continue to help students strengthen their writing skills so that they can contribute findings to their own academic field.

Optimal Location: Odum Library

Tutor and staff participants also mentioned how their writing center's physical location could often determine whether students attended tutoring. Although participants' responses

differed when they discussed their writing center's location, the overall consensus was that more students would enter a centrally located writing center like the ASC's Odum Library location. One Writing Center tutor explained that the computer lab's central location made the space "open for anybody at the institution to use" (Participant #9). Having The Writing Center serve students' computer needs and provide writing tutoring simultaneously allowed students to go in and out often. Students' frequent visits made receiving writing help more incognito, and students were less likely to worry about their initial tutoring visit.

In contrast, the SSC's location was specifically known for providing tutoring and advising, so students might feel more intimidated with walking in the front door, especially if they were less familiar with what tutoring entailed. A staff member explained that the SSC's Langdale Hall location was more isolated, which made it more obvious when students attended tutoring:

> There are some students who don't necessarily want people to know they're going to get tutoring… because they're embarrassed or they're uncomfortable or whatever. When they came into our old center in Langdale Hall, it was pretty obvious… That was the only reason anybody would go in there…to tutor. So, it was a little more ominous, and again, it was kind of off the beaten path, so I think that made it a little more awkward. (Participant #5)

Students who have never attended tutoring often feel embarrassed or shy to admit that they need help, so the SSC's location could have amplified students' anxiety and hesitancy. Another SSC staff member mentioned that the Langdale Hall dorm location also received pushback from students who wanted their living space separate from their academic affairs. Some students complained, "This is my living space. I don't want to study in my living space" (Participant #6).

Although this staff member recalls the SSC receiving a lot of tutoring business, some students expressed that they wanted their living area separated from school.

Meanwhile, the ASC library location helped students see tutoring within a default and pre-existing common study space. Students felt less vulnerable and could see others receiving tutoring, so they realized that everyone was too busy to judge if they made a tutoring appointment themselves. A staff member explained the benefits of the ASC located in the library: "I will say one of the things that's nice about the library is students could be [sic] getting tutored, or they could be having a study session, or they could be sitting by themselves. Nobody really knows because it's a more open space, and it's a space that's used by everybody" (Participant #5). The ASC's central space combatted the SSC's previous issue because tutees could easily blend in when they attended tutoring with the other students studying around them. Potential tutees could also observe how tutoring worked from a distance and see firsthand that tutoring operated casually.

One staff member from The Writing Center who witnessed the SSC relocate to Odum Library explained why this location made the most sense for writing tutoring: "I think it was also a good move to move tutoring from Langdale Hall to the library and put it in the center of an academic building that probably doesn't get as much student use as it should. And I mean the visits to the library increased dramatically after that move was made, and the space is nice" (Participant #7). Having writing tutoring located near various library resources supports Rebecca Nowacek and Rebecca Babcock's research that multimodal and adaptable approaches increase student access. If tutees had diverse needs, writing tutors could adapt their tutoring approaches with nearby library resources. For instance, if a writing tutor encountered a deaf or hard-of-hearing tutee, the ASC could easily contact the Access Office, which has partnered with Odum

Library, and request an interpreter. Tutors could also transition the tutoring session to nearby computers and implement Babcock's deaf visual instruction practices themselves. Hearing tutees could also benefit from using technology during writing tutoring, as computer programs could also serve as a multimodal option if writing tutors implemented Nowacek's multimodal writing transfer techniques.

Non-Distracting Tutoring Spaces

Additionally, environmental efficiency measures whether the writing center has an environment conducive to learning so that writing tutors can work with tutees productively and make progress. Participants' responses sometimes contrasted when asked about their own writing center's environmental efficiency. Among these differing opinions, the responses concluded that an efficient writing tutoring environment provides students with additional non-distracting spaces. Having small, separated areas from the main space gives students a quieter area when they need to focus and prevents writing tutors and tutees from experiencing interruptions during tutoring sessions.

The Writing Center's computer lab location in West Hall and proximity to VSU's English Department made the writing center accessible because students could easily find and attend tutoring between their classes. However, tutors and staff members had differing opinions about the space's efficiency and whether having computers nearby was beneficial. One staff member explained that though the computer lab space could be more efficient, the computers allowed writing tutors to answer students' quick questions about writing online: "The setup probably wasn't optimal in West Hall because most students thought of that as a computer lab… It probably wasn't the best environment, but what happened because of the computers is we eventually started tracking on-demand tutorials… Those were a lot of fun to experiment with and

play around with, and I think [sic] beneficial to all of us" (Participant #7). Following this staff member's sentiment that the computer lab space had its positives, another staff member reflected positively about the small space. This staff member explained that the computers allowed group instruction on MLA formatting to occur: "Students would come in, and we would show them how to format their papers in MLA, while the teacher just sort of stood there and watched what was happening. But it was nice because the students could do their work and the tutor could be behind them helping" (Participant #6). The Writing Center's computer lab space also meant that classes could attend at once, and writing tutors could assist students with formatting their writing with the class instructor nearby.

However, one writing tutor disagreed that the computers made the tutoring environment less efficient since computers had their own set of problems. This tutor explained that the computers could distract students during individual tutoring sessions: "It could be distracting at times because you're trying to work with somebody, but there's [sic] people who might have … a computer problem, then [the tutor] has to interrupt and get up and address that. And so, it wasn't the most efficient, but it was available, and we worked within it" (Participant #9). Since writing tutors' role included providing tech support when students needed help, troubleshooting the computers could take writing tutors away from working with a tutee. Staff members might have mentioned computers as a positive environmental aspect because writing tutors mainly tutored in this common space while staff still had separate offices if they needed separation from the distracting computers.

Additionally, since the SSC featured an overall open layout and relocated from the old President's House, some tutors and staff from this iteration shared differing opinions about the space's overall efficiency. However, the SSC writing tutors and staff also recognized that the

new Langdale Hall location improved tutoring. An SSC staff member at the time described their hopes to cultivate a "non-intimidating, inviting atmosphere," mentioning that though the wide-open space brought a sense of community, there were still issues with noise levels (Participant #6). The SSC had a flourishing tutor community with tutors of all subject areas together on one floor, but this also created multiple conversations concurrently and some noise complaints. This same SSC staff member explained, "So people get so excited when they talk to each other, and they get loud, and everybody in one big room, you know, it's distracting to people who get distracted" (Participant #6). As multiple tutoring sessions occurred near each other, this lively environment engaged students who might not mind the noise but proved detrimental to students who needed a quieter learning environment.

Likewise, when asked about the SSC's environmental efficiency, writing tutors explained that the environment worked well for tutoring. One tutor emphasized that "beneficial" described the space more accurately, explaining that the SSC was "highly academic and intellectual" but also "supportive and vibrant" (Participant #10). While the SSC maintained a laid-back and welcoming atmosphere, this writing tutor also suggested potential issues with having tutoring contained on one open floor. This tutor explained the positives and negatives of the SSC's open tutoring space:

> There are like advantages and disadvantages, right? Having this learning center where we're all kind of dumped in a room together, it did get loud. I'm sure there were students who had learning differences who experienced the chaos of what I experienced is like [sic] beautiful chaos. They probably felt overwhelmed or overstimulated or distracted… So do I think there is a huge value to an open, highly collaborative setting? Yes. Is that going to benefit everybody? No. (Participant #10)

Another SSC writing tutor agreed that the SSC's open space could be positive, mentioning how the layout encouraged collaborative opportunities. This tutor's responses indicated that she did not remember any issues with the tutoring space: "I felt like I was able to work well with my own students that I was tutoring in this environment" (Participant #3). Overall, previous SSC writing tutors and staff reached the consensus that the tutoring center's overall environmental efficiency provided the writing tutors with constant collaborative opportunities despite some flaws with Langdale Hall's open layout.

Although the ASC's library location has remained an optimal location, recent staffing changes have also interfered with maintaining a collaborative atmosphere, causing conflicting tutor and staff responses towards the environment's overall efficiency. Improving on the SSC's open layout, the ASC has combatted the SSC's previous noise issue with additional spread-out seating spaces and individual study rooms. One staff member mentioned how the space's design helps reduce noise if students need a quiet place: "We also have study rooms along the side wall in case they need it to be much more quiet [sic]. We also have white noise machines in those study rooms so that also helps reduce the noise as well" (Participant #4). The ASC has provided students with separated spaces so that they could remove themselves from the main space's noise previously, but recently there has been less noise that students need to escape.

When the ASC adopted the Knack platform and utilized graduate students as writing tutors, this change caused fewer tutors to congregate in the ASC's main area because the graduate students have different schedules. When asked about the environment's efficiency, ASC participants' responses were divided based on whether they had experiences tutoring before or after the Knack program was introduced. One tutor recalls his experiences tutoring before

Knack, emphasizing that he found the ASC environment efficient since the space promoted student interactions:

> Having other tutors there while everyone else is [sic] working also made it so that if one specific tutor was working with a tutee and maybe the question came up that that tutor didn't have the answer for, they could quickly just go to another one of the tutors who were on the clock… [If] one tutor is working with a student on a paper and they have a question about a [sic] comma usage and the tutor doesn't know, the tutor can go to one of the other tutors on the clock…and say, "Hey, do you know about this common rule?" … It just made it very quick and easy, and again, [student interactions] kind of helped foster that fun, casual environment. (Participant #1)

This tutor found the area efficient since he saw peers collaborating with one another; writing tutors could ask other tutors for their input when they needed help tutoring a tutee. Noise levels were also not an issue since tutors had priority to use the various individual study rooms around the area, which provided writing tutors and tutees with a non-distracting place for tutoring sessions.

One writing tutor who has tutored during the ASC's partnership with Knack explained how the environment is not efficient. Since the main writing tutors are six VSU English graduate students and many tutors left after Knack's transition, the tutoring environment is far from being the collaborative space that it once was. When asked about the tutoring atmosphere and why this writing tutor found the environment inefficient, she said that tutoring was "very individualized", and she does not "interact with other tutors" (Participant #2). This tutor explained that students tend to use study rooms and stay off to themselves. Also, since Knack offers fewer tutoring

training opportunities, this has caused tutors to not know each other like before when tutors attended pre-semester group trainings and weekly training meetings.

Somewhat agreeing with this writing tutor's opinion that the ASC's environment could be more efficient, one ASC staff member said that the ASC space had an efficient physical layout, but there were overall fewer connections between tutors and staff. This staff member also explained that when the ASC directly hired tutors instead of Knack, the environment was more collaborative: "It was very collaborative. It was very collegial. I don't see that as much now. The writing tutors … do most of their appointments out there. But seven or eight of them. They're [sic] very different schedules, so there isn't as much collegiality because more often than not, when the writing tutors are there, they're there by themselves" (Participant #5).

Unfortunately, since partnering with Knack and having fewer tutors in general, the current ASC environment has lost its previous collaborative atmosphere. Rather than writing tutors needing to escape the noise like previous generations mentioned, writing tutors have lost their tutor support system. Despite the ASC having fewer people present at one time, which has left the space quieter, one tutor mentioned that students still use the various individual study rooms that surround the main space.

Moreover, the obvious remaining popularity of the individual study rooms still confirms the finding that non-distracting tutoring spaces are an important aspect that writing centers need to maintain an efficient environment. This conclusion supports Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic theory, which emphasizes that engaging in one-on-one conversation shapes meaning. The ASC's individual study rooms provided students with a non-distracting space when the environment got noisy from many students tutoring in the main space. Today, these study spaces still work to place a divide between any remaining noise that occurs in the library and students who need a

quieter place to concentrate. When the ASC's main space had a more collaborative atmosphere, there were more chances for writing tutors to help tutees construct knowledge, as tutors could rely on other tutors if they wanted an additional perspective. Now that there are fewer multiple perspectives that contribute to meaning making, this less collaborative environment could suggest that there might also be less dialogic conversation.

Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring

Participants' responses about effective writing tutoring strategies shared the following commonalities: the tutoring session should frame writing as a process rather than a final product and encourage active tutee participation. Most writing tutors and tutees, no matter the generation, understood that writing tutors were not editors but rather co-collaborators who met students at their writing level and guided them in the right direction. Although participants mentioned different students' learning challenges when discussing their flexible writing tutoring practices, transfer techniques were a popular strategy that ensured that the writing tutor adjusted tutoring to meet students' diverse needs. Additionally, observing how these sociocultural tutoring strategies have stayed consistent over time proves how close tutor-tutee relationships positively influence and support learning.

Dialogic Conversation

When asked to explain their go-to writing tutoring practices, participants overwhelmingly mentioned dialogic conversation approaches, which motivate the tutee to actively engage out loud with the writing tutor. Two specific out-loud practices that writing tutors used included asking the tutee several questions and having the tutee read their essay out loud or discuss their writing. All these approaches supported another goal that participants mentioned—partnering with the tutee, rather than writing for them. One tutor from The Writing Center mentioned that

she often asked tutees to read their essays out loud so that students could explain what their ideas meant. This tutor explained that she engaged students with this method when they wanted to sit on the sidelines during the tutoring session. This tutor compared tutees' passive tendencies to a car ride: "[Students] were more reluctant to drive." They wanted to "sit in the passenger seat" and "be a passive participant" (Participant #9). When students read their papers out loud, this prevented them from sitting idle while the writing tutor did all the work.

Writing tutors from the SSC also recalled prompting students to actively participate. One SSC writing tutor explained how students need a thinking-out-loud partner: "Many people construe writing as a solitary endeavor… For me, writing is thinking… [Students are] often better anchors, right when [they] have a thought partner" (Participant #10). Another SSC tutor explained that she led out-loud discussions to engage the tutee and provided helpful suggestions when the student got stuck. This tutor said that when she asked tutees to read their papers out loud, she gave them the chance to find errors on their own. Rather than pointing out these errors directly, this tutor gave the tutee hints about the error type present: "[I] have them read aloud, and if they pass…some errors that I notice and they don't notice, I maybe stop them after a few sentences and say, 'OK, there are a couple of these types of issues here. Could you try to find where I'm talking about?'" (Participant #3). This writing tutor considered that the tutee might have difficulty recognizing writing errors on their own if she only asked the student to locate errors.

Instead, this writing tutor leveraged the student's current learning level, utilizing Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development to provide the student with hints so they could complete the more challenging task of locating errors. The writing tutor could help the tutee learn while allowing them to feel more comfortable stepping into more difficult tasks with their

ZPD. When the writing tutor mentioned the error type within the student's writing instead of locating the errors, the tutor gave the student a starting place and the necessary practice to avoid making the same mistakes in the future. This engaging practice also ensured that the writing tutor never edited the student's work for them.

Solidifying the idea that effective writing tutoring occurs audibly, an SSC staff member detailed how writing tutors learned the Top 5 Writing Tutoring Strategies during training. One of these top strategies encouraged tutees to read their own work out loud. This staff member also explained how her philosophy towards tutoring's main goal changed, emphasizing that everyone needs a writing partner:

> I used to tell my tutors, "We're trying to put ourselves out of a job. We're trying to help students become independent writers." And over the decades, I've recognized that that's not true. What we're trying to do is create confidence so that students are unafraid to work with other people on their writing to get feedback and to offer feedback…That's why I think it's the most valuable way: one-on-one conversation. Conversations about writing that generate ideas and provide tips and just give real-time feedback from a human being. (Participant #6)

Similarly to Kenneth Bruffee's emphasis that peer workshopping enriches students' learning, peer conversations will always remain a necessity since even independent writers benefit from having another set of eyes. Regardless of whether students can write themselves, they will truly never retire from tutoring. Rather than viewing all tutoring as remedial, students should see the tutoring session as an opportunity to receive peer feedback through dialogic conversations so they can improve their writing further.

Likewise, the ASC writing tutors also mentioned that having engaging conversations with tutees, specifically questioning, helped redirect students when they faced difficulties. One tutor explained that she "probed the student with questions" so that the tutee could start thinking about their mistakes and how they could improve their writing. Another tutor stated that using questions helped redirect students and keep them actively engaged:

> My primary method was just to get as much information as possible and then lead the student to produce the best writing they can. A lot of times that looks like just asking questions as prompts for what they should think about writing next rather than telling them out right...You could say, "Well, what would you say is the overall point of your paper? How would you wrap it up in one sentence?" That's a lot easier for the student to understand, and plus it fuels a lot more of their own ideas. (Participant #1)

This tutor's main questioning strategy aligns with Vygotsky-inspired questioning methods like scaffolded conversation. The tutor explained gathering information about the tutee's situation or assignment first, likewise to how scaffolded conversation's initial questions help the writing tutor establish the tutee's situational context and main goal. Similarly, to scaffolded conversation's "how" questions that ask students to explain their reasoning, this tutor's "how" question prompted the student to consider how they could revise their writing.

An ASC staff member reiterated that the writing center supports students' learning, explaining how out-loud tutoring techniques benefit tutees. This staff member explained that writing tutors were typically trained to implement the reading-out-loud strategy: "We often have the writing tutors either read their paper out loud or have the student read the paper out loud because it helps them engage in their own work. It also allows [the tutee] to be able to hear if there are any issues when they're speaking the sentences out loud, if there are any grammatical

or sentence structure issues" (Participant #4). Reading out loud mirrors Bakhtin's dialogic conversation, allowing the tutor and tutee to equally contribute during the tutoring session. As dialogic conversation relies on an individual's initial address and the receiving individual's response, reading out loud also helps the student gain a new understanding about their paper. In this specific case that this staff member mentions, students might hear obvious mistakes when they read their paper out loud, helping them fix any grammar or writing errors that they might not have noticed while writing.

Additionally, supporting Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development idea helps the teacher provide students with appropriate challenges regardless of their writing level, this staff member also said that the current ASC hopes to make tutoring accessible for all students. This staff member outlined one ASC goal, which includes "support[ing] students where they are" and "be[ing] accessible to students as well" (Participant #4). To ensure that writing tutors consider students' various learning levels during the tutoring session, writing tutors can use conversation-based approaches combined with a student's ZPD to appropriately challenge them without providing too much assistance. However, writing tutors also must continually adapt ZPD and out-loud approaches when they encounter students with diverse needs.

Transfer Techniques

Most participants also acknowledged that not all students learn the same, which meant that writing tutors used flexible tutoring approaches to meet students' diverse needs. Depending on the student's needs, some writing tutors implemented writing knowledge transfer, which encouraged students to recall prior writing knowledge and adapt their writing skills for new assignments. Some writing tutors also used transfer themselves, adjusting prior writing tutoring methods according to students' various needs. Although writing tutors' transfer methods

differed, participants' responses concluded that implementing transfer techniques was another popular tutoring method used across all three writing center generations.

Though the Writing Center differed from the SSC and ASC generations since writing tutoring occurred later in the writing process, writing tutors still adapted tutoring methods to help students learn. One writing tutor from The Writing Center mentioned how writing tutors typically used minimal marking techniques to show the tutee where errors were located without specifically stating the error made. Using minimal markings ensured that the writing tutor did not edit the tutee's paper. These markings instead prompted tutees to think about how they could improve their writing, learning to recognize and edit errors independently. When asked how The Writing Center navigated students' various sociocultural factors, such as tutees with diverse needs, one staff member explained how the writing tutors adapted writing tutoring methods. This staff member explained that even though the main tutee population consisted of freshman students, there were also international tutees who had varying English proficiency levels:

> Probably some of the biggest conflicts came around international students, because we weren't really trained well enough about how to work with the particular language issues that population might have had. So, I did a lot of…research…because I was trying to make sure I understood what we could and couldn't do… When I had a student from Vietnam, where [sic] at the time, from everything I understood, there were no verb endings in that language, so verb tense was really a confusing issue. So, we did … Haswell's minimal marking, where I was just going to check on the line that had a problem and he would try to find it, and we would work until we did. And so, we shared that strategy. (Participant #7)

Rather than using Rebecca Nowacek's prior writing knowledge transfer, this staff member explained that the writing tutors used their prior writing tutoring knowledge. Students adapted the same minimal marking strategy used with other English-speaking students to support international students' English language challenges. Using minimal marking allowed writing tutors to stay consistent with not editing students' work for them regardless of the student's learning need.

Writing tutors from the SSC generation also explained how they transferred their previous writing tutoring knowledge to tutor international tutees. When asked how writing tutors met students' diverse learning needs, one writing tutor explained that writing tutors must meet students where they are, adapting traditional writing tutoring practices when necessary to make writing tutoring more inclusive. This tutor also mentioned her approach with international students and how she did not necessarily provide more support:

> Working with an international student, they might be really concerned about their sentence structure, but in many ways, like [sic] their …grammar of the English language…is better than many native speakers, right? So, it doesn't always actually mean more support… So, sometimes it just means, like [sic] highlighting all the times they got it right and, like [sic] building that confidence. (Participant #10)

This SSC tutor explains how international students might not need more support from the tutor, but that the student benefits from receiving positive feedback. Nowacek explains that the writing tutor can also reference students' previous writing successes when employing writing transfer. This tutor explained that she pointed out international students' strengths, which made them feel more confident about their future writing tasks since they know which English writing aspects they know well.

Another SSC writing tutor explained how her professional goal of becoming an ESL instructor made her tutoring sessions with international students a time to learn about students' differences and learn the best ways to adapt. This tutor explained that writing tutors must "be open to understanding that not all students are going to have the same learning style" (Participant #3). This writing tutor also mentioned how she took a "slightly different approach" with international students, asking students about how they felt about "writing in their own language," giving the student the opportunity to mention any writing concerns (Participant #3). This writing tutor considered that international tutees might have difficulties writing in their own language and had students reflect on their writing abilities in their native language. By having international students or English Language Learners consider their previous writing abilities, students could then learn how these previous native writing skills compare to English writing.

Participants from the ASC also discussed transfer techniques that they used with their writing center's diverse tutee population. One staff member explained how the ASC's close partnership with the VSU Access Office makes providing interpreters and notetakers possible. With these extra accommodations, writing tutors can transfer their typical writing tutoring strategies with the help of an interpreter. An ASC tutor detailed his experiences tutoring deaf students: "There were sometimes students that would have maybe disabilities or learning differences that might require a different form of communication. For instance, if a student was deaf, I would have to type or write out everything I was going to say to them" (Participant #1). Before discussing how he tutored deaf students, this tutor explained that asking hearing students questions helped him gain an overall context, similar to scaffolded conversation. However, this tutor explained how he transferred this out-loud tutoring strategy, writing these get-to-know-you questions on paper. This tutor also supported Rebecca Day Babcock's research that deaf students

learn best when they receive visual instruction. Although this writing tutor wrote words instead of referencing pictures, the deaf student could still benefit from seeing the writing tutor's correct syntax usage. Babcock explains that deaf students also share similar challenges with ESL students, as deaf students must learn Standard American English grammar structures.

Another ASC tutor also implemented transfer with tutees but used writing knowledge transfer, encouraging students to use prior writing knowledge to complete their current assignment. This tutor explained that for longer essay assignments, she often taught students to recall the standard five-paragraph essay structure:

> The way I explain it is that every paper you write from here on out will be a five-paragraph essay with more than five paragraphs. It is the same basic structure: you have an introduction, then you have your first idea, your second idea, your third idea, and then your conclusion. Even if you're writing, you know [sic], a 25-page paper, this structure is still that same idea of the five-paragraph [sic] essay, just hella expanded out… So, if you tell them, like, you know, the thing you're familiar with is what you're doing just on a larger scale, it helps build confidence. I had a senior who came to me repeatedly, and she's writing her capstone paper… It was like 25 pages. And she was like… "I've never written something that long," and telling [sic] her that it is that idea of a five-paragraph essay, just instead of five paragraphs, it's maybe 5 pages per point… really helped build her confidence. (Participant #2)

By having tutees reference their previous understanding of the traditional five-paragraph essay structure, the writing tutor made longer papers more manageable and less intimidating to the tutee. Using this writing knowledge transfer gave the tutee a starting point since she could rely on a familiar writing structure. Rather than feeling overwhelmed that she needed to complete a

long paper at once with no direction, the tutee could view the paper in separate five-paragraph pieces. This transfer technique not only calmed the student's anxiety about her capstone paper but also encouraged the student to thoughtfully develop her paper with a writing process.

Writing Process Emphasis

Most participants across all three generations emphasized that they taught students the writing process—planning, drafting, and revising—rather than focusing solely on the student's final written product. It was not too surprising that seven out of ten participants mentioned the writing process as an important tutoring strategy because the writing center wants students to learn rather than having the writing tutor provide edits. To ensure that writing tutors take a student-centered learning approach, writing tutoring should reflect process-based writing approaches over product-based approaches. Although participants consistently emphasized that students must learn the writing process, writing tutors used various process-based strategies over time.

In the early days of The Writing Center, around the 1980s, when writing tutoring helped students navigate new technology such as Word processing tools to format their papers, an emphasis on the writing process still existed. One staff member explained how using computers made it easier for students to view their writing as a recursive process since they could easily edit their essay drafts. This staff member explained how the computers shifted students' previous product-based writing assignments to more of a process-based approach:

> It made editing easier. It made writing more of a process than a one-shot production. In the early years, [we] spent a lot of time having students write their papers over 2 periods in the writing centers, while their teachers paced the room and answer[ed] questions. So,

> during that time is when writing moved from like 305 to 500 words written in class to longer essays that were at least drafted a little bit. (Participant #8)

With technological advancements making editing easier, students could now pay closer attention to editing their work. Likewise to Linda Flower and John R. Hayes's cognitive writing process theory, students moved away from the mindset that writing an essay consisted of one final draft written in one sitting. Typing essays on the computer helped students now acknowledge the writing process's reviewing stages since they could continuously revise with ease. This staff member also mentioned how using computers revolutionarily changed writing assignment lengths, therefore encouraging students to take more time writing their essays since they created more than one draft.

Another tutor from The Writing Center around the 1990s recalled that writing tutoring still provided students with assistance formatting papers in MLA, but she also provided mini lessons about the writing process during individual learning sessions. When students needed to revise their essay content, discussing different writing process stages helped students troubleshoot where their writing was not working. This tutor explained her different writing process-related approaches when tutoring struggling students:

> We explained the writing process to students if they were struggling. And then, like I said, it was rare that they would come in [during] those early stages. We would focus on, like, your one, A, B, 2-3, you know, outlining ideas. We would talk about your thesis statements, introductions, and conclusions. You know, we would talk about the basic components of an essay, since most of them were some type of essay. (Participant #9)

Although writing tutoring often took place later in the writing process's reviewing stages, writing tutors still taught students about writing skills rather than providing quick edits with a product-based approach.

Both tutor participants from the SSC also noted why teaching the writing process was important when targeting students' main challenge of writing quick essays and taking ownership. One SSC tutor explained that writing tutors today should guide students through the writing process: "Now students are coming out of high school not having done a ton of writing… so I think to have a near peer in particular be able to walk them through some of the process…is critical to support new students" (Participant #10). Since freshman students might not have had much experience with a process-writing approach during their high school English career, many new college students need help with grasping foundational writing skills.

When asked about students' main writing challenges, this same SSC tutor explained that tutees struggled to see the writing process as recursive and viewed their initial brainstorming ideas as a first draft. This tutor explained that students would often say, "I've written my thoughts, and therefore this is a draft, and I will just keep trying to polish [it] up" (Participant #10). If students wrote an essay too quickly, completing several writing process steps at once, they neglected to answer the assignment's question or prompt. When this tutor noticed that tutees had rushed writing, she recommended that students delete their off-topic writing ideas and explain their typical writing process. This tutor could then assess the student's writing process and suggest how they could improve their writing stages, mentioning that "there are different writing processes," such as structured outlines, mind maps, and freewriting (Participant #10). Once understanding the tutee's writing process, this writing tutor could then provide alternative

writing process strategies when the student encountered problems with their own writing process.

Another SSC writing tutor said that teaching students the writing process empowered them with confidence and increased their sense of writing ownership and agency. When students see the writing process as a flexible process that they have control over, they might choose to actively participate during the tutoring session to make sure that their writing reflects their own voice. This writing tutor framed the writing process as a beneficial tool that allows students to "embrace [their] individuality" and consider their own "author voice" (Participant #3). Emphasizing that the tutee owns their writing process allows the student to enjoy the writing process since they can creatively express themselves and make decisions about what they want their writing to achieve. As students learn about their own writing process, they can make their writing more authentic and effective as they develop their own rhetorical strategies.

This SSC writing tutor also explained that along with framing the writing process as creative, she helped tutees consider using more formal conventions and understanding their instructor's preferences. This tutor explained how students still needed to consider their specific course or assignment task while tailoring their writing process: "But also, I like to emphasize, you know, you still have to keep in mind instructors' rules that they have for this paper and also whatever concepts for MLA or just the subject area in general are required and…embrace both of those" (Participant #3). This tutor's additional approach towards the writing process supports David Bartholomae's insistence that writing tutors help tutees invent and find a place in the university. As students learn to navigate their discourse field's norms, writing tutors can help students satisfy any additional instructor-based writing preferences that can also improve their writing. By sharing her previous VSU course experiences and different instructors' writing

styles, this tutor could help the student better understand their specific instructor's writing expectations.

When asked about his tutoring strategies, one ASC tutor also explained that engaging with the writing process helped students who had trouble writing and organizing their thoughts. When asked about what he learned from tutoring writing, this tutor said:

> One thing I think that was a key take away was just how daunting a blank page is. A lot of the students that would come in, they wouldn't necessarily have anything prewritten, and they would just be very lost in terms of figuring out where to start on their writing. And I would try to get them to understand that whatever you write first doesn't mean it's like your first draft. You shouldn't expect it to be perfect or even good the first time around, and it's much better to have a poorly written first draft than nothing at all. So, I think learning how to help the students be more comfortable generating content and then revising it after the fact was a key take away. (Participant #1)

This ASC writing tutor reminded stressed students to not feel pressured to write a perfect or even adequate first draft. Redirecting students away from having an all or nothing product-based approach and worrying that their first-stage writing was not perfect helped students feel less intimidated from their current blank page and assignment task before them.

Two ASC staff members also stressed why writing tutors should use the writing process as a learning strategy with tutees. One staff member said that writing tutors must provide tutees with clear expectations for the tutoring session:

> We've always kind of follow[ed] the same...method of tutoring where we have a set or series of steps for our tutors to go through. So, we want them to…set the expectations for the appointment, kind of get some rapport with the student… If they're a brand-new

> student, … we expect them to work collaboratively with our tutor, and then they kind of outline what they want to work on, whether it's a first draft or a final draft or even just generating ideas for a thesis. (Participant #4)

Teaching the writing process—a go-to ASC writing tutoring method— helped ensure that the writing tutoring session was a collaborative effort. If the writing tutor outlined tutoring expectations upfront with a new tutee, then the student would understand the tutor's role more clearly, expecting that they would not receive writing edits.

When asked about the ideal writing tutor's qualifications, another ASC staff member mentioned that the writing tutor should understand the writing process so they could share the various writing steps to a tutee. During the hiring process, this ASC staff explained the questions that staff members would consider when choosing writing tutors:

> [The ASC Director] generally would review [potential writing tutors] to see, do they seem to have the mechanics, as well as sort of the larger, the higher skills in terms of creating a piece of work that makes sense. …That would help us at least [understand] does this person understand the structure of the writing process? And then we interviewed them, and we would ask them questions related to that to see how well they can explain that to us. (Participant #5)

This staff member's perspective shows how teaching the writing process was instrumental for writing tutors to know themselves and explain to others. VSU's writing tutoring shift from incorporating beginning writing process tutoring approaches with The Writing Center to prioritizing process-based writing skills during the ASC's hiring process emphasizes how central this tutoring strategy has become. By ensuring that ASC writing tutors have a solid understanding of the writing process, the writing center can provide cognitive and sociocultural

writing tutoring services that strategically help tutees understand how they can intentionally shape their writing.

Overall Suggestions for Improving Writing Tutoring

By answering the open-ended questions and direct questions from the questionnaires, participants reflected on changes and suggested that the writing center could improve its availability and adaptability. Most writing tutors and staff responses concluded that the writing center should provide on-demand in-person tutoring for VSU students and embrace AI technology. Despite participants' differing opinions about their writing center's required tutoring training, their responses also concluded that writing tutors need weekly writing training meetings. As VSU's ASC continues, these participant suggestions give the current organizational staff and institution some insights about possible changes that could improve writing tutoring.

Weekly Writing Training Meetings

Across all three writing center generations, participants mentioned that writing tutors should be well versed in the writing process and collaboratively engage the tutee rather than completing their work for them. Over time, though writing tutoring training shifted—starting with The Writing Center's tutors taking training courses to the SSC's more informal group training meetings and the ASC currently not providing consistent training—almost all the participants' responses mentioned writing training as significant since training opportunities prepared tutors to help the tutee learn.

Despite tutoring training changes over time, previous writing center generations provided proof of weekly writing training benefits. One staff member explained that The Writing Center expected that writing tutors take a training course before tutoring writing. Another writing tutor mentioned that writing tutors "were required to take a tutor preparation course" that was a one-

hour credit (Participant #9). This course covered writing pedagogy, peer tutoring approaches, and readings that tutors met weekly to discuss. This writing tutor also explained that these training meetings were important since writing tutors learned that tutees needed to complete their own work. Though this writing tutor explained that writing tutoring methods did not significantly change, she explained how these meetings kept writing tutors updated with current tutoring pedagogy. This tutor explained how the Writing Center "director might share an article" with new methods or a "new concept people are talking about" (Participant #9). Aligning with Vygotsky's philosophy that instruction should appropriately challenge students, these writing training meetings equipped students with the necessary skills to help students.

During the SSC generation, students still took a training course, but this requirement later shifted to weekly writing training meetings. One SSC staff member explained that SSC tutors paid for the tutoring course at first, but this later changed so that students did not have to pay for training. Instead, writing tutors met weekly and discussed writing tutoring curriculum, viewed students' writing, and practiced giving tutees feedback. The staff member explained how these training meetings contributed to tutoring's main goal: tutoring should "create confidence so that students are unafraid to work with other people on their writing to get feedback and to offer feedback" (Participant #6). Likewise, this principle reflects Kenneth Bruffee's insistence that collaborative learning benefits both participants. As students get more comfortable navigating and interacting during the tutoring session, the writing tutor learns while they help others learn, and the tutee benefits from receiving feedback from a peer.

SSC tutors also explained how writing tutoring training gave them a great learning experience that made them stronger writing tutors. One SSC tutor said that she remembered completing a "credit-bearing course" and also having a tutoring apprenticeship period where she

tutored “some sections and got some feedback and reflected on them” (Participant #6). Since this participant now directs her own writing center, she explained how she uses these same writing tutoring strategies with her own writing tutors to implement with tutees:

> Like, you do really, really count on some of those seminal concepts in the field to guide your practice … You have to have a solid foundation to work from. And so, I think those things, like the paramedic method that made my writing better but also made my consulting better… Like those things, like, OK. No, pen’s got to stay with the tutee right at all times [sic]… You know this concept of writing is thinking and the really crummy first draft. Like, those were such a gift as, like, a foundation to work from… I love that there’s this sort of, like, generations of consultants pulling from the same great stuff. (Participant #10)

This SSC tutor also mentioned how writing training taught tutors helpful writing tutoring strategies and gave tutors methods to socially engage with tutees. Since the SSC emphasized that writing tutors use sociocultural tutoring strategies, such as considering the tutee’s ZPD and then implementing scaffolding or collaborative conversation approaches, the writing tutors also needed training on how to build rapport and a good relationship with the tutee.

Following the SSC’s lead and no longer requiring tutors to take a training course, ASC writing tutors also attended training meetings until implementing the Knack program, which decreased training opportunities. Before the Knack program joined the ASC, one staff member recalled that writing tutors discussed writing tutoring strategies, examined writing pieces, and analyzed what made writing samples successful during weekly training workshops. When asked about changes, specifically how the ASC approaches how writing tutors tutor writing, this staff member explained that though the tutoring process has not changed, writing tutors do not receive

the same support as before: “I would say the overall processes stay the same in the time that I’ve been here. The support that we’ve offered for our writing tutors have changed” (Participant #4). This staff member admitted that they have missed these previous writing training meetings ever since the ASC’s reorganization because writing tutors previously received more support and learned valuable strategies that helped them strengthen their own writing abilities.

Another ASC staff member explained that the past writing training weekly meetings helped the previous ASC director and writing tutors collaborate. This staff member explained that the ASC staff now provides more structural support than helping writing tutors learn more writing tutoring skills. Reflecting on the ASC’s organizational changes, this staff member said:

> From an administrative standpoint, I think it’s unfortunate that over the years we have moved out of the academic affairs division… I wish that things hadn’t changed in the last couple of years… In addition to regular training, [the ASC director] met with [writing tutors]… once a week, and she provided some additional training because, again, writing is such a unique skill, and the process itself, [sic] there’s so many pieces involved and complexities and things that really kind of keep our tutors always fresh, always kind of on the cusp of what’s going on in the writing world. (Participant #5)

This staff member explained that since Knack now directly controls hiring and training tutors, in-person staff and tutor connections have been lost in the process. This staff member also proposed that reverting back to the ASC’s prior system, where ASC staff directly managed writing tutors, would provide writing tutors with the same writing skills support they received before.

This contrast between the ASC’s training practices before and after Knack was introduced was evident in the ASC tutors’ responses. One tutor remembered attending writing training meetings before Knack, while another tutor explained that the ASC currently needs to

train writing tutors more. The writing tutor who tutored before Knack integrated explained that he remembered “a three-day training period before the semester started” where tutors were “trained in various aspects of tutoring, not just writing” (Participate #1). This participant explained that writing tutors discussed writing skills and tutoring strategies during weekly meetings with the previous ASC director, who outlined the ASC’s guidelines and expectations.

The other ASC tutor who was asked about training provided a different response, explaining that with the Knack program, she has not received writing tutoring training. Instead of completing formal training or designated training hours after being hired, this writing tutor mentioned how she had a brief conversation with a veteran graduate writing tutor who explained how ASC writing tutoring worked. When asked how the ASC could improve their support for writing tutors and tutees, this tutor said: “I think one of the biggest ways [to improve the ASC] would be to give, like, proper training to tutors. You know, I was kinda just thrown in there like, “Oh, you’ve tutored before. Yeah, go ahead. Have at it.” So, like [having a] proper training more than just, like, informal conversations would be really helpful” (Participant #2). If the ASC continues to not train writing tutors, then future tutors may feel not supported and equipped with the necessary writing tutoring skills to effectively tutor students. Some potential challenges of not having writing training meetings include writing tutors not learning methods for navigating tutee challenges and writing tutors moving farther away from collaborative approaches. If the ASC brought back weekly writing training meetings or provided more writing training through the Knack system, then increased tutor development would give writing tutors the tools they need to meet students’ various writing needs.

On-Demand In-Person Tutoring

Writing tutoring availability, specifically how easily students receive tutoring services through appointments or walk-ins, was the second most frequently mentioned area for improvement that participants mentioned. Although the way that students have scheduled writing tutoring appointments has changed over time, participants' responses highlighted the need for students having more tutor availability. Based on tutor and tutoring staff experiences, most responses concluded that providing additional on-demand in-person tutoring appointments would improve the writing center. Guaranteeing that students could walk into the writing center and receive an on-demand session with a writing tutor who is available and ready to help them would further support VSU students.

In The Writing Center, one tutor explained that writing tutoring usually happened on demand. This tutor explained that writing tutoring did not occur "on any type of appointment basis," and students could easily walk into the computer lab when they needed help (Participant #7). One staff member explained that students usually received face-to-face tutorials, but a tutor later created a synchronous tutorial system where students could submit quick questions about writing. When asked about how tutoring changed at The Writing Center, this staff member said: "What happened because of the computers is we eventually started tracking on-demand tutorials or how we answer quick questions about writing that came up while people were writing, which weren't really tutorials as much as quick conversations about writing skills" (Participant #7). This staff member explained that even though the online synchronous platform was helpful, the writing tutors had to carefully use online platforms so that they did not edit students' work. Utilizing this online system and also providing walk-in writing tutoring showed that on-demand writing help was definitely a need among VSU students.

In the SSC, the need for on-demand in-person writing tutoring continued. One writing tutor explained how the SSC served students' writing needs in a way that the typical classroom could not, considering the student's own convenience and timeline. This tutor framed the SSC as a third, socio-academic space that supported students and made "sure they were walking back out of [the] door with some good skills, some good knowledge" (Participant #10). The tutor framed the SSC's writing tutoring services as convenient and readily available, differing from classroom instruction that occurs at a set time. If students need help from their instructor, they must visit the instructor's office hours or wait until the next class meeting. Describing the SSC as a third socio-academic space emphasizes how the writing center provides an environment for stress-free learning and allows students to receive tutoring help right when they need it.

Additionally, an SSC staff member explained that budget cuts have interfered with VSU's ability to provide on-demand in-person tutoring appointments: "Even after yearly data clearly proving that we have a positive impact on retention, they decided to eliminate our [tutoring] program" and join tutoring with advising; the ASC's office focus is now intervention: "Focus on the students with the problems and try to put resources in front of them, and then most of the tutoring is now with an online vendor" (Participant #6). This SSC staff member also explained that adopting Knack has caused the ASC to struggle with providing students with on-demand in-person appointments. The ASC's lack of availability makes VSU's current writing tutoring program less effective since students do not have the same resources readily available, limiting students from learning academic normal discourse and receiving writing help when they need it. With the tutoring pairing system, Knack operates with the idea that tutoring occurs in a perfect world, where students schedule appointments ahead of time and do not procrastinate. Unfortunately, in most writing tutoring appointment instances, this simply is not the case.

Some ASC writing tutors put the Knack's scheduling situation more bluntly when asked how the ASC could improve writing tutoring. One ASC writing tutor who currently tutors with Knack mentions that the appointment scheduling system needs to be reworked. This tutor said, "There should definitely be better ways to sign up for tutoring. It's convoluted, and the Microsoft Teams scheduler doesn't really work" (Participant #2). Another tutor who has seen the ASC shift from a collaborative to an emptier environment said that the ASC should hire more undergraduate tutors. The ASC needs "to hire undergraduate writing tutors directly again rather than through Knack.com," because "writing tutoring is something that is much more effective when it's done in person rather than virtually" (Participant #1). This tutor refers to how, with the Knack program, there are fewer writing tutors available because VSU English graduate students mainly tutor writing. This tutor also emphasizes that the sociocultural tutoring methods that he learned at previous writing training meetings work better face-to-face. Even though Knack gives students the option of receiving writing help from their many professional writing tutors online, many students prefer meeting with a VSU peer tutor who knows their classes and instructors.

An ASC staff member explained that students have the option of scheduling tutoring appointments in person or over the phone but also expressed that walk-in appointments are limited with the new Knack program. However, this staff member explained that the Knack program still makes an effort to provide students with on-demand support: Through Knack, students can receive writing help "that same day, and if not the same day, then as soon as they can the next day" (Participant #4). This scheduling system brings back the main problem mentioned earlier: sometimes students who need writing tutoring cannot wait until the next day. As much as instructors and peer writing tutors remind students that they need to plan ahead and

not procrastinate, some students will always wait until the last minute or realize too late that they need help from a thought partner, the writing tutor.

Also mentioning that the Knack system has issues providing on-demand in-person writing tutoring appointments, another staff member explained another issue with the tutoring service. Because Knack's tutoring appointments are scheduled based on specific courses, this limited booking option omits the previous tutoring appointment option to receive general writing help. This ASC staff member explains how students schedule appointments through Knack and how English graduate students now provide general writing help:

> You have a specific course, you request tutoring for that course, and [a] tutor has that course on their list, [and] they match up with you. So, if you want to do something like general writing, maybe you just have questions about something [related to] … the writing process… Knack doesn't have a way to offer that, and I didn't have anybody that I was hiring myself. So, over the last few years we've worked closely with the English department, particularly [the English Graduate Coordinator]. (Participant #5)

Since participants mentioned teaching students that writing is process and not a final product, not having a general writing tutoring option advertised to students is a problem. Also, because the ASC provides multiple tutoring disciplines, it is not guaranteed that students' writing needs will always be related to their specific English course. ASC writing tutoring services in the past have always been understood to be interdisciplinary, as students might need help writing a biology paper or completing a business capstone project.

Having on-demand in-person writing tutoring that is geared towards student's general writing needs outside the English field is important, or the outside VSU student population will only perceive writing help as solely provided based on a student's English course. Ultimately,

shifting away from easily available on-demand in-person tutoring has created a barrier for students who need to receive walk-in writing help. Most participants suggested that the writing center provide increased VSU peer tutor availability to ensure that all students regardless of their assignment deadline or course can receive the help that they need.

Ethical AI Writing Practices

In recent years, as artificial intelligence (AI) technology has revolutionized how fast individuals can complete tasks, students have started plagiarizing and using AI to complete their writing tasks. Though AI can benefit students who have established their own writing process, since AI programs like ChatGPT and Gemini can help with quick searches, brainstorming, outlining, and proofreading, other students might take AI usage too far. Unfortunately, students with weak writing skills could depend on these programs to replace their own critical thinking skills, never learning how to write independently. When considering how the writing center can continue to improve amidst these technological advancements, participants' responses concluded that ethical AI writing practices was as a new topic that writing centers must teach writing tutors to navigate with tutees. Changing tutees' approach towards AI from using it as a convenient tool rather than having it think for them, writing tutors can help instructors from seeing student papers with high Turnitin AI percentages and help students learn the importance of writing themselves.

Even though The Writing Center generation experienced beginning writing technology such as simple Microsoft processing and synchronous writing tutoring platforms, one tutor explained that students today need similar guidance with using computer resources to write. Whenever asked how the writing center could make writing tutoring services more effective, this

writing tutor explained that writing centers must acknowledge the need for updated writing tutoring practices that help students navigate advanced technology like AI:

> I think exploring innovative ways…whether it's through technology and technology is, you know, the name of the game these days…Embracing the applications that exist and the technology that exists, rather than shying away from it to encourage students to express themselves because it is such a critical skill… I know you're not going to have to write a five-paragraph essay when you grow up, but you are going to have to communicate effectively…You are going to have to communicate effectively… And I think maybe taking that kind of approach to say, "Hey, I know that this is not the kind of writing you have to do, [but] these are hoops you have to jump through to get that degree, and I get it. And you might think it's stupid and that's OK." It's just part of the requirements. However, the concepts are translatable and transferable (Participant #9).

Current writing centers today need to embrace new technology, teaching students that it is okay to do the same instead of banning new tools completely. If students are expected to write independently, writing tutors must explain why using AI unethically is wrong since it robs them of important writing skills. This writing tutor highlighted the importance of writing tutors communicating the importance of learning crucial writing and critical thinking skills to students, mentioning that writing skills are translatable and transferable. Likewise, to Rebecca Nowacek's research over multimodal approaches to writing knowledge transfer, writing tutors can use AI ethically during writing tutoring appointments to show tutees how they can use advanced technology without missing out on the writing skills that they need to learn. Writing tutors can frame AI as a resource for completing initial research, writing process planning, and even receiving revision-based feedback without having AI complete or edit students' work.

Both SSC tutors also mentioned AI as a current writing trend and how writing tutors must help students navigate the issue. Although she never encountered specific AI instances since "AI was not a big thing or really even a thing" at the time she tutored, one tutor mentioned that the "increase of technology kind of started the issues of, like plagiarism and stuff" (Participant #3). Since AI is a big change for students, they have a higher tendency to use AI platforms for the wrong reasons, and some might not even realize that they are using it the wrong way. Grammar-checking systems were one of the first AI programs that became popular. These programs caused many problems among students who did not realize that clicking a button to automatically change their paper to a more formal tone could be just as bad as asking AI to write their paper from scratch. In both instances, using AI could become equally problematic since AI writing stripped away the student's original voice.

Another SSC tutor explained how AI issues is currently a prominent issue that the current writing center needs to target since students have misconceptions about what AI can actually accomplish. This writing tutor explains how students who have not learned the writing process themselves are unable to see when AI-generated writing content does not make sense: "And like ChatGPT can only do what you tell it to do if you're telling. And like even if you're getting it to write a paper that has like perfect grammar…if it doesn't make sense, like if it doesn't represent an original thought, if it's not an analysis that lands like, OK, that's like you know what, 30% of the rubric is grammar" (Participant #10). This SSC writing tutor explained how students who use AI unethically approach writing through a product-based approach. Since students see that ChatGPT can consistently produce perfected final written products in a matter of seconds, providing material without grammar mistakes that incorporates fancy vocabulary and formal tone, student miss out on the bigger picture. In students' dismissal of the writing process, they

forget higher-order concerns, that content with originality and overall purpose matters more than whether their sentences are free of mistakes. Using AI allows for students to skip the writing process altogether, losing the opportunity to establish foundational writing skills that they can transfer to future writing assignments.

An SSC staff member continued these SSC tutors' sentiments that writing centers must train writing tutors with students' frequent AI usage in mind. When asked if students' writing needs have changed, this staff member explained that students currently still struggle with establishing their writing's main point, but relying on AI has complicated this problem:

> I don't think their needs have shifted, everybody struggles with how to organize, and everybody wants to focus on the grammar, when that's not the real problem. The real problem is you don't have a point and it's not organized…What has shifted is students' preparation for college writing. They have much more fundamental needs than they used to… And of course, with the advent of AI, … some people, some students, are terrified of it, and some students are using it unethically… The real emphasis now is how do you use AI in a way… that makes your life a little bit easier, but you still get the critical thinking practice…So, one of the focuses in my classes now is…I give you an essay assignment and I want you to submit it to AI, but I don't want it to rewrite for you. I wanted to help you brainstorm and come up with a way to organize, but don't change your wording. Don't take the content but take the suggestions… So, you got to be a prompt engineer to use AI…Yeah, that's got to be a huge part of the [tutoring] training. (Participant #6)

Likewise, to the SSC tutor who explained that students' product-based writing approaches cause them to prioritize grammar, this SSC staff member proposed potential solutions for integrating AI topics into writing tutoring training. If writing tutors reframe AI platforms as the students'

tool or assistant instead of as the writers, students can learn how to engineer prompts that reflect AI's new ethical role. This SSC staff's use of AI in her classroom shows that writing tutors can take the same approach with students, integrating AI during the tutoring session to teach them how to use it. Once writing tutors help tutees understand that they first need to learn their own writing process and have topic ideas or an initial purpose first, this foundation will allow them to integrate AI to make their writing process easier instead of writing unethically.

An ASC writing tutor agreed with these other participants' insistence that AI has become an issue among students but showed how the ASC's current approach towards AI has been the opposite, encouraging students to not use certain AI platforms altogether. This writing tutor explained this avoidant-AI approach when asked about how he had seen tutoring change over time:

> I didn't see too many changes…One thing that we did have to become more aware of was the prevalence of AI writing. So, we were instructed to steer students away from that if they brought it up. But also, something like Grammarly, which previously was used to just catch grammar mistakes, has now offered services where they will change the wording of your document, for instance, and that still pops up as AI on something like Turnitin.com. So, we have to be more mindful of guiding our students, our tutees, in the right direction and letting them know what sort of tools are okay to use in writing and what are not. (Participant #1)

Because ASC writing tutors have not been receiving weekly writing tutoring training opportunities, writing tutors are unable to learn current writing tutoring strategies such as teaching new topics like AI to students. Taking more avoidant approaches like recommending that students not use certain AI platforms at all can be problematic and unrealistic because

students still see these AI programs as a shortcut when writing on their own becomes challenging or when they procrastinate. If the ASC provides writing tutors with the strategies themselves to help students use AI ethically, AI usage will no longer be an issue since students have learned how to use it as a helpful tool.

CHAPTER VII

The Ideal Writing Center: Suggestions for VSU's Current ASC

This chapter outlines how VSU's current ASC can improve based on reflecting on my own writing tutoring experiences, considering the historical changes across versions of VSU's writing center and analyzing participants' responses. Though the conclusions presented in the findings section were based on mainly subjective responses, these participant opinions collected reflected major writing center trends and needs that VSU's future writing center should consider. Providing my own insights in this chapter allows me to provide an additional perspective plus propose potential solutions to the main findings concluded from participants' responses.

To better support sociocultural learning, the ASC needs to reconsider their Knack partnership, hiring more VSU undergraduate writing tutors. Though most participants concluded that the ASC has an optimal location in Odum Library and that the physical layout has successfully considered potential noise with individual study room space, the environment's atmosphere has changed from the collaborative space that it once was. One common theme across the environmental-based findings: face-to-face advertising, a collaborative atmosphere, Odum Library as the optimal location, and non-distracting tutoring spaces, was the need for more people, which without, could hinder the ASC's overall ethos and environmental effectiveness.

Since face-to-face advertising methods and cultivating a collaborative atmosphere were crucial components mentioned that encouraged student engagement, the ASC must realize the benefits of hiring more writing tutors. VSU writing tutors are vital to supporting these sociocultural aspects that make the writing center a success, and they directly influence whether

students utilize writing tutoring services. As a previous undergraduate writing tutor who tutored before Knack, I remember a large group of undergraduate tutors across several academic disciplines filling up the ASC space. This group of tutors was an influential student community on campus that supported each other and several tutees' success.

At the start of each semester, the writing tutor team divided up and attended several English courses to conduct class visits. Writing tutor pairs signed up for several instructors that requested class visits on a large Excel spreadsheet, spreading news about writing tutoring if students did not already notice the ASC's inviting presence on the library's main floor. The main ASC space turned the heads of students passing by—the casual conversations and peer-centered learning environment were magnetic. Students joined the space who did not even have a tutoring environment just so they could study amidst the ASC's laid-back, but bustling, productive environment. As writing tutors conducted learning sessions, they often collaborated with other writing tutors near them, meeting more tutees in the process and forming more student connections.

As undergraduates themselves, these writing tutors also strengthened their own learning as they engaged with tutees in out-loud collaborative learning and dialogic conversations. However, with ASC services housed directly under the Knack program, this

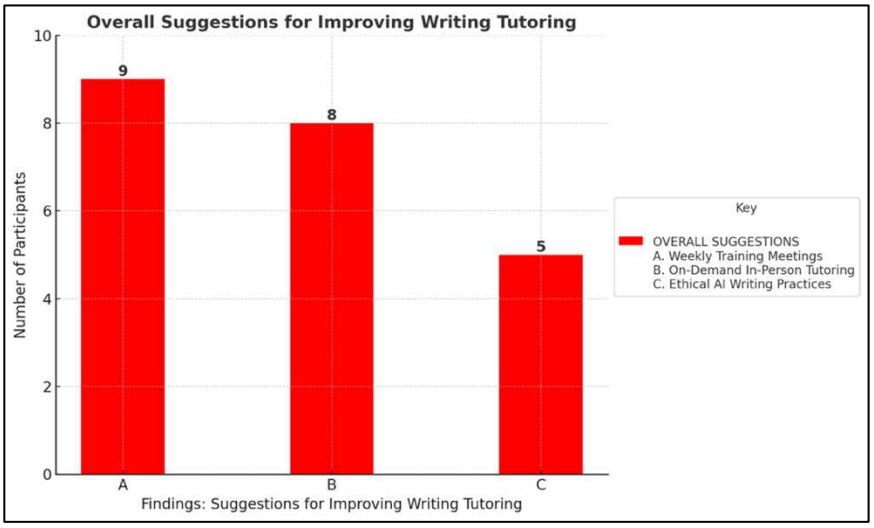

Fig. 7. Overall Suggestions for Improving Writing Tutoring Bar Graph *Source: (Own work).*

resulted in English graduate writing tutors now taking over the main writing tutor role and less collaborative opportunities. If the ASC decided to directly hire undergraduate writing tutors again, prioritizing more in-person VSU tutoring over Knack professional tutors, then this community could be restored. According to Fig. 7, hiring more writing tutors would also provide students with more tutoring availability. Students need the option to receive on-demand in-person tutoring, as I have tutored almost as many students through walk-in appointments as students who pre-scheduled appointments.

A staff member from the Writing Center summarized it best, explaining why VSU needs to consider allocating more of the budget towards hiring more writing tutors directly:

> I have been quoted the data before that shows that students who take advantage of the writing center…They are retained at higher rates. They have higher grades. Often, real benefit accrues to the people who tutor. They learn the material better, they become better writers themselves. They become better teachers. So, it's a win-win if we can support it financially. (Participant #7)

I can confirm that writing tutoring not only benefits the tutees that receive writing tutoring services but strengthens tutors' writing skills as well. As I tutored students, I often found that I did not always understand why a grammar rule existed. As I led grammar mini lessons with tutees, I learned how to write purposefully instead of instinctually.

Another aspect that VSU's ASC needs to consider is having a designated writing tutoring director. According to Fig. 7, an overwhelming majority of participants mentioned the need for writing tutoring training. Previously, the prior ASC director had a strong Rhetoric and Composition background, providing writing tutors with weekly support. During my time tutoring writing when this director was at the ASC, weekly writing tutoring training shaped my career as

a tutor. Having been recommended by my previous ENGL 1102 instructor, I knew that I understood writing well, but I needed to also understand how to share this writing knowledge to others. In the same way, the ASC must bring back weekly writing meetings for future beginning writing tutors who know how to write themselves but need to understand how to effectively impart their writing knowledge to others.

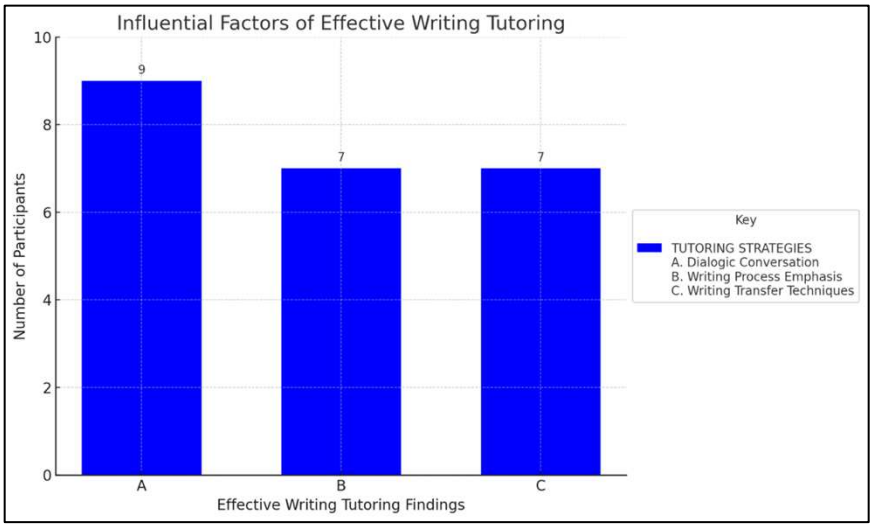

Fig. 6. Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring Bar Graph. *Source: (Own work).*

After attending weekly writing meetings each Friday, I learned more and more tutoring strategies that redirected the main writing responsibility in the tutee's hands as I learned to sit on mine. Likewise, to participants' frequently mentioned writing tutoring practices in Fig. 6, writing tutors discussed strategies to actively engage tutees, using out-loud and dialogic conversation strategies, encouraging students to develop their writing process, and transferring prior writing skills to complete current writing tasks. These meetings also gave writing tutors a strong staff and fellow-tutor support system, as the director led discussions on how to navigate various writing situations with tutees. During these instances, writing tutors could also chime in with

suggestions and empathy, providing a writing practice that worked best when they previously tutored the same tutee.

Though AI was not a common issue when I started tutoring writing in 2019, as a freshman composition instructor, I have seen issues with students plagiarizing AI-generated writing. Considering that I have seen students' challenges with AI and the finding in Fig. 7, writing tutors need writing tutoring training now more than ever to discuss how to properly navigate advancing technology. As mentioned by one SSC staff, writing tutors need writing training that shows them how to use AI as a prompt engineer, utilizing AI as a tool rather than a thought replacement. If the ASC can provide writing tutors with a writing leader, like the ASC's prior director, then writing tutors will be able to help students embrace new technology, leveraging AI with their own writing process and skills.

Seeing the dynamics of the ASC shift after Knack and recalling my past positive experiences as an undergraduate writing tutor highlights the need for the ASC to hire an undergraduate writing tutoring team to help students learn and anticipate future technology changes. To successfully provide writing tutors with weekly training meetings that encourage them to actively engage the student, referring to sociocultural strategies like Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding, Kenneth Bruffee's collaborative learning, and Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic conversation will make the writing tutoring environment more engaging and writing tutoring practices more flexible.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Transcripts

APPENDIX A

Participant Transcripts

Participant #1 Transcript

January 30, 2025, 5:01PM

Anna E. Cooper 1:10
OK. So, this is the first interview with human participant #1. I'm about to read the research statement. Again, you are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled "VSU Writing Centers: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies," which is being conducted by Anna Cooper, a graduate student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to show how three of Valdosta State University's riding centers, the Riding Centre Student Success Center, and the Academic Support Center have changed over the years. This research will analyze what has changed and what has stayed the same through each iteration of tutoring. Writing at VSU, you will receive no direct benefit from participating in this research study, however. Your responses may help us learn more about possible paths forward for tutoring writing as VSU adjusts to rapidly advancing technologies and changes in the larger environment. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately at least 55 minutes and at most 85 minutes, or one hour and 25 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded to capture your concerns. Opinions and ideas. Once the interview recording has been transcribed, the recording will be immediately deleted from recording devices. Your name will be deleted from the interview. Transcripts and pseudonyms will be used to anonymize your data, which will be included in the research study's references chapter. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding, or to skip questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to leave the study, audio-recorded conversations and any written information linking you to the research study will be destroyed. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Anna Cooper at aecooper@valdosta.edu. The study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review under federal regulations. The IRB University Committee, established by federal law, protects the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB administrator at 229-253-2947 or IRB@valdosta.edu. OK. So, I'm just going to ask that you are OK with this research, and then we can begin with the questions.
Participant #1 4:38
Yes, I am OK.
Anna E. Cooper 4:43
OK, perfect. So, we're going to begin with some opening questions. And this is going to be for Questionnaire 1, which is for the tutors. So, let's begin with #1. So, what is the name of your tutoring center?
Participant #1 5:10
The Academic Support Center.

Anna E. Cooper 5:14
OK. So, how many years or semesters have you tutored writing?
Participant #1 5:22
I have tutored for three years.
Anna E. Cooper 5:27
OK, so as a writing tutor, do you currently have any additional roles or duties in the writing center?
Participant #1 5:40
Yes, I also served as the graduate assistant for the Academic Support Center as well as at the international building as a writing tutor.
Anna E. Cooper 5:58
OK. So, what made you want to become a writing tutor? And how were you hired?
Participant #1 6:07
I was told about the position by my friend, who was a writing tutor at the Academic Support Center. She recommended that I apply for the job. I didn't originally think that I would get the position, but I put in my application on the last possible day, and I went to a group interview a couple of months later, and they gave me the position.
Anna E. Cooper 6:37
OK. So, what was your major? Whenever you started tutoring?
Participant #1 6:45
My major when I started tutoring was English.
Anna E. Cooper 6:51
OK. What courses did you support? Like you can tell me the names of them or the different courses that, like, students would come in to receive help for.
Participant #1 7:04
I supported English 1101 and 1102 and all the three- and four-thousand-level English courses, including British literature, American literature, Grammar and style, and creative writing.
Anna E. Cooper 7:26
OK. So, which classes did you tutor in writing? So, think about what you did. Tell me specific classes, but like, was there a variety of students, or did you only stay in English classes?
Participant #1 7:44
So I primarily worked with students in English classes, but I also work with students who were writing essays for other courses, such as history classes, criminal justice classes, and sociology. Any sort of course that required a written assignment. I probably saw at least one student work.
Anna E. Cooper 8:10
OK. So, how did the students that you tutored learn about writing tutoring services?
Participant #1 8:19
The students that I tutored were usually either told about the tutoring services through their professors, or sometimes we would do class visits at the beginning of the semester to increase

awareness about the academic support center. We were also instructed to create flyers advertising our services and to place them around campus for students to see. So, there are quite a few ways, but there was no one.
Specific way that most students, I would say, found out about the ASC.

Anna E. Cooper 8:58
OK. So, what makes writing tutoring beneficial or important to you?

Participant #1 9:07
Writing tutoring is important because so many different types of courses have some sort of written assignment component, and the writing tutor, the way that we were trained in writing tutoring, really allowed us to take the tools that we already had and apply them across several different disciplines. We focused on form and style, especially in situations where we didn't have the content knowledge. If it was a history course, I was still just relying on my knowledge of form, flow, grammar, and all those things. I think the writing tutoring aspect of it was one of the most important aspects of the ASC at the time because it was so multifaceted and could be utilized across all different courses.

Anna E. Cooper 10:02
OK, so that closes out the opening question section of the interview. We're now going to move on to direct questions. So, for the first direct question. There are going to be some follow-up questions that come after it. What writing tutoring training did you receive before becoming a writing tutor? I'm going to let you answer that first one first.

Participant #1 10:33
So as far as training is concerned, we had, I think, a three-day training period before the semester started. We were trained in various aspects of tutoring, not just writing, but the writing tutors did meet with the director separately to kind of go over some of the expectations and some of the strategies that we would use as tutors. There are a lot of, like, guidelines that we were expected to follow. Phrases such as "sit on your hands," meaning don't go overboard trying to make the student's assignment your own or try to do the work for them. The general training mindset was mainly about teaching the writing tutors not to write for the students and simply being there to help guide them in the right direction and help them uncover the writing on their own rather than doing the work for them.

Anna E. Cooper 11:48
OK. To follow up with that first question, as a writing tutor, did you complete further training through meetings, classes, or training sessions?

Participant #1 12:02
Yes, in my first two semesters and possibly after that as well, we had dedicated meeting times for the writing tutors where we would meet with the supervisor. We would just kind of go over different tactics and strategies that we could use as well as bring to everyone's attention things

that we may have been struggling with or things that we had done throughout the week that we thought were particularly effective. And it was just a really good way to kind of not only hear from the supervisor but also your peers who are in that same role and just kind of share ideas that way.

Anna E. Cooper 12:45

OK. So how did these training sessions help you assess and adjust your writing tutoring effectiveness?

Participant #1 12:55

So it was really handy to have both the supervisor and the peer writing tutors there at the same time. Like I said before, the supervisor would maybe suggest a strategy, and the other peer writing tutors would kind of give examples of how they had done that in the past and how it worked or maybe how they plan to use it in future sessions. So, tutors had the theoretical component from the supervisor as well as the practical element and put it into motion with the peer writing tutors. So, I found that very helpful. Also, many of the writing tutors who were there in those meetings had been tutoring for longer than I had. So, they had much more experience, and if I had any questions, I could easily just go to them for help.

Anna E. Cooper 13:48

We're going on to question 2. Can you discuss the main goals of the writing center, the ASC where you worked?

Participant #1 14:02

Yes. So, the primary goal was to work with your students in a way that allowed them to find their words in their writing style organically through writing rather than simply instructing the student on what to do or say. The primary slogan for the academic support center when I worked there was the three Cs creating the conditions for connection. So, what that basically means is we want to facilitate an environment that allows the students to make the connections of all the ideas on their own. We're not making the connections for them. We're simply creating the conditions for the connections to be made on their end.

Anna E. Cooper 15:07

OK. What are your professional goals, and how did these goals influence your writing tutoring practices?

Participant #1 15:20

One of my professional goals is to get a PhD and eventually become a full-time professor in English. I also like to do my own creative writing. Hopefully I will work more in the literary or poetry journaling editing world in the future. As far as how my tutoring helped shape that, it was really interesting to see how other students approached writing differently. Because if I hadn't had that experience with tutoring, I would only have my own experiences with writing and how I go about my process. But working with these other students, the students that tutored as well as

the other tutors, the other writing tutors, it just really opened my eyes to a whole bunch of other possibilities and approaches to writing in general.

Anna E. Cooper 16:29

OK. Moving on to question three. Can you explain your approaches for tutoring a student in writing?

Participant #1 16:40

Yeah. So, my personal approach was to gather as much information as possible at the beginning of each session, especially if I had never worked with a student before. I would ask them about, you know, what assignment they were working on and ask if I could see the assignment sheet to get all the details of the assignment. Obviously, I would ask to see if they had written anything prior that we could work on. It was also important for me to kind of feel or get an understanding of their own personal confidence level with writing. Certain students need a little bit more of a push when it comes to idea generation. Others were really just looking for a second set of eyes on what they had already written. So, I think my primary method was just to get as much information as possible and then lead the student to produce the best writing they can. A lot of times that looks like just asking questions as prompts for what they should think about writing next rather than telling them outright, "OK, you need to have a thesis statement here instead." You could say, "Well, what would you say is the overall point of your paper? How would you wrap it up in one sentence?" That's a lot easier for the student to understand, and plus it fuels a lot more of their own ideas. Yeah, compared to when it's just them responding to a question that I ask.

Anna E. Cooper 18:16

OK. So, you mentioned some of your approaches, but could you please run me through how a typical writing tutoring session with you would go?

You can go from the beginning to the end.

Participant #1 18:29

So first I would introduce myself if I had not seen the student previously. I would ask the student where they want to sit. The actual physical environment was very important too because you want the student to feel comfortable. I would try to, you know, engage in some friendly banter, especially if I had already seen the student. I want them to feel as comfortable as possible around me and not just like I'm a professional tutor or like a professor. I want to you know, position myself as a peer. But like I said, the beginning of the session is all about gathering all the information necessary on whatever assignment or topic the student is working on. After we get through that sort of preliminary information, we look at what the students have already written. After that, we go into either outlining an assignment or focusing on it. Like I said before, ask questions to generate responses to kind of build those connections for the students. As we get towards the end of the session, you kind of want to check back in on the student and their goals.

What did you get done? What did you not get done? Ask them if they feel confident in what they're doing, and then just kind of allow them to work out a plan of attack from there, whether that means setting up another tutoring appointment or whether that means instructing them to maybe have one of the online tutors look over a rough draft after the fact. Just kind of making sure the student has some sort of guidance for after they leave the session as well.

Anna E. Cooper 20:20

OK, think about specific instances that you can remember for question 4. So, how do you explain the writing process to students?

Participant #1 20:33

Whenever I was explaining the writing process, one of the things that I tried to make the most aware of is the importance of thesis statements and having a clear vision for your writing. The thesis statement kind of lays the outline for the rest of the essay. And like I said, you know, you might make an outline from there, just bullet points on what you want to cover in your essay. Once they have that sort of framework, that skeleton of the paper, it's much easier for them to fill in the supplemental information that supports those many ideas. So that's what I would stress. Whenever it comes to writing, tutoring is just making sure that they have a clear focus because at the end of the day, they are the ones generating their own content, and all they really need to know is what they're going to say about whatever the topic is.

Anna E. Cooper 21:36

OK, so you can talk about a specific student or situation, but how do you encourage students to work with you on their writing?

Participant #1 21:52

Can you give me more specifics on what you mean by working with me?

Anna E. Cooper 22:01

So, how do you make sure that the student is not just working alone or you're doing the work yourself, like you mentioned, to sit on your hands? How do you get them to work with you?

Participant #1 22:15

So, one of the methods that they taught us was to not have a pen in your hand. If you guys are working on pen and paper, make the student hold the pen and hold the paper. If you are working on a computer or on a laptop, have the computer in front of them; make sure their hands are the ones on the keyboard if they do tend to try to get you to come up with a sentence or a word for them. The way around that is, like I said earlier, to ask them questions instead of giving them a statement. So, for instance, I used the example before. If you're trying to get them to write a thesis statement, you ask them, "How would you sum up the entire point of your paper in one sentence?" If they're starting, perhaps like a new paragraph, you might say, "Okay, what is this paragraph going to be about primarily? And then when they give you the answer, if they just verbally give you the answer, then you can instruct them. Okay, write that down." At the end of

the day, those are still their own words. But yes, I think sometimes you also have to lay down the border of I'm not going to write for you. You need to write your own content, and sometimes they would instruct us if you want to say, "But look, the ASC is very strict about this. I'll get in trouble." It kind of makes it less harsh and less like it's a boundary that's coming from you personally and more just you covering yourself and adhering to the rules of the ASC. But some students did need those boundaries. But for the most part, they understood that they were supposed to be the ones doing the writing. Especially, like I said, if they were the ones holding the pen or the ones with the laptop.

Anna E. Cooper 24:12

OK, to finish up question 3: What have you learned from the students you've tutored?

Participant #1 24:22

One thing I think that was a key takeaway was just how daunting a blank page is. A lot of the students that would come in, they wouldn't necessarily have anything prewritten, and they would just be very lost in terms of figuring out where to start on their writing. And I would try to get them to understand that whatever you write first doesn't mean it's like your first draft. You shouldn't expect it to be perfect or even good the first time around, and it's much better to have a poorly written first draft than nothing at all. So, I think learning how to help the students be more comfortable generating content and then revising it after the fact was a key takeaway because it's very different than how I would write on my own.

Anna E. Cooper 25:18

OK. Moving on to question 5, during your time tutoring, how would you describe the tutoring environment?

Participant #1 25:28

The tutoring environment at the Academic Support Center was very informal, at times friendly. Almost a family-like atmosphere. The section of the library that the writing tutors and other tutors would congregate at would have a lot of discussions back and forth. Not to an obnoxious degree, where they would be bothering other students who are getting tutored or trying to study. But there was definitely a fun, friendly environment, and I think that actually made the ASC a more welcoming place not only to work but also to get tutored. I know some people who were friends with tutors, and they would sometimes hang around while the tutors were on the clock, not distracting them, but just kind of because the library is kind of an open space. And then those friends would see how easy and non-judgmental tutoring actually was, and then they would end up using the tutoring services. So, I think having the Academic Support Center be a part of the library and it being so open-ended made for a very welcoming, fun casual environment.

Anna E. Cooper 26:50

OK. So also, whenever I mentioned describing the tutoring environment, could you kind of explain to me, like physically, where the writing center is located and what it is like whenever

you walk in?

Participant #1 27:07

So, the writing center, or the Academic Support Center, was on the second floor of Odum Library. To the right of the main desk was the Academic Support Center desk. They would usually have someone working behind the desk to make appointments or help tutees find their tutors. And then there was a small area comprised of about three or four tables where the students and the tutors would sit around. There were computers nearby if a student didn't have a laptop and they needed to use a computer. There are also study rooms that the tutors and students had priority over. The actual environment itself was very bright and open. There was no physical divider between the Academic Support Center section of the library and the rest of the library, which I think was good. Very bright lighting, a big open window. So, if it was daytime, there's always plenty of light, and even though that might seem like a small thing, I think that did add to the atmosphere of the writing center. It just made for a fun spark.

Anna E. Cooper 28:35

Thank you so much for that detailed description. So, to conclude Question 5, did you find this tutoring environment efficient?

Participant #1 28:48

I do think the tutoring environment was fairly efficient. Like I said, there are a few tables that all the tutors would congregate at when they were on the clock. If a tutee came in for an appointment and they didn't know the tutor, all they had to do was go to the front desk, and the front desk worker would guide them to the tutor and introduce them. Also, having other tutors there while everyone else was working also made it so that if one specific tutor was working with a tutee and maybe the question came up that that tutor didn't have the answer for, they could quickly just go to another one of the tutors who were on the clock. For instance, say one tutor is working with a student on a paper, and they have a question about comma usage, and the tutor doesn't know. The tutor can go to one of the other tutors on the clock because they'd only be a few feet away and say, "Hey, do you know about this comma rule? Are they supposed to use the comma here?" And then it just made it very quick and easy, and again, it kind of helped foster that fun, casual environment.

Anna E. Cooper 30:07

OK, so for question number six, how did you adjust your writing tutoring approaches to support various students?

Participant #1 30:18

Different students had different comfort levels with writing. Not only writing, but also technology. There was one student in particular that I worked with throughout an entire semester who was a non-traditional student who hadn't been to school in about 50 years, I would say. They were very unfamiliar with how to use laptop programs such as Google Docs and how to

navigate BlazeView, so helping that student became a lot of technical discussions and tutoring, as well as the writing half of it. Other students were very advanced in their writing and really were just looking for a second set of eyes. Sometimes I would look over an assignment, and I wouldn't find anything wrong with it, and then I would give them a few guidelines, and maybe the session would end early because they got everything they needed. Other students require a little bit more of a push when it comes to generating content. And like I said, a lot of times it would just be me asking questions and getting them to answer the questions through their writing. There were sometimes students that would have maybe disabilities or learning differences that might require a different form of communication. For instance, if a student was deaf, I would have to type or write out everything I was going to say to them. Yeah.

Anna E. Cooper 32:02

OK. So, you're beginning to go into the next question, but the next question is, consider how sociocultural factors such as attitudes, background, or identity impact your tutoring sessions. Some examples are freshman students, graduate students, international students, and students with disabilities, et cetera.

Participant #1 32:26

Yes. So, for instance, if I was tutoring a freshman, I would try to maybe stay away from some terms or concepts that they hadn't maybe been introduced to yet and then just communicate those ideas in different language in a way that they might understand more readily. Students that were more advanced, maybe taking like three-thousand- and four-thousand-level courses, I could get into more technical aspects of writing with them. Students with disabilities. Obviously, it would just depend on what the disability was, but our supervisors and staff were always very helpful in terms of accessibility. For instance, there was one of our tutors who was majoring in ASL or interpreting, and there were times when we would take a writing tutor and that interpreting major tutor, and that tutor would help facilitate a tutoring session between the writing tutor and a deaf student, for instance. Another factor to consider was the student's personality. Students that were maybe more outgoing or seemingly confident, you could joke around a little bit more and have more casual conversations. If I noticed that a student was maybe anxious or nervous, usually like a freshman student, you want to make them feel as comfortable as possible. So, you might change the way you ask them questions in a way that you have to be considerate of, not making them feel overwhelmed. Or, like, you don't want to make the student feel like they're on the spot or they're being judged for not having an answer. So, those are all things to consider.

Anna E. Cooper 34:43

OK. For question seven, what writing needs did you see most often?

Participant #1 34:55

I think the most often I would see students who were simply struggling to come up with an

approach to a writing topic. That's why I said earlier, for me, teaching the thesis or helping the students understand the concept of the thesis statement was the most important because they would just kind of be overwhelmed by their assignment, and they wouldn't know where to start. So, they were really looking for a writing tutor to kind of help make that more manageable. Break down the requirements of the assignments in a way that they understood. And just kind of act as guidance, letting them know, like, is this a good idea? Is this an appropriate topic or a response to this question? Maybe helping explain the technical guidelines. For instance, if they're working with MLA or APA and they've never worked with that format before. But yeah, I think what I saw the most was just students who were looking for guidance in getting started with an assignment.

Anna E. Cooper 36:11

OK. To follow up on that question, did students' writing needs stay the same or change over time?

Participant #1 36:23

I would say in my tenure as a tutor, I didn't see much of a change or a different trend in the needs of the students. I would say it was primarily the same types of concerns all the way throughout, but I have only tutored for about 3 years now, so maybe that's not enough time to see it change. But from what I've seen, it mostly remained the same.

Anna E. Cooper 36:55

OK, so #8, what institutional policies or administrative tasks were you responsible for following and completing as a tutor?

Participant #1 37:07

So as a tutor, we were responsible for logging our hours, making our own schedule, and logging when we worked or didn't work. We were also required to fill out a reflection form after every tutoring meeting. Basically, just explaining who you worked with, what you worked on, and what the key takeaways were. We were also expected to make our flyers to advertise our services as well as PowerPoint presentations to do class visits to explain the Academic Support Center to the students. As a graduate assistant, I have more duties like data collection or record keeping. I would, as a staff, also ask to have one-on-one check-in meetings with the tutors throughout the semester. Just basically trying to get a sense of how they felt they were doing their job, any concerns that they might have had, and what their goals were for the rest of the semester. But that's pretty much all I can think of, I think.

Anna E. Cooper 38:34

OK. So, how did these duties impact your writing tutor?

Participant #1 38:43

I think specifically filling out the reflection forms after every session really caused me to be more mindful as the session was playing out because you couldn't just go through the session

and then just forget everything that you had done. You needed to have some sort of recollection of what you worked on, what went right, and what didn't go right. I think just knowing that I had to fill those out after every session just kind of made it more of a conscious thought in my mind to kind of keep track of what was going well and what's not going well because I knew I would have to reflect on that later.

Anna E. Cooper 39:32

OK question 9. During your employment, can you please explain the peer staff support system writing tutors have or you remember them having?

Participant #1 39:47

When I was a tutor at the Academic Support Center, all of the tutors were broken up into teams of about maybe six to ten tutors, and then there would be a team lead who would hold weekly meetings. The team leads would also all meet together with staff, and the team leads would help act as a liaison between the staff and the rest of the tutors. So, in the tutor team meetings, the team leads would kind of catch their team up on what had been discussed in the previous week amongst the staff and the rest of the team leads. Our staff, our supervisors, were all very helpful. When I was a writing tutor, I would meet with our supervisor once a week, but they were also just very good at communicating, either through e-mail or just going into their office and having a quick chat with them. So, there was always good communication throughout the Academic Support Center.

Anna E. Cooper 41:01

So how did tutors and staff members collaborate with one another?

Participant #1 41:16

I think the main way that the collaborations would happen would be either through weekly meetings or through check-ins. So, when you check in, do kind of give a breakdown of how the semester's going so far, what's working, what's not working, and what you want to do in the future. And that was a really great way for the staff members to get a big picture of what everyone was feeling throughout the Academic Support Center. Also, in the team meetings, you would have the primary tutors communicate their thoughts, feelings, and concerns on things to their team lead, and then the team lead would meet with the team leads and the staff to kind of relay those ideas from their team. So, it was kind of a two-way street. The team lead would carry the ideas from their team to the staff, and the team would also carry the ideas from the staff to their team. So, there was always good communication. There were also multiple events throughout the semester where, you know, obviously the staff and the supervisors would be in attendance, and there was never a situation where I needed to communicate something to my supervisor, or a staff member and I wasn't able to get ahold of them. They very much had an open-door policy, and anyone could go to speak to them about anything anytime.

Anna E. Cooper 42:59

OK. The last direct question is, how has your academic major impacted or influenced how you tutor writing?

Participant #1 43:10

So as an English major, obviously there was a lot of writing in my courses, and as I became a better academic writer through my English courses, I became a better tutor because I understood writing better. Also, just from a content knowledge level. Obviously, every class that I tutored for I had already taken, so generally all of the books that the students would come in with—if it was for an English class, the books that the students had to read and were writing on—were the same books that I had already read and written on in my classes, so that helped a lot. Also, things I'm learning in my grammar and style class, and I believe I had, you know, rhetoric or composition courses. All of those things, just the knowledge that I gained from those courses, obviously carried over to my writing tutoring as well.

Anna E. Cooper 44:15

OK. Now we're going to begin the two open-ended questions. So, I have a main question, then follow-up questions just like the previous ones. The first open-ended question is, in your opinion, how have writing tutoring methods changed during your time tutoring?

Participant #1 44:37

I didn't see too many changes over my tenure. One thing that we did have to become more aware of was the prevalence of AI writing. So, we were instructed to steer students away from that if they brought it up. But also something like Grammarly, which previously was used to just catch grammar mistakes, has now offered services where they will change the wording of your document, for instance, and that still pops up as AI on something like Turnitin.com. So we have to be more mindful of guiding our students, our tutees, in the right direction and letting them know what sorts of tools are okay to use in writing and what are not.

Anna E. Cooper 45:38

Also, did the writing tutoring environment change?

Participant #1 45:47

During my time in the Academic Support Center, there was not a lot of change in the environment of the writing tutoring center or the area where the writing tutoring would take place. There was a shift in the supervisory roles, meaning that the supervisor and the graduate assistant or the student worker who would work with the ASC had to move offices. But overall, it didn't really change the atmosphere of the tutoring center itself.

Anna E. Cooper 46:32

OK. The next opening question is, based on your experiences, what could the writing center and future writing tutors do to make tutoring services more effective?

Participant #1 46:48

I think. I think in order to make the writing tutoring services more effective, there needs to be an

increased focus on awareness. Currently, the only writing tutors that VSU has officially are English master's students. I think, since that has changed, there have been less writing tutoring appointments made in person at VSU. I think the professors could do a better job of letting their students know that these services are available to them. I personally would like to see the ASC start to hire undergraduate writing tutors directly again rather than through KNACK.com just because I think writing tutoring is something that is much more effective when it's done in person rather than virtually. Umm. Yeah, I think there just needs to be more emphasis placed on writing tutoring in general. Tutors themselves are trained well, and they know what they're doing, but there just needs to be more of them, and the students need to know that the service is there in order to utilize it.

Anna E. Cooper 48:52

OK. Last question, how could the writing center's environment improve to support tutors and students?

Participant #1 49:06

I think the physical location of the writing tutoring center and the environment are still good, but they would be improved by simply having more writing tutors working at any given time. Part of the appeal of the ASC in the past was that the Academic Support Center was always kind of a vibrant, fun location. And people who didn't even know what tutoring was probably walked through and learned what tutoring was because they noticed all of the same people congregating in the same place throughout the week. So, we really just need more tutors in general physically there in the library. To kind of bolster that fun, welcoming environment.

Anna E. Cooper 50:23

OK. So that concludes the questions but are there any additional insights or things you would like to mention about tutoring and your role as a writing tutor or the physical location of the ASC in general?

Participant #1 50:40

No.

Anna E. Cooper 50:53

Well, thank you so much for your time with this interview and for your thoughtful responses.

Participant #1 51:10

Thank you.

◉ **Anna E. Cooper** stopped transcription.

Participant #2 Transcript

January 30, 2025, 10:36PM

Anna E. Cooper 0:05
OK. This is interview number 2 with human participant #2. OK, I'm going to start by reading the research statement from the IRB. OK. You're being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled VSU Writing Center: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies, which is being conducted by Anna Cooper, a graduate student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to show how three of Valdosta State University's writing centers, the Writing Center, the Student Success Center, and the Academic Support Center, have changed over the years. This research will analyze what has changed and what has stayed the same through each iteration of tutoring writing at VSU. You'll receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about possible paths forward for tutoring writing as VSU adjusts to rapidly advancing technologies and changes in the larger environment. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately at least 55 minutes and at most 85 minutes, or one hour and 25 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded to capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the interview recording has been transcribed, the recording will be immediately deleted from recording devices. Your name will be deleted from the interview transcripts, and pseudonyms will be used to anonymize your data, which will be included in the research study's references chapter. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding, or to skip questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to leave, the audio-recorded conversation and any written information linking you to the research study will be destroyed. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Anna Cooper at aecooper@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review under federal regulations. The IRB University Committee, established by federal law, protects the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB administrator at 2292532947 or visit IRB@valdosta.edu. So, you can let me know if you agree to this research statement.
Participant #2 3:26
I agree to this research statement.
Anna E. Cooper 3:39
OK, perfect. So, we are going to go over the questionnaire #1 for tutors. And we are going to start with 9 opening questions just to get to know you and to understand your role as a tutor. So, we're going to begin with those. So, the first question: what is the name of your tutoring center?
Participant #2 4:10
I work in the Academic Support Center.
Anna E. Cooper 4:19
OK, how many years or semesters have you tutored writing?
Participant #2 4:26

Writing here at VSU for two semesters and a couple of additional semesters on Tutor.com, but non-related to VSU.
Anna E. Cooper 4:43
As a writing tutor, do you have any additional roles or duties in the writing center?
Participant #2 4:52
I do not; I just tutor writing.
Anna E. Cooper 5:01
As a writing tutor, do you have any— Oh, same question. Next one. What made you want to become a writing tutor, and how were you hired?
Participant #2 5:18
I was selected for a graduate assistantship, and part of the graduate assistantship here at Valdosta. State is tutoring 8 hours in the writing center every semester. I was previously selected to tutor writing because I enjoy it—it's what I want to teach, so it is career advancement.
Anna E. Cooper 5:45
OK. What is your major when tutoring?
Participant #2 5:51
I am an English master's student with an emphasis in composition and rhetoric.
Anna E. Cooper 6:04
What courses do you currently support? Like, if you can name any of the courses, that would be very helpful.
Participant #2 6:13
I mostly tutor for English 1101 and English 1102, but there have also been other subjects, including students with masters of library and information science, sociology, and psychology. I think there was also a history student, just like writing-heavy courses.
Anna E. Cooper 6:44
OK. Which students did you tutor writing to, like a specific class or a variety of students? Which ones do you tutor?
Participant #2 7:04
I tutored entirely in person here at VSU. So, in the Academic Support Center, face-to-face with traditional students.
Anna E. Cooper 7:18
OK. So how did these students that come to tutoring learn about writing tutoring services?
Participant #2 7:26
Oh, ways that students find out about it? Professors often advertise the Academic Support Center. Emails go out from [the Coordinator of Tutoring] and [the Office Manager] in the Academic Support Center. And tutors also attend presentations in classrooms where they come and explain to students about the Academic Support Center.
Anna E. Cooper 7:57
OK. This is the last opening question. So, what makes writing tutoring beneficial or important to you?
Participant #2 8:09
So my career goal is to work with remedial first-year writing students. So, these are the students who, through either SAT, ACT, or Accuplacer tests or GPA in high school, have been determined to be, you know, not prepared to take English courses, right? You know, maybe they scored really good on all the other sections of the SAT but not the reading response section. So, because of that, they are not prepared; they don't know how to write academically, so tutoring is

just another part of that, like, first semester, let's get this. Let's get these students ready, particularly in the University System of Georgia. Remediation is one semester only, that first semester you are in college, so tutoring is like incredibly important to make sure that students are getting to that, on pace, by the time they enter English level two.

Anna E. Cooper 9:22

OK. Now we're going to begin the ten main direct questions, and there are going to be some follow-up questions after each of the main ones. So, for number one, what writing tutoring training did you receive before becoming a writing tutor?

Participant #2 9:44

I didn't really receive any training. I had kind of like an informal 10-minute conversation with [a lead tutor]. And that was about it. Just kind of figure it out as you go along, kind of thing.

Anna E. Cooper 10:24

OK, so as a writing tutor, did you complete further training through meetings, classes, or training sessions?

Participant #2 10:35

I did not.

Anna E. Cooper 10:42

How did these training sessions help you assess and adjust your writing tutoring effectiveness?

Participant #2 10:51

I did not receive any training here at VSU.

Anna E. Cooper 11:01

OK. On to question two. Can you discuss the main of the writing center where you work?

Participant #2 11:10

The main goals of the writing center are to, you know, help students understand what they're doing wrong and not to teach them what they're doing wrong. It's to help them understand how they can improve their paper.

Anna E. Cooper 11:31

So what are your professional goals, and how did these goals influence your writing tutoring practices?

Participant #2 11:40

So my career goal is I'd like to be a director of remedial first-year writing at a college or university in the United States. Particularly, I'd like to go back up to Atlanta and work at one of the open enrollment colleges there. This has really influenced my path as a writing tutor because, you know, remedial students are not ready for college. Well, they are ready for college. They are not ready for the writing aspect of college, you know, and being able to be a writing tutor is giving myself more information about what is being looked for and what first-year students are actually like, rather than what, you know, the theory says they're like.

Anna E. Cooper 12:38

OK. Question 3. Can you explain your approaches for tutoring a student writing? Please run me through how a typical writing tutoring session with you would go. You can talk.

Participant #2 13:22

So a typical tutoring session, I like to start with, like, you know, asking the student a little bit about the assignment and what, you know, they're trying to accomplish. I then move into, like, reading through what the student has, or if they don't have anything, asking them. You know what? What? What information are you looking to get that you know you don't already have? I then move into providing kind of generalized feedback on the paper and going, you know, this

seems a little wordy, or this seems, you know, there are some grammar mistakes here. I'm noticing a lot of like run-on sentences or comma splices, et cetera, et cetera, but not like specifically marking the grammar. Occasionally I will like to mark the grammar specifically if it's only a one-page paper. Like, I'll mark the grammar because they're here for an hour, and I might as well. But outside of that, I really like probing the student with questions and trying to get them thinking about why. Why they're making these mistakes, or how they think that they can improve stuff along those lines.

Anna E. Cooper 15:18

OK, so question #4: How do you explain the writing process to students?

Participant #2 15:28

The way I explain it is that every paper you write from here on out will be a five-paragraph essay with more than five paragraphs. It is the same basic structure: you have an introduction, then you have your first idea, your second idea, your third idea, and then your conclusion. Even if you're writing, you know, a 25-page paper, this structure is still that same idea of the five-paragraph essay, just hella expanded out. And I know a lot of people don't like it because then they get stuck in the mindset of it can only be five paragraphs, but you know when you're working with students who maybe have only ever written a five-paragraph essay and then you're expecting and then you're giving them—OK, now you've got to write an 88-page paper or a 10-page paper. That's like terrifying to them. So, if you tell them, like, you know, the thing you're familiar with is what you're doing just on a larger scale, it helps build confidence. I had a senior who came to me repeatedly, and she's writing her capstone paper. So, it was like 25 pages. And she was like, I don't know how to get that many pages. Like, "I've never written something that long," and telling her that it is that idea of a five-paragraph essay, just instead of five paragraphs, it's maybe 5 pages per point. You know, it really helped build her confidence in what she was completing.

Anna E. Cooper 17:21

So how do you encourage students to work with you on their writing rather than working on their own? Like when they come to tutoring or you are doing most of the work for them?

Participant #2 17:36

I typically encourage students. You know, I have a lot of students who have come in, particularly towards the end of the semester when they were working on final papers, who just want someone to, like, sit and watch them and make sure that they're not doing other things like opening TikTok. So, they just want, like, that accountability. Like, there's a word for it now. I don't remember what that word is for somebody to sit with you while you work. So, that is something that they mention. I'm like, yeah, no problem. I'll sit here and do my work. You sit here, do your work, and if you need help, let me know. But if a student is, like, actively trying to get me to do the work, I start asking questions. That's what I do; I go, "Okay, so, why did you write this sentence like this, you know? Why is this the point you're making and not this point?" and I try to just get them to talk to me.

Anna E. Cooper 18:32

OK, to finish question #4, what have you learned from the students you've tutored?

Participant #2 18:42

Oh, people just have such interesting ideas of what to write about. I love hearing what the students are writing about because everyone has their own ideas. So, they might not know the specific terminology, or they might need help finding out what that terminology is, but they have such great ideas, and hearing all those great ideas is always so much fun. Because it's like I helped with a paper on evil and modernity, and I'm like, that's so cool. Like, everyone has such

cool ideas, and it's cool to hear what other people's cool ideas are.

Anna E. Cooper 19:27

Question #5: During your time tutoring, how would you describe the tutoring environment?

Participant #2 19:41

Very individualized, weirdly enough. Like, I don't interact with other tutors. I pretty much only interact with the students around me, and if I do interact with the other tutors, it's more so like, "Hey, let's go hang out." And not like about tutoring. So, it's really individualized.

Anna E. Cooper 20:10

How would you describe, like, the physical aspects of the environment, like where tutoring takes place, where it's held, and what it looks like in the tutoring center?

Participant #2 20:22

The tutoring center is, you know, this big open area with study rooms. Students tend to use the study rooms to, you know, have an enclosed space to be in. Maybe they have to record a video or have a Teams meeting for that. And then there are also tables with computers and empty tables for you to sit at and kind of work. Like, together the tables are kind of big for tutoring. So, you're kind of, like, far apart from the person you're tutoring. So that's sometimes a challenge because they'd never want to, like, sit next to you. They want to sit across from you, but yeah.

Anna E. Cooper 21:09

Do you find this tutoring environment efficient?

Participant #2 21:14

I couldn't do that with my last one, no. I think it was. I think the tables are a little too big and that there should be smaller tables for you to be able to, you know, interact with each other and not, like, have a huge space in between.

Anna E. Cooper 21:39

OK, number six, how did you adjust your writing tutoring approaches to support various students? So, consider how sociocultural factors such as a tutee's background or identity impact your tutoring sessions. Some examples could be freshman students, graduate students, international students, students with disabilities, etcetera. How do your approaches support these various students?

Participant #2 22:08

So particularly when jumping from a session with a freshman to jumping to a session with a senior in the English department, the way you approach those students is very different. Like a freshman might want to be handheld more than a senior, where a senior just kind of asks, "Can you look at this? Is it good?" Then the senior says, "Okay, good. Goodbye. See you. See you next week." Whereas a freshman needs reassurance that they're doing it correctly and that they're improving. So, it's more of like a reassurance thing, and there obviously are times when seniors are looking for that as well, but more so the seniors are kind of like they know what they're doing, particularly in the English department. So, once they, you know, maybe it's extra credit or whatever, but they're generally there because they want an extra set of eyes rather than, like, I genuinely don't know what I'm doing. So, it's more like maybe I'll hold the hand of the freshman a little bit more than a senior.

Anna E. Cooper 23:18

OK, for #7, what writing needs did you see most often?

Participant #2 23:29

I mostly saw people looking for content feedback, which I can't really do. Like if people come in and are like, "Does this make sense?" And I'm like, "I mean, technically, I've read *Just Mercy*,

but I'm not supposed to give content feedback. I can't make your opinion for you." Which, for freshmen, is like hard to hear because they want to know. They're so used to papers being like, "You did this right, or you did this wrong." The opinion is hard to come by.

Anna E. Cooper 24:13

So I know you haven't been there as long, but still. Did you notice that students writing needs stay the same or change over your time at their tutoring center?

Participant #2 24:27

Even across the one semester, I felt like it changed. The freshmen who were coming in at the beginning of the semester were much more like, I don't know what I'm doing, compared to those same freshmen at the end of the semester, when they're like, "I know how to do MLA. I know how to do this." Where at the beginning of the semester, they're coming in like, "How do I format my paper?" Versus, like at the end, coming in like, "Does my grammar look good?"

Anna E. Cooper 24:57

OK, #8. What institutional policies or administrative tasks are you responsible for following and completing as a tutor?

Participant #2 25:08

I am just responsible for filling out end-of-session feedback forms. So, did they show up? Was that session good? Stuff like that. That's it.

Anna E. Cooper 27:36

OK. So how did this duty of doing these session reflection forms impact your writing tutor role?

Participant #2 27:47

It really didn't. I just had to, you know, sit there at the end of the session, and go, "Hi. Can you tell me what the name of your professor was?" I had to make sure to remember to ask them to fill out their name, and then they were good to go. So, it's just like a little 5-minute thing at the end of the session; that's about it.

Anna E. Cooper 28:11

OK, during your employment. Can you please explain the peer staff support system that writing tutors have had?

Participant #2 28:39

The only real support I had was [the office manager], who would schedule tutoring sessions. I don't really work with other tutors or directly with [the Coordinator of Tutoring]. I mostly work with [the office manager] and go, "Hey. This student needs this hour. Can you do it?" And she goes, "Yeah." And then that's about it. That's it.

Anna E. Cooper 29:11

OK, to finish question #9, how do tutors and staff members collaborate with one another?

Participant #2 29:24

I don't know. Yeah, I mean, I work with [the office manager] to schedule tutoring hours and stuff like that, and she works with students who e-mail the Academic Support Center or call on the phone to schedule. But that's about it again. So, it's the same answer, really.

Anna E. Cooper 29:52

OK. The last directed question before the open-ended. Question #10: How has your academic major impacted or influenced how you tutor writing?

Participant #2 30:07

Well, so I'm in rhetoric in composition. So, a lot of the classes that I'm taking are rhetoric and composition, or like teaching rhetoric and composition. A lot of the classes have heavily influenced how I think about writing and how I think about tutoring and stuff like that because

it's literally what I'm learning in class. So, it's a very one-to-one type of situation.
Anna E. Cooper 30:40
OK, next are two open-ended questions. So, #11, in your opinion, how have writing tutoring methods changed during your time tutoring?
Participant #2 30:58
I'm not sure if like methods have changed. If anything, I maybe just feel a little bit more confident getting in the groove of doing in-person tutoring because Tutor.com is obviously entirely online, and you don't know really anything about the student. So, the personal connection is me growing as a tutor more so. So, it isn't really a theory thing. It's more so me building confidence.
Anna E. Cooper 31:29
OK. To conclude, #11 also, did you notice any changes in the writing tutoring environment?
Participant #2 31:40
It's definitely busier towards the end of the semester than at the beginning of the semester. Obviously, I haven't been there a long time, so I can't really say what the long-term changes are, but I've definitely noticed that students by the end of the semester are much more confident to come in than at the beginning.
Anna E. Cooper 32:03
OK. The last question is #12, and then there's a question after that, and that'll be the last one. So, based on your experiences, what could the writing center and future writing tutors do to make tutoring services more effective?
Participant #2 32:22
I think there should definitely be better ways to sign up for tutoring. It's convoluted, and the team scheduler, Microsoft Scheduler, doesn't really work. There have been a couple of times when I'm not working, like I'm not even scheduled that day, and somebody books this tutoring session with me, and I'm like, "Hey, I don't work. Hey guys, it's outside my hours." So, it's stuff like that. And I also think a lot of students just don't know how to use the Academic Support Center. I think verbalizing that particularly to freshmen would help a lot. Like, I think there's really only one professor who ever asked for tutors to come in to give our little presentation. So, that should be a thing that every class is getting, not just one. And obviously there aren't enough writing tutors to be doing that, but also it should be more than just one class.
Anna E. Cooper 34:08
OK. The last question: How could the writing center's environment improve to support tutors and students?
Participant #2 34:18
And I think one of the biggest ways would be to give proper training to tutors. You know, I was kind of just thrown in there like, "Oh, you've tutored before. Yeah, go ahead. Have at it." So, like, having proper training more than just informal conversations would be really helpful. Other than that, I can't really think of anything. Maybe just a way to have tutors be able to self-promote their hours because we can't really go up to students and go, "Here's my business card." So yeah, that would be it.
Anna E. Cooper 34:56
What about the physical environment, like where tutoring is?
Participant #2 35:02
Smaller tables—I just think the tables are too big. Most of the tables are too big to really facilitate a relationship with the student. You know, if you're like several feet away from me,

how are we supposed to make a connection? And for writing, you know that's for in-person tutoring. That's like that connection and being able to vibe with one another is really important too for the environment.

Anna E. Cooper 35:37

OK, we've concluded the direct and indirect questions. Do you have any additional comments or insights about your time tutoring at VSU?

Participant #2 35:49

I do not.

Anna E. Cooper 35:54

OK. Thank you so much for your time and thank you for participating in this interview.

Participant #2 36:00

You're welcome. Have a great day, Anna.

◉ **Anna E. Cooper** stopped transcription.

Participant #3 Transcript

January 31, 2025, 4:08PM
Anna E. Cooper 0:10
OK. This is interview #3 with participant #3. So, I'm going to begin with reading the IRB research statement. You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled "VSU Writing Centers: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies," which is being conducted by Anna Cooper, a graduate student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to show how three of Valdosta State University's writing centers, The Writing Center, the Student Success Center, and the Academic Support Center, have changed over the years. This research will analyze what has changed and what has stayed the same through each iteration of tutoring writing at VSU. You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about possible paths forward for tutoring writing as VSU adjusts to rapidly advancing technologies and changes in the larger environment. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately at least 55 minutes and at most 85 minutes, or one hour and 25 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded to capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the interview recording has been transcribed, the recording will be immediately deleted from recording devices. Your name will be deleted from the interview transcripts, and synonyms will be used to anonymize your data, which will be included in the research study's references chapter. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding, or to skip questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to leave the study, audio-recorded conversations and any written information linking you to the research study will be destroyed. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you're 18 years of age or older. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Anna Cooper at aecooper@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review under federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by federal law, protects the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB administrator at 229-253-2947 or IRB@valdosta.edu. OK. OK. We're now going to begin the tutor questionnaire. I just read the research statement, and my participant is going to respond now.
Participant #3 4:10
I acknowledge and consent to all of the above.
Anna E. Cooper 4:48
OK. We're going to start with the opening questions.
So what was the name of your tutoring center?
Participant #3 4:58
The Student Success Center at VSU.
Anna E. Cooper 5:03
OK, how many years or semesters did you tutor writing?
Participant #3 5:10
I tutored for about two years.
Anna E. Cooper 5:17

As a writing tutor, did you have any additional roles or duties in the writing center?
Participant #3 5:28
I was a writing tutor for two years, and for the last year I was kind of given permission to focus a bit more on ESL and served on the tutor panel for the TIES Conference.
Anna E. Cooper 5:46
What made you want to become a writing tutor, and how were you hired?
Participant #3 5:52
I think, first and foremost, I just strongly believe that writing is the gateway to success. Success in numerous different areas, academically, and then once you get out into the real world. I was hired because I've just always been interested in writing, and I had been encouraged by my English professors to apply.
Anna E. Cooper 6:17
OK. What was your major when you tutored?
Participant #3 6:22
English.
Anna E. Cooper 6:27
What courses did you support?
Participant #3 6:33
It was composition one and two, but I also had students come in for various papers and different subjects like biology, business, et cetera.
Anna E. Cooper 6:50
Which students did you tutor in writing? You could discuss a specific class or the variety of students that you tutored.
Participant #3 6:58
So I tutored traditional and international students. So yeah, and so that's kind of it. There were different international students. I took a slightly different approach than I did with traditional American students, but those were my two groups.
Anna E. Cooper 7:20
How did these students learn about writing tutoring services?
Participant #3 7:26
As far as I know, they were either informed by a fellow student or by faculty.
Anna E. Cooper 7:34
So the last question for the opening questions: what makes writing tutoring beneficial or important to you?
Participant #3 7:44
I believe it is important because if a student can't write, they are going to have issues not only in their English courses but also in other courses that require any sort of communication, whether that's written or oral. And it also is just going to prepare them for a future outside of academics as well. You have to know how to communicate.
Anna E. Cooper 8:15
OK. So, now we're going to complete the direct questions. There are going to be 10 questions with some follow-up questions. So, for number one, what writing tutoring training did you receive before becoming a writing tutor?
Participant #3 8:33
I would say in general I don't remember the specifics, but I believe my unofficial training was my courses that I took in college and doing well in those and developing those skills. And then

after that, when I did start tutoring, we had, you know, meetings and things to go over different protocols, just how to approach students and different methods for helping them with their writing that would push them to really do things on their own, rather than just proofreading their essays.

Anna E. Cooper 9:14
OK. The follow-up question is, as a writing tutor, did you complete further training through meetings, classes, or training sessions?
Participant #3 9:25
I did. We would hold different trainings for different aspects. Sometimes it was a meeting just to reiterate proper methods or just kind of as a reminder to tutors on how to tutor properly. I mean how to address certain issues with writing, and then we also had some training sessions that involved Blackboard Collaborate.
Anna E. Cooper 9:53
OK, to conclude, #1, how did these training sessions help you assess and adjust your writing tutoring effectiveness?
Participant #3 10:04
It opened my eyes to the fact that everyone has a different writing style, and most of all, it helped me understand that if you are teaching writing and helping students improve their writing, you can't do the work for them, but instead you have to push them and guide them to do it themselves.
Anna E. Cooper 10:27
OK, #2. Can you discuss the main goals of the writing center where you worked?
Participant #3 10:34
The main goals of the Student Success Center were to improve student comprehension and ability to write at a university/college level.
Anna E. Cooper 10:50
OK. So, what are your professional goals, and how did these goals influence your writing tutoring?
Participant #3 10:59
So, my career goals have changed over time, but they've always involved good writing. At the time of tutoring, my main goal was getting into ESL instruction and having the opportunity to teach or not teach, but tutor American students and then students from various backgrounds like French, German, Japanese, and Korean. It showed me that each of those different kinds of, like, cultural groups has its own language barriers and ways that its own languages are set up in terms of sentence structure, things like that. So, it helped me to acknowledge those differences, and that was really important for me if I wanted to teach ESL.
Anna E. Cooper 11:49
OK, so #3, can you explain your approaches for tutoring a student writing?
Participant #3 11:58
My first approach is I like to give everything a glance over on my own so I can kind of see where they're at and what some of their common issues may be. Because you'll notice that with a lot of people, they might be OK in one area, but they might have, like, a prominent issue. Another method I like to use is having the student read out loud because a lot of the times they'll catch those issues on their own before I even have to point something out to them.
Anna E. Cooper 12:31
OK, please run me through how a typical routing tutoring session with you would go.

Participant #3 12:38
So, generally I would meet with the student, and first and foremost, because I think it's best for learning, I would make sure they felt comfortable and welcomed in a situation so that they didn't have the additional stressors of anxiety holding back their potential. I like to ask what the paper is and what format it's supposed to be in. Like, is it MLA? Is it Chicago? And then ask them what their main concerns about their writing may be, and then I'll kind of give it a glance through, like I said previously. And I like to have the student read either alongside me as I'm doing that and then have them read aloud, and if they pass through some errors that I notice and they don't notice, I maybe stop them after a few sentences and say, "OK, there are a couple of these types of issues here. Could you try to find where I'm talking about?"
Anna E. Cooper 13:42
OK, #4, how do you explain the writing process to students?
Participant #3 13:49
I like to explain the writing process overall as a way for students to be able to embrace their own individuality in terms of whether it's creative writing or just writing style and author voice in general. But also, I like to emphasize, you know, you still have to keep in mind instructors' rules that they have for this paper and also whatever concepts for MLA or just the subject area in general are required and kind of, you know, embrace both of those.
Anna E. Cooper 14:30
How do you encourage students to work with you on their writing rather than them?
Like working alone or you doing more of the work for them.
Participant #3 14:42
So, umm, while I wouldn't do this for the entire paper, I would maybe take a section of a paper that needs work and kind of talk about it with them. And then maybe take 5 minutes for each of us to rewrite the section and compare, and they can kind of see from that and learn from what I had done. But also, it forces them to work on it as well, rather than just depending on me to make corrections for them.
Anna E. Cooper 15:12
What have you learned from the students you've tutored?
Participant #3 15:18
I have learned first and foremost that I know, I've kind of reiterated this a lot already, but if you just proofread their paper and give them things to correct, they're not going to either understand why or feel that they need to put effort into actually getting better at their own writing. The other thing I have learned is that students really appreciate it if you can understand their own individual strengths and weaknesses. It's always good to find a strength to point out to a student that they have so they don't feel discouraged. And just kind of, you know, understand what kind of background they may have that leads to these differences.
Anna E. Cooper 16:08
#5. During your time tutoring, how would you describe the tutoring environment?
Participant #3 16:16
I would say it wasn't uncommon for tutors for specific subject areas to kind of group together, but it wasn't like in a clicky way. It was more so because a lot of the times tutors could discuss what was working with them and their tutee, and, you know, vice versa. And it was also a good way to share methods among tutors who were also tutoring in the same subject area.
Anna E. Cooper 16:46
How would you describe the physical tutoring environment? Like where the writing center is

located and what it's like, where tutoring takes place.
Participant #3 16:57
So when I was in the Student Success Center, the writing center itself was 2 floors. Most of the writing tutoring took place on the 1st floor. And it really depended on what you needed, like there was an area in the back with a whiteboard. So, if you needed some visual aid that was available, yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 17:29
Do you find this tutoring environment efficient?
Participant #3 17:34
I personally did, and I can't speak for everyone, but I felt like I was able to work well with my own students that I was tutoring in this environment.
Anna E. Cooper 17:47
Number six, how did you adjust your writing tutoring approaches to support various students? Consider how sociocultural factors such as attitudes, background, or identity impact your tutoring sessions. Some examples are freshman students, graduate students, international students, students with disabilities, etc.
Participant #3 18:11
Yeah. So, I mean, just in general, I think acknowledging all these differences among students is important. And I would say that's why it's important to kind of ask questions, ask the student what their concerns might be. And if you know a student is an international student, it is also helpful to maybe ask how they are with writing in their own language and, like, kind of let them open up to you about their concerns. And just being open to understanding that not all students are going to have the same learning style and some students might catch on more quickly than others and just being open to that.
Anna E. Cooper 19:00
OK, #7, what writing needs did you see most often?
Participant #3 19:10
For me, that would really depend on what type of student I was tutoring. For international students, it would depend on their proficiency because they might have different proficiencies in English, but for example, with Japanese students and Korean students, a lot of it was the fact that the whole sentence structure is different than English. So that, you know, would affect it a lot. And with American students, it really came down to whether they were a freshman or a senior, and also sometimes the subject area, like sometimes they might be good with writing a biology paper versus a literature paper that takes more literary analysis.
Anna E. Cooper 20:05
OK. During your time at the Student Success Center, did students writing need to stay the same or change over time?
Participant #3 20:16
I would say they changed, and I think that's just because no student or class or group of students is ever going to write the same. But I do think AI was not a big thing or really even a thing at that point. But I do think the increase in technology kind of started the issues of plagiarism and stuff, though I didn't personally encounter any of that.
Anna E. Cooper 20:47
#8. What institutional policies or administrative tasks were you responsible for following and completing as a tutor?
Participant #3 20:59

In terms of administrative tasks, I think just making sure that I was checking into my schedule and knowing when I was going to have students come in and things like that. But other than that, I didn't have any administrative tasks.

Anna E. Cooper 21:17
How did these duties impact your writing tutor role?

Participant #3 21:23
I wouldn't say that they impacted it in any way.

Anna E. Cooper 21:37
OK question 9. During your employment, can you please explain the peer staff support system that writing tutors had?

Participant #3 21:48
So just in general, there was a sense of camaraderie among the tutors in general, whether it was inside or outside of your tutoring subject area. But I also felt like the specific students who were working at the front desk were still involved in a way because they would help us keep track of our schedules and different things like that.

Anna E. Cooper 22:14
How did tutors and staff members collaborate with one another?

Participant #3 22:22
In terms of the Student Success Center, again, it was mainly just keeping record of student schedules and also contact information for students or tutors who needed it.

Anna E. Cooper 22:37
OK, #10 to close out the direct questions. How has your academic major impacted or influenced how you tutor writing?

Participant #3 22:49
Overall, because I did major in English and ended up majoring in it a second time with my master's, it just reiterated the importance of writing as a form of communication. That it's important in general, even if it just comes down to writing an e-mail once you get into the working world. Yeah, I think that if you can write well, you can learn how to really embrace your own personality. And also it helps you know how to do that depending on the environment and adapt to those environments as well.

Anna E. Cooper 23:29
OK, to begin, the two main open-ended questions are #11: in your opinion, how have writing tutoring methods changed during your time tutoring?

Participant #3 23:42
To be honest, I don't think they changed much during my time tutoring. However, when I did go back to graduate school, there were students also in my graduate program who were tutors, and I do think the method and the location and things could have possibly changed, but I don't directly know.

Anna E. Cooper 24:09
And then to close, #11, also, did the writing tutoring environment change at all, whether that be physically or like how the environment felt?

Participant #3 24:22
Yeah. So, when I was there, we were strictly the Student Success Center, and we had one location, but once I graduated, it was not soon after that that I knew some major changes were going on, and it moved over to the University Center across campus. Then, it moved to the library, and there were some title changes. And I'm not sure if they were just trying to

incorporate more or make it more welcoming to students, but yeah, there were changes.
Anna E. Cooper 24:55
OK, #12. Based on your experiences, what could the writing center and future writing tutors do to make tutoring services more effective?
Participant #3 25:09
I actually think that as a tutor, making sure that you don't look like you don't want to be there. Like, let the students that you're tutoring know that you do want to be there and it's supportive for you to help them and that you're there first and foremost to help them improve their writing and not to just rewrite things for them.
Anna E. Cooper 25:27
OK. The last question: How could the writing center's environment improve to support tutors and students?
Participant #3 25:56
So, I think in terms of tutors, it's kind of that thing where there's that concept of customer service, but you also have to make sure that your tutors are comfortable, make sure that they feel safe in that environment, make sure they're not feeling harassed or anything like that, and vice versa for students. I think first and foremost, having a comfortable environment and safe environment is what really shapes the whole experience for both.
Anna E. Cooper 26:29
OK. To conclude the questions, do you have any additional insights or comments that you would like to make about the Student Success Center and your time tutoring?
Participant #3 26:43
I would just like to say that I do truly believe that as a writing tutor, it helped me become more understanding of individual differences among people and helped me become more culturally aware, and in that, it also helped me improve my own communication styles.
Anna E. Cooper 27:04
OK. I just want to conclude by thanking you for your time and for all of your thoughtful responses. And this is the conclusion of interview #3.

◉ **Anna E. Cooper** stopped transcription.

Participant #4 Transcript

February 3, 2025, 3:07PM

Anna E. Cooper 0:04
OK, that is loading OK, perfect. It's starting OK. OK.
Anna E. Cooper 0:10
So, I'm going to begin interview number four with the IRB research statement. So, let me begin by reading the first statement. So, you are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled "VSU Writing Centers: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies," which is being conducted by Anna Cooper, a graduate student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to show how three of Valdosta State University's writing centers, The Writing Center, Student Success Center, and Academic Support Center, have changed over the years. This research will analyze what has changed and what has stayed the same through each iteration of tutoring writing at VSU. You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about possible paths forward for tutoring writing at VSU as VSU adjusts to rapidly advancing technologies and changes in the larger environment. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately at least 55 minutes and at most 85 minutes, or one hour and 25 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded to capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the interview recording has been transcribed, the recording will be immediately deleted from recording devices. Your name will be deleted from the interview. Transcripts and pseudonyms will be used to anonymize your data, which will be included in the research study's references chapter. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding, or to skip questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to leave the study, audio-recorded conversations and any written information linking you to the research study will be destroyed. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Anna Cooper at aecooper@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review under federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by federal law, protects the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB administrator at 2292532947 or IRB@valdosta.edu. So that concludes the research statement. So, you can tell me whether you agree.
Participant #4 3:27
I agree.
Anna E. Cooper 3:28
OK, perfect. So, we're going to move on to the questions, but before we start those questions, I just wanted to remind you that since it's not a recording, you can take as long as you need to answer any of the questions or think about your responses because the transcription will not show that time has passed. Like, it won't be evident if you have to wait to think about your response.
Participant #4 3:54
OK. Yeah.

Anna E. Cooper 3:55
You can go at your own pace, and we're going to start with the opening questions. OK, so for question number one, what is the name of the tutoring center you work with currently and have worked with?
Participant #4 4:13
OK. So, the office that I have worked with has undergone a couple of changes. Our current overall office is named the Office of Student Success and Retention, and within this office, we have the Academic Support Center, which is our tutoring branch. A number of years ago, we changed our name to the Academic Support Center due to some restructuring around campus. There was a different department that wanted to use the name we were using, so we changed our name. But we were previously called the Student Success Center from, I believe, when it was founded in 2006 up until about 2019. And then we switched over to the Academic Support Center in 2019.
Anna E. Cooper 5:07
OK. Thank you so much. OK, for number 2, how many years did you work for each?
Participant #4 5:17
I have worked for the Academic Support Center for about 11 years, almost 12 years since 2013. I would say 11 1/2 years, yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 5:33
OK. OK, perfect. So, what is your current job position and positions you have had?
Participant #4 5:43
Sure. My current title is admin assistant. When I started here, I was the administrative secretary. They went through a reclassification across campus so that's where the name changed. And when I started, I was supporting not only administrative duties but also a little bit of the student employment side of things.
Anna E. Cooper 6:13
OK.
Participant #4 6:13
You know, guiding students through the hiring process, the application side, and how to interpret the hiring documents to know what to bring to HR. You know those kinds of things.
Anna E. Cooper 6:31
OK.
Participant #4 6:32
And then, now my role is supporting not only the Academic Support Center but also two other branches, including our orientation side of the office as well as academic coaching. I still have the same number of duties or the same kind of duties. However, I'm less involved in the payrolls.
Anna E. Cooper 6:54
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 6:57
That's part of our tutor coordinator's side of things.
Anna E. Cooper 7:09
OK, perfect. So how many years have you worked for each role?
Participant #4 7:17
So, I would say a solid 10 years for the Student Success/Academic Support Center, 2013 to 2023. We had a major restructuring where our Academic Support Center was brought into our new office, Student Success and Retention. And my job duties changed with that merger, so my

new job duties started about a year and a half ago.
Anna E. Cooper 7:59
OK. So, moving on to #4, during the hiring process, how are writing tutors typically hired, and what qualifications should an ideal writing tutor have?
Participant #4 8:14
Sure. We had a pretty good, you know, applicant pool before we had the changes with the restructuring. We had undergraduate and graduate writing tutors that were available for appointments, and we would work closely with the English department to get references and applications and through word of mouth. And now we mainly have our graduate assistant writing tutors, and they're hired pretty much the same way. One big benefit is that our graduate writing tutors have a much wider knowledge of writing because they've been through both the undergrad and the grad side.
Anna E. Cooper 9:22
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 9:22
They can support not only composition one and two and some of the literature classes and world history classes, maybe, but they can also support the upper-level kinds of requests that we have, and the requirements for both, I would say, are the same. It helps to have applicants that are very patient and empathetic.
Anna E. Cooper 9:50
Hmm.
Participant #4 9:51
They have really good listening skills and have a good understanding of composition and, you know, not only the basics but also more advanced knowledge like how to write different kinds of papers, maybe more of a scientific paper. So, it helps to have a wide set of skills.
Anna E. Cooper 10:33
That's a really good point. OK, so #5, what tutoring disciplines does your tutoring center support?
Participant #4 10:45
So I mentioned that there was a change in the last year. Our core graduate writing tutors support everything from English 1101, British literature, and world history classes
and any general paper that students might need help with. Like it could be a biology paper they need help with, like the grammar and the composition of the paper but not so much the context or the details. And then they help with upper-level graduate papers as well.
Anna E. Cooper 11:35
OK. Could you also briefly mention, like, disciplines outside of English that your tutoring center has? Thank you.
Participant #4 11:41
Oh, sure, yeah. So, our graduate writing tutors can help with biology papers. You know, chemistry. We don't see as much demand for things like math papers, but those come up occasionally, you know, computer science, those sorts of things.
History is a common request. We've also sometimes had dissertation students, doctoral students that are looking for help with their dissertation or thesis.
Anna E. Cooper 12:18
OK, also, like, besides writing tutoring. What are other tutoring options that students have?
Participant #4 12:27

Oh, sure. Yeah. Thank you. So, in addition to our grad writing tutors, we also have our VSU tutors that offer tutoring through our Knack platform. Those include biology tutoring, math tutoring, chemistry tutoring, Spanish tutoring, computer science tutoring, and some accounting tutoring.

Anna E. Cooper 12:57
OK.

Participant #4 12:58
We also have tutors across campus that are not within our branch, but they also offer other kinds of tutoring.

Anna E. Cooper 13:08
OK, perfect. Thank you so much for giving me an idea of the tutoring services, OK.

Participant #4 13:14
Mm-hmm.

Anna E. Cooper 13:15
So have these services shifted over time? You did mention the new program, so you can talk about that.

Participant #4 13:21
Yes. Sure. Yeah, we've had a large shift in the time since I started working here.
Initially, when I started in 2013, our center was located in a different part of campus, North Campus, and we were kind of our own self-contained unit.

Participant #4 13:43
We were located in Langdale Hall, which was a two-floor center with space on the first floor for collaboration.

Anna E. Cooper 13:51
Mm-hmm.

Participant #4 13:55
We had a lot of meeting tables, a front desk, and a side room for other conversations, and then upstairs, we had more of a computer lab and more office spaces. And we've gone through a bunch of different platforms over time to make appointments, but the process has stayed the same. And we have changed from when I started here. All of our tutors, whether it was math, writing, you know, biology, or Spanish, they were all hired the same way, trained the same way, and hired at the same time, and they worked closely together in the same room or building.
And even though our writing tutors had specific challenges that they would, you know, come across compared to a math tutor, everybody was trained and worked together much more closely, and that continued up until 2023.

Anna E. Cooper 15:14
Mm-hmm.

Participant #4 15:14
When we had our merger with this office and all of our tutors, except for the writing tutors, tutors were brought online through a new online platform called Knack. They are hired through the outside vendor Knack, and they're paid through them.

Anna E. Cooper 15:32
Mm-hmm.

Participant #4 15:38
However, we collaborate with them, and they use our tutoring space to work from. They still work with our VSU students, but there's much less oversight of our math and science tutors

compared to our writing tutors. So, we work much more closely with them, and we also have a separate scheduling system now for our writing tutors.
Anna E. Cooper 16:03
OK.
Participant #4 16:04
Which is on our shared calendar.
Anna E. Cooper 16:09
OK. Thank you so much for explaining those changes.
Participant #4 16:12
Mm-hmm.
Anna E. Cooper 16:13
OK, number six, how do students receive writing tutoring services?
Participant #4 16:20
Oh, sure. So, they can call our office, e-mail us at our shared tutoring e-mail, or just come by in person on the second floor of the library. We'll make a calendar appointment, send it to their VSU e-mail, and they can either meet the writing tutor in person or online through Teams. If they're meeting in person, then they meet over in our Academic Support Center office area.
Anna E. Cooper 16:52
OK. #7, what steps does the tutoring center, the ASC, take to advertise writing tutoring services for students?
Participant #4 17:06
Oh, sure. It's changed a little bit over the years. We send out emails occasionally to our staff and student group. We post to our social media platforms occasionally. We try to get [tutor and facilitator] interview[s]. We'll do highlights of profiles of some of our tutors—
Anna E. Cooper 17:37
Oh yeah.
Participant #4 17:39
and facilitators as well. And I believe we have. I don't know if we've done it this semester, but in the past, we've posted electronic advertising slides to our shared advertising system around campus. We have TV sets around the library and around the other student areas that display those ads.
Anna E. Cooper 18:03
Mm-hmm. That's really cool. OK, #8. How does writing tutoring contribute to VSU student success?
Participant #4 18:17
It's probably one of the most core important functions I think of towards student success, because if you know if a student is having issues with certain aspects of writing or speech, it's going to affect the rest of their academic career and their career beyond after they graduate.
Anna E. Cooper 18:45
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 18:46
So I think it's a really great service, not only for whenever students are working on their immediate paper, but I think it also gives, you know, it gives the student a chance to be more. What do you call it? I guess more autonomous, and it is important for them to take ownership of their own work or paper, and it sets them up to have a good mindset for the rest of their college career. To say, you know, you, you get the grade on your—

Anna E. Cooper 19:12
Oh yeah, that makes sense.
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 19:27
paper and your academic work in your classes. Depending on how much effort you put into it. So that's something we stressed with all of our tutoring appointments, and we hope that it kind of helps build that autonomous mindset for them.
Anna E. Cooper 19:48
That's a really good point. That officially closes the opening questions. So now we're moving on to the direct questions, more about tutoring some more. So, #1, from an institutional perspective, what are the main goals of the tutoring center?
Participant #4 20:11
That's a great question. So, I think we have multiple goals. We're obviously here to support, you know, our students, undergrad and graduate level. And a main component of what we do is supporting student retention because we know that, you know, the more support and help that a student receives, the more likely they are to be able to continue from next semester and the next semester and stay in college if they're having difficulties.
Anna E. Cooper 20:36
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 20:51
So retention is a big part of it, and also one of the benefits of us working with our students is that they learn a lot of the kinds of things I was speaking about before, where they can sort of—I'm trying to think of the right word.
Anna E. Cooper 21:18
No, you're fine. You have plenty of time.
Participant #4 21:21
Yeah. They can.
Anna E. Cooper 21:23
I know it's a big question.
Participant #4 21:23
kind of, you know. Yeah, they can self-regulate, and they can learn a lot of those skills that'll help them get through their other college classes and career. Umm.
Anna E. Cooper 21:39
They just kind of learn to be a professional.
Participant #4 21:42
Yeah. Yeah, exactly.
Anna E. Cooper 21:44
I get exactly what you're saying.
Participant #4 21:45
And what's expected—yeah, what's expected of them, you know, in their upper-level classes as well. Collaboration and ownership responsibility, good student conduct, that kind of thing.
Anna E. Cooper 22:02
Yes.
Participant #4 22:03
Avoiding plagiarism, which is always important.
Anna E. Cooper 22:04

Yes, of course.
Participant #4 22:10
And.
Participant #4 22:12
How we think is different—I didn't cover that one. For institution, we do report all of our data to our institutional research branch. So, obviously we want our students to get good grades, and we've seen an impact on our student data semester after semester, year after year. That shows that there's a—
Anna E. Cooper 22:26
Mm-hmm.
Thank you.
Participant #4 22:40
definite impact on the GPA of students that have attended tutoring events.
Anna E. Cooper 22:47
Those are really good points.
Participant #4 22:49
Yeah. So that qualitative and quantitative data is important to us.
Anna E. Cooper 22:54
Yeah, that's a good point. So thinking about these goals that you mentioned, how do these goals align with the day-to-day tutoring operations and services provided to students?
Participant #4 23:10
Yeah. So, we try to be staffed at reasonable times for our students, 8:00 to 5:30. However, we do occasionally get requests from our online students or students that are working during the day that they need evening hours. You know, after 5:30. So we try to—actually, our writing tutors are really excellent, and they work with us. You know, they might move their schedule slightly for a week.
Anna E. Cooper 23:37
Yeah.
Participant #4 23:41
And that really helps us with our goals to support students where they are. And we try to be accessible to students as well.
Anna E. Cooper 23:53
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 23:54
We've worked with all kinds of student types, and we work closely with the Access Office as well. If their need for things like interpreters.
Anna E. Cooper 24:03
Yeah.
Participant #4 24:04
And then we are located in a central space on campus. We actually moved from Langdale to the library, which is more in the central heart of campus. So that way students can, you know, come directly to see us right after class, for example.
Anna E. Cooper 24:12
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #4 24:19
They'll have to go all the way to the north part of campus. And we're also much more visible as

well because we're right here in the library, and having this space also connects us with tangential services like the reference desk in the library, so the students might go get a recommendation for peer-reviewed sources or books. They can take that material and work with it on their papers and then bring it over to us just down the hallway to work with the writing tutor. So, it's a really good space.

Anna E. Cooper 24:55

Yeah. OK. So. Moving on to #2, so can you explain your main responsibilities and how you contribute to the tutoring center? You can include any additional roles you have that further support the program.

Participant #4 25:15

Oh, sure, OK. So, I help run and staff the front desk of our Office of Student Success. We have two desks. We have the one within our office space.

Anna E. Cooper 25:30

Mm-hmm.

Participant #4 25:32

and another desk over by the front of the circulation desk. Both of those are staffed by our student assistance. And we have phone lines that run that are connected. So, if a student calls in to one of those lines, either one of those desks will be able to take that phone call. And it's also a good space to have over there at the ASC because our student assistants can get their students paired up with a tutor more easily. So, I help with that staffing. I do the hiring and training. I help with the payroll side for our front desk, and I also field a lot of those calls myself. So sometimes I'll get some of those requests that are a little bit more, that need a little bit further help, like students that are returning to college after so many years that might be non-traditional students, and they might need a combination of writing, tutoring, and academic coaching.

Anna E. Cooper 26:42

Mm-hmm.

Anna E. Cooper 26:49

Mm-hmm.

Participant #4 26:51

So, I'll get them in touch with one of our student success coaches as well as a writing tutor. We had that happen a few times last semester. We also work with our international students as well.

Anna E. Cooper 27:03

Mm-hmm.

Participant #4 27:03

Because they have a separate set of—You know, if you want to say challenges or things that are necessary.

Anna E. Cooper 27:14

Mm-hmm yeah.

Participant #4 27:15

And the other thing, I work closely with our tutoring coordinator, and we do outreach around campus occasionally, like at Open House, at The Happening—different student events. We've been trying to do more tabling to get the awareness out there for students as well.

Anna E. Cooper 27:30

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Participant #4 27:46

And I think lastly, I also help with the updating our website. So, as we have updates to the

Academic Support center's website, I'll help with those.
Anna E. Cooper 27:57
OK. #3. So, how does the tutoring environment—like you can think about the building and like the layout—promote efficiency and productivity for writing tutors and tutees who attend tutoring sessions?
Participant #4 28:15
Oh, sure. So, we have a great space. One of the things that's really helpful is that we have a whole bunch of different seating choices for students, so we have high tops that have a spot where they can put their laptop. If they're working on a paper, they just bring it right with them or a tablet. We have computers right there if they want to jump on and sit with a writing tutor to go over their paper.
Anna E. Cooper 28:42
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 28:43
We have couches. You know, sort of more—
Anna E. Cooper 28:49
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 28:50
couch style seating or booth seating.
Anna E. Cooper 28:54
Yeah.
Participant #4 28:54
So, it's a little bit quieter. It's, you know, in the corner of our office space by the window. So, that's a little bit more helpful if somebody needs a quieter space to talk.
Anna E. Cooper 29:06
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 29:07
Rather than space that has a lot more activity. Let me see—we also have study rooms along the sidewall in case they need it to be much more quiet. We also have white noise machines in those study rooms so that also helps reduce the noise as well.
Anna E. Cooper 29:27
Oh wow, I did not know that. I guess I figured that.
Participant #4 29:31
It sounds just like an air conditioning running. That's what that noise is and then we centered—
Anna E. Cooper 29:36
That makes sense.
Participant #4 29:42
our front desk on the side there. So, as they round the corner, they'll be able to see, you know, who's at the front desk.
Anna E. Cooper 29:51
OK. Thank you for those descriptions.
Participant #4 29:53
Yep, you're welcome.
Anna E. Cooper 29:55
So, you did mention earlier how the tutoring center has moved from the previous location around Langdale. So, have there been any major changes in the tutoring centers, environment and

structure in terms of the building itself, services provided in levels of student engagement?
Participant #4 30:17
Yeah, I would say that there's been a pretty big change.
Anna E. Cooper 30:18
Really.
Participant #4 30:21
So initially when we were in Langdale, we had two floors. I would say we have a little bit more square footage in our current space in the library.
Anna E. Cooper 30:34
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 30:36
However, I guess there are benefits and drawbacks to when we were in Langdale with two floors. The 1st floor was completely open concept. We had a cluster of tables where students could be very close to each other, so a lot of times that would bleed over to the next tutoring session.
Anna E. Cooper 30:57
Yeah.
Participant #4 30:57
We had a lot of noise complaints. You know, that was something we had to work with. It was just a smaller space. I would say we had about a little less than 10 tables in that area, 4 chairs to a table. We also had a side room that was useful for that. It was more equivalent to a study room space.
Anna E. Cooper 31:13
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #4 31:19
But we didn't have as many options as we do here. The other thing with having two floors would be the upstairs floor was our quiet space basically because of the computer lab. But we still had a little bit of the same kind of issues. We'd have some noise bleed over.
Anna E. Cooper 31:38
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 31:39
And that upstairs area was supervised by our director and assistant director.
Anna E. Cooper 31:48
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 31:48
So, it was a good space. We were perhaps a little bit more cramped, and it was less visible to students who are walking around on campus looking for us. A lot of times we would get comments like, "Oh, I didn't even know that this was over here."
Anna E. Cooper 32:04
Yeah.
Participant #4 32:05
Oh, I didn't know we were there.
Anna E. Cooper 32:07
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 32:08
So moving to the library was a good benefit. They actually built a lot of our features with us in mind.

Anna E. Cooper 32:17
Oh wow.
Participant #4 32:18
They created the four study rooms as well as two office spaces for us so that we could have a little bit better of supervision to that space. It was more welcoming. You know, students could come by and see us really easily.
Anna E. Cooper 32:35
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 32:36
And get the help they need.
Anna E. Cooper 32:39
Yeah.
Participant #4 32:40
We had a printer over there so students can print, the computer spaces. It's still open concept, however we have more of those quiet setting rooms available and we also are in the center of campus. So, it's much more easier to get help from other departments like the reference desk or circulation desk.
Anna E. Cooper 32:53
OK. Thank you for that response.
Participant #4 33:05
Yeah, no problem.
Anna E. Cooper 33:07
OK, #4, how does the tutoring center navigate student sociocultural factors? Welcoming students of various backgrounds and identities. Some examples could be freshman students, graduate students, international students, or students with disabilities.
Participant #4 33:26
Oh, sure, that's a great question. Over the years, we've always kind of had the same, you know, student population, but we have had a few changes in the last few years but we work closely with the Access Office in case we need an interpreter for our students that are hard of hearing or deaf.
Anna E. Cooper 33:37
Mm-hmm mm.
Participant #4 33:48
Let me ask a quick question.
Are you asking me about are tutors that we work with or student population?
Anna E. Cooper 34:00
Yeah, those are good.
So, like the tutees, the students that come to receive tutoring?
Participant #4 34:14
OK. So, we work closely with the Access Office for any kind of students that may have disabilities. That might also include, occasionally we have requests from the Access Office for note taking, so we may have our writing tutors help out with that or proctoring, and then with our international students, we have the CIP, Center for International Programs.
Anna E. Cooper 34:34
Mm-hmm. Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 34:44
Where we have our grad tutors help support them as well with study groups or study time. We've

also had in the past, I don't know if we offer it right this semester, but in the past we've also offered study hall to our camp students.
Anna E. Cooper 35:05
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 35:06
The grant program and we've actually been able to get referrals from that program and have our CAP students work as tutors.
Anna E. Cooper 35:16
Oh wow.
Participant #4 35:17
For math and science, that's been a great program. They would, you know, come over to our desk, do study hall with us, and then we would get to talking to them and find that, you know, they'd be a great fit to be a tutor.
Anna E. Cooper 35:24
Mm-hmm. Oh well.
Participant #4 35:30
We work with that program. We also work with the athletic side, and we offer study hall for students that are football athletes and baseball athletes. We have requests from coaches occasionally and we have study hall there. We haven't done that as much this past semester, but probably that's something we do. It's helpful to the athletes because we can work around their practice schedule. So we might have, you know, a tutor offer study tips to them, do a presentation.
Anna E. Cooper 36:01
Oh yeah.
Participant #4 36:10
And then we also have a lot of requests for non-traditional or older students that might be coming back the college campus after a couple of years.
Anna E. Cooper 36:22
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 36:23
And they just need a refresher. They might have had a couple students that have had traumatic injuries, and they need help with navigating BlazeView, navigating online courses, and just kind of making sure they're on the right track with things and they need a little bit of an extra eye.
Anna E. Cooper 36:36
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #4 36:50
So it's incredibly helpful for all of our students and I know that our nontraditional students really appreciate the one-on-one help. Sometimes it's just a matter of like even navigating how to sign up for tutoring.
Participant #4 37:10
They'll call us and yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 37:10
Oh, that's so true.
Participant #4 37:14
So there's a lot of layers there.
Anna E. Cooper 37:16

So you basically went into this, so you could just kind of reiterate or list them. But what programs or strategies are in place that promote inclusivity in the writing tutoring environment?
Participant #4 37:33
We do outreach where we have our tutors talk directly to some of our classes to talk about the tutoring services.
Anna E. Cooper 37:44
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 37:51
I believe [the Coordinator or Tutoring] goes to the new employee orientation faculty. You know, faculty orientation at the start of the semester as well, and speaks to them about our services available, including writing tutoring.
Anna E. Cooper 38:07
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 38:14
There could be others that I'm missing.
Anna E. Cooper 38:17
What was the name of the one that you just mentioned with the migrant workers who became tutors?
Participant #4 38:23
Oh, sure. Yes, the camp program.
Anna E. Cooper 38:26
OK, the camp program.
Participant #4 38:28
Yeah, camp. It's— give me one second and get you that name.
Anna E. Cooper 38:37
Thank you.
Participant #4 38:38
Yeah, no problem. College Assistance Migrant Program is what it stands for.
Anna E. Cooper 38:44
OK. Thank you. I just wanted to have a note of that cause you explained it well. OK so. Moving on to #5, were you finished with #4?
Participant #4 38:58
I think so, yeah, that's no problem.
Anna E. Cooper 39:00
I probably interrupted you.
Participant #4 39:08
I'm trying to think there was something on question three that I wasn't sure if I addressed.
Anna E. Cooper 39:14
Let me see.
Participant #4 39:14
Could you? Could you read the third question again, OK.
Anna E. Cooper 39:16
Yes, I can read it again. So, was it the one about the different sociocultural factors?
Participant #4 39:26
I think it was the one before that.
Anna E. Cooper 39:27

OK, it might have been. Have there been any major changes in the tutoring center's environment and structure in terms of the building itself? Services provided and levels of engagement?
Participant #4 39:38
Yeah. So, with levels of engagement, last year we switched from a tutoring process where we had all of our tutors hired, managed, and paid by our university. To a new process where we have only our writing tutors managed and supervised and paid by our university and our other tutors are managed and paid by the Knack platform but still working in our Academic Support Center space.
Anna E. Cooper 40:09
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 40:10
So we are currently in the process of evaluating and getting that data to see engagement levels preliminarily. I talked to [the Coordinator of Tutoring] and it does look like we have perhaps fewer appointments in fall of last year compared to fall 2023 and a lot of that is because we made that switch over to the new platform in August of last year.
Anna E. Cooper 40:25
Mm-hmm.
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 40:38
So, students had to navigate it. We had to teach them how to.
Anna E. Cooper 40:44
Yeah.
Participant #4 40:46
We're not able to make appointments for them directly the same way we used to. We are able to with the writing appointments. So, if a student walks into our office and they need help at 10:00 AM, we're able to get them an appointment like right there, right at that moment.
However, with Knack, the difference is the student would have to go through Blazeview, go into Knack, send out a message to our writing or Spanish or math or other tutor and then all of our main tutors receive that message and whoever elects to respond to it will get that appointment.
Anna E. Cooper 41:22
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 41:28
However, you know there could be as much as a couple hours of a delay to a day delay because of Knack. So the appointments really aren't as on-demand as they would be for, right, our writing tutors. So, I wanted to mention that was big.
Anna E. Cooper 41:42
Oh, that makes sense. So you're saying that whenever they sign up using that platform, then it kind of pairs them with someone that's available rather than them choosing a specific person.
Participant #4 41:54
Yep, that's correct.
Anna E. Cooper 41:56
OK.
Participant #4 41:56
On our previous platform, they could make an appointment within the same day, within half an hour worth of that time.
Requesting now, there's much more of a delay. It could be as much as half a day, depending on

how long it takes for the math tutor to respond, a day to a couple days.
Anna E. Cooper 42:17
That makes sense.
Participant #4 42:18
We are looking at ways to kind of mitigate that time problem or time difference.
Anna E. Cooper 42:30
Yeah.
Participant #4 42:32
So we might look at some more on-demand tutoring during our peak hours like midterms and finals. So that is one change and I think that might be one of the other reasons why we haven't had as many appointments, which speaks to maybe a lower engagement
Anna E. Cooper 42:51
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 42:51
We certainly had the requests because people know about the office.
Anna E. Cooper 42:55
Yeah.
Participant #4 42:56
We've had the request, they've had them come by in person to ask or call, but they aren't getting the appointments as quickly.
Anna E. Cooper 43:00
Mm-hmm. Isn't there also an ability to like submit a paper online as well and receive like feedback?
Participant #4 43:14
Yes there is. There is that option. I think compared to our last platform Tutor.com, I think the turnaround time is a little bit longer. [Wait time] might be 12 to 24 hours versus 6 to 6 hours or 12 hours. But there is an option where they can upload a paper.
Anna E. Cooper 43:27
Oh, OK. Got it. Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 43:36
Then, include some information about their rubric or syllabus, and then get a response from our writing tutors.
Anna E. Cooper 43:43
OK. Thank you for covering the levels of engagement. That's really helpful.
Participant #4 43:48
Yeah, no problem.
Anna E. Cooper 43:50
OK.
Anna E. Cooper 43:50
So, we finished #4 about inclusivity. So, we're going to move on to question #5. What major institutional changes have impacted the tutoring center's focus or ability to meet students' needs?
Participant #4 44:13
Oh, I'm sorry. I think I talked about it briefly with the previous question.
Anna E. Cooper 44:16
Yes, you. You kind of went into this one already.
Participant #4 44:19

Yeah. We've not only changed our space, you know, over to the library, which was a great benefit because we've had higher visibility, better word of mouth, and we're more connected to other campus services right here in the center of the campus, but we've also changed our platform a couple times. Every time we have [changed our platform]—since the time I've been here, I think this is the third platform or fourth platform we've had—there's always a delay in terms of the roll out because we have to train our students how to use it.
Anna E. Cooper 44:49
Mm-hmm.
Anna E. Cooper 44:57
Yeah.
Participant #4 44:57
[There were] issues like bugs and all that stuff. And actually, some of the times the platforms didn't completely have all the features that we needed from the start, so they'd have to build out those features as we went and we take a semester or two to get those features.
Anna E. Cooper 45:12
OK.
Participant #4 45:20
So there are those kinds of delays.
Anna E. Cooper 45:23
That makes sense.
Participant #4 45:24
Yeah. So, with the Knack tutoring, we have changed.
So, it's a little bit less in terms of the on-demand tutoring for everything you know, math, science, and Spanish. However, we have kept our on-demand aspect for our writing tutors, which has been incredibly, incredibly helpful.
Anna E. Cooper 45:40
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 45:50
And they also offer not only in-person hours, but some of our writing tutors offer online hours for the students that are online that want to meet through Teams.
Anna E. Cooper 46:00
Yeah.
Participant #4 46:02
But overall, the process has stayed very much the same.
We focus on our, you know, core values and—
Anna E. Cooper 46:10
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 46:13
I think, you know. Luckily, even though we've had these platform changes, I think we've still had a lot of really good core success with our writing tutors.
Anna E. Cooper 46:25
That's good. OK so. The follow-up question of that one: So, have students or like the tutees that come to writing tutoring appointments, have you seen their writing needs shift or stay the same? And how has the tutoring center made adjustments to support these needs?
Participant #4 46:47
Oh, sure. I think I would say I've seen a bit of change. We certainly saw a big change during

COVID.
Anna E. Cooper 47:02
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 47:03
We worked online for about a year. We worked remotely and so all of our appointments were online and we had some technical issues that we worked through with that.
Anna E. Cooper 47:16
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 47:16
But overall, it worked quite well all the same. And then we when we moved back to in person. One of our previous platforms for Tutor.com also had an online portion so—
Anna E. Cooper 47:35
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 47:37
We didn't have as— I'm trying to remember, we didn't have as many requests for it, but I think we had an online option for students that were looking for online help. We'd have to go back through our data, but I do believe in 2021 or 2022—as students were getting used to coming back on campus, coming back in person—I think there was an uptick in requests for online tutoring.
Anna E. Cooper 47:52
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 47:56
More notably, so then in-person tutoring, that was something that happened for like a semester or two.
Anna E. Cooper 48:11
Oh, that's interesting.
Participant #4 48:11
We had more online requests than in-person requests.
Participant #4 48:17
So that was different.
Participant #4 48:20
It could have just been from, you know safety concerns or they were just more used to that from going through high school, you know, with online video chat, that kind of thing.
Anna E. Cooper 48:22
Mm-hmm.
Anna E. Cooper 48:25
That makes sense. Yeah. So, did more tutors start tutoring online?
Participant #4 48:36
Yeah. Yeah, our tutors, you know, offered online hours. They were very flexible. They'd say, "OK, I could, you know, work some of these hours online or some in-person."
Anna E. Cooper 48:51
Yeah.
Participant #4 48:52
And they would be very flexible if there was an hour that was requested that was only in person if we talked to them, then they would switch over to online and again, I think one of the benefits of our current configuration with our writing tutors is that they have been incredibly flexible with

some of our requests from our international students.
Anna E. Cooper 49:12
Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 49:24
Uh. Working with our non-traditional students, who some of them prefer to meet in person and they prefer to print out their paper first and do it all with pen versus working on editing with a word programmer, a document editor.
Anna E. Cooper 49:37
Yes. Yeah.
Participant #4 49:47
And then we have others that are online students that only work online because they're two hours away.
Anna E. Cooper 49:57
Yeah.
Participant #4 50:01
So yeah. So, we've tried to keep up with those changes.
Anna E. Cooper 50:05
OK.
Thank you so much. So, number six, what are the institutional policies or administrative duties that writing tutors are expected to follow and complete?
Participant #4 50:18
Oh, sure. So, um, they have a set number of hours they have to work per week; depending on the grad tutor, they have between 14 and 19 hours. They have either a 14-hour schedule or a 19-hour schedule, and some of those hours are divided into tutoring for us or working with the English department. They have to put their hours on their timecard to get paid each month.
Anna E. Cooper 50:57
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 50:58
We do training every fall. We do an annual compliance, so I believe they have to complete that as well as cybersecurity training.
Anna E. Cooper 51:10
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 51:11
And then, for their actual appointments, we have an appointment reflection form where they complete that with who they worked with, what time, the time and date of the appointment, what the subject was for, what they worked on, and how it went. So, that data is really important to us in terms of a qualitative side of things.
Anna E. Cooper 51:19
Yeah.
Participant #4 51:21
So we know if a student is working with a student that's having a lot of issues or maybe their behavior is inappropriate. Then we're more aware about what's going on and we can address it with the student.
Anna E. Cooper 51:56
OK.
Participant #4 51:57

Or even address it as a group with other writing tutors too.
Anna E. Cooper 52:03
That is true. So following up on that question, how do these duties support the writing tutoring—or sorry, how did these duties support the tutoring center's effectiveness?
Participant #4 52:20
How do we support the writing tutor's effectiveness?
Anna E. Cooper 52:24
Sorry, I missed that question, though.
So, how did these administrative duties support the overall tutoring center's effectiveness?
Participant #4 52:26
OK.
Anna E. Cooper 52:39
So, like the ASC, yes.
Participant #4 52:41
Yeah. So, I definitely would say that the appointment reflection form is very critical to us. It's something we've kept from the very beginning.
Anna E. Cooper 52:53
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 52:54
We've added to it, and we've done surveys to figure out what to include on the form, but it helps us capture, you know, how many appointments we've had, the effectiveness, and if there's something that needs to be addressed with the student in terms of a behavioral problem.
Anna E. Cooper 53:00
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 53:06
So, if a student comes in and they're just kind of expecting the writing tutor to do the work for them or write the paper—
Anna E. Cooper 53:19
Mm-hmm. Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 53:27
Then that's something we can address not only with the student on a one-on-one basis but also bring to the attention of all the writing tutors to say, "Hey, this is a behavior we've seen from the student, and they've displayed it in multiple appointments, and here's how you address this with a student in a kind way."
Anna E. Cooper 53:42
Yeah.
Participant #4 53:50
And kind of help guide them in what they need to do, and, let me see, I think with the other policies, we try to work around the writing tutor schedule.
Anna E. Cooper 54:06
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 54:07
If they have classes elsewhere, we, you know, have them choose the hours that work best for them.
Anna E. Cooper 54:14
Mm-hmm.

Participant #4 54:14
So that way they're not too stressed out.
Anna E. Cooper 54:17
Yeah.
Participant #4 54:20
They have time to work on their homework in their off time.
Anna E. Cooper 54:23
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 54:25
And. Umm. Actually. So, I can talk a little bit about how we used to support our tutors.
Anna E. Cooper 54:39
OK.
Participant #4 54:40
Before the merger, if this is helpful. But when we had our director of the ASC, she would meet with our writing tutors in a group, you know, weekly, to go over concerns and questions that they might have about a student or about a writing process, or, you know, some new training material.
Anna E. Cooper 54:49
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 55:06
And also work with them on their rhetoric or their composition skills to kind of help them become a better writer as well.
Anna E. Cooper 55:19
Yeah.
Participant #4 55:20
Techniques, that kind of thing, and it was an incredibly great process.
Anna E. Cooper 55:26
Yes.
Participant #4 55:27
Because it gave a lot of good camaraderie, and it was a direct support to our writing tutors.
Anna E. Cooper 55:36
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 55:37
That is something that I think I miss with our new configuration, and it would be helpful to any writing center.
Anna E. Cooper 55:41
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 55:42
To any writing center that I think is having to have support for those kinds of issues.
Anna E. Cooper 55:47
Yeah. So that leads into the same question I was going to ask, which is how does the tutoring center provide writing tutors with peer and staff support?
Participant #4 56:03
So I would say that right now we have a pretty good connection with all of our writing tutors. If they have an issue, they're able to come into our office or call or e-mail us about any kind of, you know, scheduling issue or student concern.
Anna E. Cooper 56:24

Yeah.
Participant #4 56:28
And so that's a great benefit. I think we could definitely do more.
Anna E. Cooper 56:41
Yeah.
Participant #4 56:41
You know more along the lines of how we had it before the merger. It would be really helpful for us to have workshops and maybe student or writing tutor led meetings where we could talk about, you know, a topic of the week or some training.
Anna E. Cooper 56:56
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #4 57:05
Have cross training or additional opportunities around campus.
Anna E. Cooper 57:13
Those are really good points. So, how would you say the program promotes tutor and staff cooperation and collaboration?
Participant #4 57:27
Could you say that one more time?
Anna E. Cooper 57:28
How would you say that the program promotes tutor and staff cooperation and collaboration?
Participant #4 57:36
Oh, sure. So, every semester we try to do some team training at the start of the semester.
Anna E. Cooper 57:53
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 57:56
At various times we've had—occasionally we've had issues, like the technology outage that we had at the start of the semester, which prevents that from happening, but we try to keep on top of other training opportunities.
Anna E. Cooper 58:05
Yes.
Participant #4 58:13
[Training opportunities] where they might work with the English department, some of the faculty over there. Our writing tutors might go speak at some student engagement events.
Anna E. Cooper 58:26
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 58:27
Umm, they might help with proctoring.
Anna E. Cooper 58:32
Yeah.
Participant #4 58:34
And we try to be as open as possible, have an open-door policy, and be available to all of our tutors if there's any kind of concern or issue for them to feel like they can, you know, always come by and talk with us.
Anna E. Cooper 58:54
OK. That's a great answer. OK, so #8. So, the tutoring center usually highlights the importance of social collaboration and tutors connecting with tutees during the writing process. How are

writing tutors trained to tutor so that collaboration is implemented during tutoring sessions?
Participant #4 59:18
Oh, that's great. So, we've always kind of followed the same formula or—
Anna E. Cooper 59:26
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 59:30
A method of tutoring where we have a set or series of steps for our tutors to go through. So, we want them to kind of set the expectations for the appointment and get some rapport with the student.
Anna E. Cooper 59:32
Mm-hmm. Yes. Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 59:46
They, you know, make it clear if they're a brand-new student that we expect them to work collaboratively with our tutor, and then they kind of outline what they want to work on, whether it's a first draft or a final draft or even just generating ideas for a thesis.
Anna E. Cooper 1:00:02
Yeah. Yeah.
Participant #4 1:00:13
They established that thing that they're working on, and then we often have the writing tutors either read their paper out loud or have the student read the paper out loud because it helps them engage in their own work. It also allows them to be able to hear if there are any issues when they're speaking the sentences out loud, if there are any grammatical or sentence structure issues.
Anna E. Cooper 1:00:45
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:00:48
And then, the writing tutors might make some suggestions depending on what the issue is that they're looking for help with. Sometimes, depending on whether they have a 30-minute or an hour appointment, there'll be time for the student to actually make those changes on the paper. And then, they work through it. And then they kind of set up what they might need help with for the next appointment if they feel like they want to come back with another draft. And altogether, I think it's a really great process because I think it puts a lot more responsibility and autonomy on the student.
Anna E. Cooper 1:01:34
Yeah, that's a good point. So, could you share some writing tutoring training practices that help tutors focus on engaging with the tutee throughout the writing process rather than the tutor only focusing on the final writing product?
Participant #4 1:01:54
Training processes that focus on the tutee.
Anna E. Cooper 1:01:57
That helps the tutor focus on the tutee instead of focusing on just writing the paper.
Participant #4 1:02:04
OK. So, a lot of it is—a lot of the process is in the communication between the student and the tutor. So, sometimes, I mean, it's kind of interwoven in the whole conversation, the whole appointment. But sometimes, they can engage with the student and see that the student might be coming into the appointment with some hesitations. Some, you know, prior concerns or, if you want to call it baggage, that they held in previous classes or writing assignments where they

don't feel well equipped to do a certain kind of paper or writing assignment.
Anna E. Cooper 1:02:51
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:03:04
What we traditionally do is, we have in the past worked with our writing tutors to do some role-play where they have a student come in. And they have one of their coworkers, other writing tutors, and they pretend that they—
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:15
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:03:26
You know, come in with a certain mindset that they just feel like, oh, I'm so terrible at writing. I haven't written anything in years, and I don't know where to start.
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:33
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:03:36
And then the tutee allows the writing tutor to demonstrate how they can kind of work with the student to identify those fears or insecurities and kind of help build them up to say, "OK, well, you know, I understand that you're feeling that way," and they show empathy and support.
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:59
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:04:00
And it really helps set the stage for a more positive learning appointment, because if they're not in the right mindset when they come to the appointment, not only will they have a hard time getting through the appointment to get the paper done, but they may not come back.
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:04
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #4 1:04:14
Also, or [the student] might think, you know, it might impact the rest of their semester or their college career.
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:15
That's true.
Participant #4 1:04:20
So, that's one thing I think we do really well: setting the stage for a lot of empathy.
You know, a lot of understanding and—
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:33
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:04:38
Trying to set the student up for success.
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:42
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:04:43
So role-play is one thing, and I go back to two years ago with those writing meetings.
I seem to remember that they used to also have a technique where they would bring up a piece of writing that their writing tutor had worked on for one of their classes, something that they were proud of.
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:17

Yeah.
Participant #4 1:05:20
Something they did well in or that they're proud of. You know, like for an advanced literature or a rhetoric class, and they would say, "Oh well, this is talking about, you know, like a detailed analysis of this book.
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:31
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:05:38
And here's where I struggled to talk about this concept in relation to the book.
So they kind of critique, they teach their own writing, and it was helpful to kind of illuminate some of those techniques to the other writing tutors for—
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:54
Yeah. Yeah, that is helpful.
Participant #4 1:06:01
On a graduate level.
Anna E. Cooper 1:06:02
Exactly.
Participant #4 1:06:03
So that might come in handy with a student looking for grad-level or dissertation-level help.
Anna E. Cooper 1:06:12
Yeah, that's so true.
Participant #4 1:06:13
So, we also, in our training, try to make sure that all of our writing tutors have enough knowledge and can support MLA, APA, Chicago style, and all the other citations.
Anna E. Cooper 1:06:29
Mm-hmm. Oh yeah, that's true. OK, so question #9: Based on your observations, do writing tutors typically study English and literature? If not, how do you ensure that peer tutors of other disciplines have the same writing skills as peer tutors who study English?
Participant #4 1:06:55
Oh, sure. So, I will say that more recently that has been the case where most of our writing tutors have been writing and English students. However, there have been cases in the time since I've worked here where we've had a multi-subject tutor, somebody that you know came in—
Anna E. Cooper 1:07:15
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:07:17
As a biology tutor, but it actually turned out their papers [proved that] they were actually quite good writers, so we would have them train with one of our staff members to be eligible.
Anna E. Cooper 1:07:27
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:07:31
A lot of times, I don't know if I mentioned this before, we try to have our writing tutors submit a writing sample.
Anna E. Cooper 1:07:43
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:07:44
You know, it's something that they could be proud of or something they want to highlight, and

that is evaluated in terms of the context and the grammar and style.
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:01
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:08:03
So, for those tutors that are not specifically writing or English majors, we also have them submit a paper as well, and we try to get them, you know, up to speed with training in MLA and APA.
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:10
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #4 1:08:16
That kind of thing.
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:19
OK. So, what are the benefits of not separating writing tutoring from the other tutoring subjects? What are some drawbacks of combining the two?
Participant #4 1:08:34
OK. That's a great question. So, one of the things I was able to observe before we had the restructuring two years ago was that when we had them, everybody working together in the same office space.
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:57
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:08:58
There was a lot of, or a higher chance of, writing tutors and other disciplines befriending each other and sharing tips and strategies for difficult appointments.
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:16
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:09:16
[They would] sit close by, and they would hang out together, and they shared knowledge and techniques. So, that was a benefit for sure. If there was something that they struggled with or they were talking with a student for a writing appointment, they could say, "Oh, hey, you know, you mentioned that they don't like math. Well, I have one of my friends who is a math tutor right here. So, let me get you an appointment."
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:39
Oh yeah.
Participant #4 1:09:42
And so a lot of that collaboration is really helpful. So, I would say one of the drawbacks is that for a writing tutor that's just starting out, that has only ever known to tutor writing as a subject, I would say without that writing tutor training that I talked about that we had before—
Anna E. Cooper 1:10:19
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:10:20
They could lose some of the writing-specific techniques that are really useful for writing tutors but are unique to the writing process.
Anna E. Cooper 1:10:37
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:10:38
You know, working through drafts, not criticizing your previous work, and, you know, a lot of it is psychological and empathetic.

Anna E. Cooper 1:10:47
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:10:48
And with, you know, math tutoring, a tutor would approach it in a slightly different way. They'd still follow the same couple of steps for the tutoring process, but they would focus on the appointment in a different way with working on practice problems, demonstrating how to do something in their own hand, and watching videos, that kind of thing. So yeah, I would say that they pick up, maybe they might pick up something.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:28
Yeah, that makes sense.
Participant #4 1:11:29
Yeah, hopefully I'm explaining that correctly.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:32
Yeah. No, that was really good.
Participant #4 1:11:34
They would pick up some incorrect techniques, or they would be unaware of certain techniques about that training.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:39
Yeah, exactly.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:43
So thinking about writing tutoring, what should writing tutoring look like to you?
Participant #4 1:11:52
I think it's really important to start with those core values of empathy. You know, being clear and having good expectations or setting up expectations ahead of time. Being direct with the student goes a long way because if you're not aware that they need to be doing or they need to be writing the paper in their own hand or other issues—other behavioral issues—being direct helps a lot with those during the tutoring process. But also, you know, having that collaborative ear and being able to listen for any kind of obstacles that the student might have or preconceptions.
Anna E. Cooper 1:12:44
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:12:45
And knowing how to address those and work through them so that the student can go into the appointment feeling much better. And then also sharing techniques with the student to let them work on another draft. Put it aside for a little bit and then come back to it. So, just sharing those kinds of things.
Participant #4 1:13:09
And I think also sharing their own passion with the student for writing is pretty cool.
Anna E. Cooper 1:13:14
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:13:15
That's one of the big benefits—if the student can see that their tutor is super passionate about writing and reading and that kind of thing. Then, it helps encourage them as well that it's something that they can do.
Anna E. Cooper 1:13:30
It's such a good point. OK, so, to finish out #10, there are two more questions.
So how are the writing tutors evaluated for success?

Participant #4 1:13:44
Yeah. So, when we hire them, you know, if you want to go all the way back to the hiring side, we look at GPA, we look at grades of the classes they're going to tutor, we look at recommendations from the professors, and then we look at the sample paper as well that they submit. And then when they actually get into the tutoring side, we make sure that they're equipped with training at the beginning of the semester, and then we have the appointment reflection form. Those are really critical for us to know whether the appointment has taken place or if it's been cancelled.
Anna E. Cooper 1:14:36
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:14:36
To identify any kind of behavioral issues with the student that we need to address and just to have a good record of how the student is doing. And on a wider scope, how effective are we for writing tutoring to say, "Yeah, we've actually seen, you know, an increase in students that got tutoring with us in their GPA or their grade."
Anna E. Cooper 1:14:53
Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:15:04
Last semester. So. Umm. We have those different items that we look at. In previous semesters—do you want me to talk about previous years or just the current year?
Anna E. Cooper 1:15:27
You could, but I also was going to mention the follow-up to that question, which you might be getting into: if there was any specific data or feedback that was assessed to measure writing tutoring effectiveness. So, if you want to mention previous times, now you could do that.
Participant #4 1:15:46
OK, in previous years when we had different staff members, we also had our director.
I believe she had it set up where they could [write] discussion posts that were almost like a reflection of how the semester went.
Anna E. Cooper 1:16:14
Hmm.
Participant #4 1:16:19
You know those kinds of topics, like—
Anna E. Cooper 1:16:19
Oh yeah.
Participant #4 1:16:22
Who was your most—without naming names—important student?
Anna E. Cooper 1:16:26
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:16:28
What did you work on with them? What techniques did you use to tackle those issues? What surprised you about the process? How do you think it made you a better tutor? And we would share all the information with other tutors.
Anna E. Cooper 1:16:39
Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:16:45
And those kinds of discussion questions and reflection were really helpful. I think she changed

those discussion board posts to a final one-page reflection; we did that. We tried that for a few semesters.
Anna E. Cooper 1:17:01
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:17:01
It didn't always work, but you know, actually, our writing tutors were always the ones that would turn those in and be super excited about it. We couldn't know for other writing tutors to do it, but that was a great project.
Anna E. Cooper 1:17:14
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:17:17
And again, it looked at those things.
Anna E. Cooper 1:17:19
So those discussion posts you mentioned, were they for the Student Success Center or the ASC?
Participant #4 1:17:24
Yeah, that was for the Student Success Center. We tried that for about a year, I think.
Anna E. Cooper 1:17:27
OK. OK, that makes sense. OK, so—sorry, were you finished with that question?
Participant #4 1:17:42
Could you repeat it one more time?
Anna E. Cooper 1:17:42
I didn't want to cut you off.
Participant #4 1:17:43
Let me just make sure there wasn't anything I didn't address.
Anna E. Cooper 1:17:45
So it was just asking if there was any data or feedback that was assessed to measure writing tutoring effectiveness.
Participant #4 1:17:54
And the other part of that is that we look at grades for our students.
Anna E. Cooper 1:17:58
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:18:01
So, we cross-check. We take our department reflection forms and our department data, and we send that off to the Strategic Research Office, and then they look at grade point average increases based on the number of tutoring appointments that a student has.
Anna E. Cooper 1:18:14
Mm-hmm. OK.
Participant #4 1:18:23
You know, like zero to five appointments, six to ten, whatever it might be, and then try to see if there are any grade changes for those classes.
Anna E. Cooper 1:18:36
OK. Thank you so much for that really thought-out answer. OK. So, now we're going to conclude with two main open-ended questions. We've just finished the directed questions. So, #11 is, during your employment, how has the tutoring center changed over time, such as how the writing tutor's role has changed or how the tutoring center has approached how writing tutors tutor writing? And I can repeat any part of that if you need me to.

Participant #4 1:19:13
OK. I would say the overall processes have stayed the same in the time that I've been here.
Anna E. Cooper 1:19:20
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:19:21
However, the support that we've offered for our writing tutors has changed.
Anna E. Cooper 1:19:28
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:19:28
[Support] has decreased a little bit, and some of that has just been a product of our own demands of our office and limited resources, unfortunately.
Anna E. Cooper 1:19:45
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:19:47
Limited—we have more responsibilities than what we have staff for with our new structure.
Anna E. Cooper 1:19:52
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:20:00
But overall, I think we've continued to offer very strong support for our writing tutoring side.
Anna E. Cooper 1:20:08
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:20:10
We make sure that any student that reaches out to us, you know, through e-mail, their phone calls, or their just kind of wandering into our office, that they can get a writing tutor on demand. You know, as much as we can that same day, if not the next day.
Anna E. Cooper 1:20:19
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #4 1:20:27
[If not the] same day, then as soon as they can the next day, and also show them how to access the—
Anna E. Cooper 1:20:38
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:20:38
Get peer-reviewed feedback.
Anna E. Cooper 1:20:42
Yes.
Participant #4 1:20:43
That is one thing that we've really tried to do, and I've also encouraged our students if they need help with more coaching techniques like navigating BlazeView, they can also go see, you know, a writing tutor in addition to one of our student success coaches here.
Anna E. Cooper 1:21:07
So, you are basically saying that the writing tutor's role has pretty much stayed the same; it's just you've seen changes in, like, the environment and the other things you've mentioned previously. OK.
Participant #4 1:21:23
Yeah. Our office space has changed, and some of our platforms have changed, but the process

and the support that we're trying to offer to our students have remained the same.
Anna E. Cooper 1:21:35
Perfect. So, onto the last open-ended section, question 12. During your involvement with the writing center, what are some administrative challenges that the tutoring center has experienced, such as employees, institutional support, and resources? And how could these challenges be approved or addressed?
Participant #4 1:22:05
Yes, I think I may have spoken to that a little bit in previous answers, but we have had some challenges—we've had a number of changes in our scheduling platform over the years. I think four, and the time that I've been here, each time it always takes a while for them, for the students, and for our employees, our tutor employees, and student employees, to get used to it.
Anna E. Cooper 1:22:22
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:22:35
So. We, you know, offer that support and learning those new systems and kind of working around the obstacles. And we're lucky that we've continued to have a lot of financial support for our tutoring programs. We've always had a good relationship with the administration side of things.
Anna E. Cooper 1:23:09
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:23:10
They've, you know, we've always had great funding for our tutors. It's kind of an ebb and flow, as we've had changes in our retention levels, but I think the fact that we are careful with our data that we report means that we have continued to have good support in terms of that funding. And I think we've been able to have some autonomy in terms of how we wanted to design our space.
Anna E. Cooper 1:23:45
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:23:46
Good support from, you know, the library, where we're located. And I think even though we've had some changes and some challenges with our staffing, I think we have a really good basis for our writing tutor program. If you want, you could repeat the question just so I could make sure I didn't miss anything.
Anna E. Cooper 1:24:21
Oh yeah, so. Basically, during your involvement with the writing center, what are some administrative challenges that the tutoring center has experienced, such as employees, institutional support, and resources? And how could these challenges be improved or addressed?
Participant #4 1:24:42
I would say one more thing is that we have a team of six writing tutors right now, and—
Anna E. Cooper 1:24:50
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:24:52
They've supported a lot of different areas, so our international programs, in addition to, you know, nontraditional students, I would love to see the program grow and for us to have more funding for more writing tutors.
Anna E. Cooper 1:25:10
Yeah.

Participant #4 1:25:13
A lot of it is the funding through the Graduate School right now, but I'd like to see that there be more on-demand support as well.
Anna E. Cooper 1:25:25
OK, so. Do you have any additional insights or comments you would like to make?
That is the conclusion of the questions.
Participant #4 1:25:44
I would say actually. Let me see. I think so. You know, I don't know if you're interested in knowing a little bit more about the history from even before the ASC side of things.
Anna E. Cooper 1:26:03
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:26:06
But I've been here long enough that, like, my first semester I was here, we had—
Anna E. Cooper 1:26:06
Yeah, sure.
Participant #4 1:26:11
We had a formalized writing center, and that was, I think, through another branch that used to be called Oasis, which a former director—
Anna E. Cooper 1:26:21
So are you talking about the Student Success Center?
Sorry to interrupt you.
Participant #4 1:26:26
Yeah, it was. It was sort of a precursor to the Student Success Center, I think.
Or it might have been the basis of what the Student Success Center became.
Anna E. Cooper 1:26:38
Oh, OK. You're talking about, like, The Writing Center with [The Writing Center staff member].
Participant #4 1:26:46
Possibly.
Anna E. Cooper 1:26:48
I know it's a long way away.
Participant #4 1:26:49
That might have been who it was. Yeah, this is like 2005, 2006.
Anna E. Cooper 1:26:54
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:26:55
2005 was when I got here, but I remember distinctly there was like one semester where I went to what used to be— what they called The Writing Center, and that was like over in West Hall. It was a classroom that was staffed by writing tutors, and it was a good model. I only went there once.
Anna E. Cooper 1:27:17
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:27:17
But it followed much the same format. You know the same tutoring format with the process.
Anna E. Cooper 1:27:24
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:27:26

But I think with what we have become now with the Student Success Center/Academic Support Center, I think all of that just kind of formalized into a much—
Anna E. Cooper 1:27:37
Mm-hmm.
Participant #4 1:27:41
A much stronger program.
Anna E. Cooper 1:27:44
Yeah.
Participant #4 1:27:44
With good visibility, you know, being in the center of campus, and we also moved when I started. We were using paper for everything.
Anna E. Cooper 1:27:53
Oh my gosh.
Participant #4 1:27:55
Yeah, we did paper appointments. Then we had to translate those paper appointments to a system that was built by our IT system and our IT administrators, and it was sorely lacking compared to what we have now.
Participant #4 1:28:10
So IT is much better, yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:28:10
That's really interesting.
Participant #4 1:28:14
So I'm glad everything's digital now.
Anna E. Cooper 1:28:16
Oh, same. That is so—that is so insightful to hear about the beginning of transitioning over into, like, tutoring subjects together.
Participant #4 1:28:29
Yeah, definitely. I wish I had a little bit more information about that. It's a little fuzzy, but that was sort of what I remember.
Anna E. Cooper 1:28:36
No, no, you're totally fine. I do plan to interview [The Writing Center staff member], who was kind of in charge of that, so that will be helpful. But you have given me such a good grasp of the tutoring center and the changes that have gone on and how it's been working and the whole process of everything.
Participant #4 1:28:44
Oh, good.
Anna E. Cooper 1:28:56
You have just helped me so much.
Participant #4 1:29:00
That's so great.
Anna E. Cooper 1:29:02
So, thank you so much for your participation in this interview.
Participant #4 1:29:02
I'm really glad to hear that. Yeah. You're very welcome. I'm very happy to.
Anna E. Cooper 1:29:11
But—

Participant #4 1:29:12
OK.
Anna E. Cooper 1:29:13
If you have, if you don't have any other comments, I am about to conclude the interview.
Participant #4 1:29:21
OK. That sounds great.
Anna E. Cooper 1:29:24
Thank you so much, [Participant #4]. And I hope you have an amazing day.
Participant #4 1:29:27
Thank you, Anna. I hope you do too. I hope everything goes well with the project and with the research.
Anna E. Cooper 1:29:32
Thank you. Me too.
Participant #4 1:29:34
All right. Bye-bye.
Anna E. Cooper 1:29:36
Bye.

◉ **Anna E. Cooper** stopped transcription.

Participant #5 Transcript

February 4, 2025, 3:02PM

Anna E. Cooper 0:06
OK. Let me check. OK. It's working OK. So, this is interview #5, and I'm about to read the IRB research statement to my participant. OK. So, you are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled "VSU Writing Centers: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies," which is being conducted by Anna Cooper, a graduate student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to show how three of Valdosta State University's writing centers, the Writing Center, the Student Success Center, and the Academic Support Center, have changed over the years. This research will analyze what has changed and what has stayed the same through each iteration of tutoring writing at VSU. You'll receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about possible paths forward for tutoring writing as VSU adjusts to rapidly advancing technologies and changes in the larger environment. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately at least 55 minutes and at most 85 minutes, or one hour and 25 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded to capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas.
Anna E. Cooper 1:47
Once the interview recording has been transcribed, the recording will be immediately deleted from recording devices. Your name will be deleted from the interview.
Participant #5 1:54
Yes.
Anna E. Cooper 1:55
Transcripts and synonyms will be used to anonymize your data, which will be included in the research study's references chapter. Your participation is voluntary.
You may choose not to participate, to stop responding, or to skip questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to leave the study, audio-recorded conversations and any written information linking you to the research study will be destroyed. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in the study. Your participation in the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project. And your certification that you are 18 years of age or older. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Anna Cooper at aecooper@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review under federal regulations. The IRB University Committee, established by federal law, protects the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB administrator at 229-253-2947 or IRB@valdosta.edu. So, do you have any questions before we begin? And do you accept this research statement?
Participant #5 3:24
I have no questions, and I accept.
Anna E. Cooper 3:27
OK, perfect. So now we're going to move on to questionnaire #2 for tutoring staff. We're going to begin with the 8 opening questions.

Participant #5 3:39
Mm-hmm.
Anna E. Cooper 3:39
So what is the name of the tutoring center you work with currently and have worked with?
Participant #5 3:49
The current name, I guess, is still the Academic Support Center. It is actually now part of a larger office called the Office of Student Success and Retention, so it's not an independent office, but it is still named the Academic Support Center. Prior to this, it was still the Academic Support Center as a stand-alone office. And then when I started, which was a little over 18 years ago, it was the Student Success Center, which it was for, gosh, I can't remember now, maybe at least like 1, 2, or 3 years. And then when we moved from the old location in Langdale Hall to the library, we took the opportunity at that time to update the name and kind of catch up to current ideas as to what the tutoring center should look like. That's when it became the Academic Support Center.
Anna E. Cooper 4:41
OK. Thank you so much for your response. OK, #2. How many years, if you can recall, did you work for each?
Participant #5 4:52
Like I said, I'm kind of—it's a little vague—but I started working here in 2006 again in August of 2006, and I was hired directly to work for the Student Success Center, and we maintained that name, I think.
Anna E. Cooper 5:00
OK.
Participant #5 5:09
Until about 2015 or 2016. So that would be—what would that be?
Anna E. Cooper 5:17
Alright, I was about to say I'm bad at math, but I can look it up.
Participant #5 5:20
Yeah, I think it would.
Anna E. Cooper 5:21
You said "2015 to"?
Participant #5 5:23
In 2016, I started—so I guess for about 15 or 16 years it was the Student Success Center, and then we moved over here. And no, actually, maybe it was a little—it might be 2018. So, it's about 12 years. I'm sorry. It was about 12 years.
Anna E. Cooper 5:36
OK.
Participant #5 5:37
I think that we were the Student Success Center, and then we moved over here, and for the last, say, six to seven years, 6 1/2 years, it's been the Academic Support Center.
Anna E. Cooper 5:47
OK.
Participant #5 5:47
I might be a little wrong on that; my recollections are a little foggy at this point.
Anna E. Cooper 5:52
No, you are totally fine. So, #3, what is your current job position and positions you have had?

Participant #5 5:55
Yeah. So, my current position is now called coordinator of tutoring. My prior position was the assistant director of the Academic Support Center, and then prior to that I was actually kind of called the tutor coordinator, sort of going back to the same thing for the Academic Support Center. That was my internal name. I was hired originally. Back when the Student Success Center was first founded and when it was first created as a concept. And [the ASC director] was hired to run the new center.
And she hired me as an advisor, so my title was actually academic services specialist or something like that.
And so, my main role at that time was to provide advising, although I did not have any kind of advising responsibilities given to me.
Anna E. Cooper 6:47
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 6:55
So we had to kind of create that. So, in the first couple of years, I was primarily working with 1st- and 2nd-year English students—in fact, 1st- and 2nd-year undergraduate English students—helping to advise them. And then, as they moved from their sophomore year into their junior year, I passed them off to the faculty where they were getting faculty advising from.
Anna E. Cooper 7:17
Oh, OK.
Participant #5 7:18
Then, as we started to morph away from focusing on advising and building the tutoring piece, we expanded into the supplemental instruction, and we added the Supplemental Instruction program about two years after the program started, after the center came into being. It sort of became more focused on that piece. And so, between myself and [the ASC director], we kind of split the responsibilities, and I started overseeing the supplemental instruction program under her guidance.
Anna E. Cooper 7:41
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 7:49
But then she kind of took the lead on the tutoring, and we just kind of helped each other as necessary in terms of supervision and management and ideas.
Anna E. Cooper 7:57
Yeah.
Participant #5 7:58
Yeah. So, we kind of eventually moved into being more of a full-fledged tutoring center as opposed to this sort of catch-all advising/tutoring. There was even a counseling piece that we were supposed to have at the very beginning.
Anna E. Cooper 8:11
There was.
Participant #5 8:12
Yeah. And that fell away fairly quickly. We were even going to—we had student employment with us for a while, kind of a separate arm. It was kind of a weird mix-up. I don't know.
Anna E. Cooper 8:23
Yeah.

Participant #5 8:23
Then it kind of formed itself over those first two to three years. And then it kind of gelled and became, you know, this more or less "Student Success Center" that focused on academic support. You know, one-on-one tutoring, mental instruction, workshops, different kinds of, you know, coaching-type things that we would do. The class visits, doing more of that and moving away from advising.
Anna E. Cooper 8:51
Oh well, that's a really good explanation.
Thank you so much for that.
Participant #5 8:54
Yeah. You're welcome.
Anna E. Cooper 8:56
So if you could estimate, how many years did you work in each position?
Participant #5 9:03
OK.
Anna E. Cooper 9:06
That would just be for each position.
Participant #5 9:08
OK.
Anna E. Cooper 9:08
How many years would you estimate?
Participant #5 9:11
OK. Let me think about that. So, I'm guessing I would say I was hired as an advisor, like — so that was an internal title. Like my actual title was academic support whatever—it was called "academic services specialist" or something.
Anna E. Cooper 9:19
Mm-hmm. Yes.
Participant #5 9:24
But my internal title was advisor, and that was probably for the first two to three years. So maybe from 2006 to around 2009, and then I moved, and I became —
Anna E. Cooper 9:31
Right.
Participant #5 9:37
Again, my internal title — my external title didn't change at that point. But then, as we moved away from the advising and we added the supplemental instruction, then we sort of—I sort of started using the internal title of tutor coordinator, and so that was from, say, 2009 until about 2014. That's about five years. And then, Sheri and I, you know, Doctor Fergus and I were discussing it and said, you know, the position has evolved, and it's grown, and our staff has grown, you know, the number of tutors and facilitators we had had grown a good bit, et cetera. So, we submitted a request to upgrade my position. So, in 2014 that was approved, and I became assistant director of the Academic Support Center. So that was 2014 to, I guess, 2023, when, as you know, the whole reorganization occurred in 2023.
Anna E. Cooper 10:27
Yes.
Participant #5 10:27
And [the ASC director] moved out, and the Academic Support Center was reformulated as an

arm of the Academy of the Office of Student Success and Retention, which is what we're in now. And my title changed again to Coordinator. And this is like an official change. So, it's "coordinator of tutoring." So, the only official changes were in 2014, when I became assistant director, and then in July 2023.

Anna E. Cooper 10:45
OK.

Participant #5 10:50
So, it's almost two years now that I've been in this coordinator of tutoring position.

Anna E. Cooper 10:57
Makes sense. Thank you for that breakdown.

Participant #5 11:00
Mm-hmm.

Anna E. Cooper 11:01
So for number 4: during the hiring process, how are writing tutors typically hired, and what qualifications should an ideal writing tutor have?

Participant #5 11:12
OK, that's a good question. You know, as you may recall, I wasn't as directly involved with that as Doctor Fergus was, being, obviously, the writing specialist.

Anna E. Cooper 11:21
Yes.

Participant #5 11:23
However, you know, we did have some basic requirements for all of our tutor applicants, and then we had some additional responsibilities or — not "responsibilities," but expectations in terms of job qualifications for the writing tutors. The main qualifications were that any student who wanted to become a

Anna E. Cooper 11:28
Yes.

Participant #5 11:41
— A tutor at the Academic Support Center, of course, had to be a student earning at least six credit hours so that, you know, they had maintained a status here. We did not really concern ourselves with what their major was.

Anna E. Cooper 11:53
Yes.

Participant #5 11:56
In fact, we purposely tried to remind people that writing tutors did not have to come from English majors because writing is something that we stressed is multidisciplinary across the curriculum and that writers can have skills, you know, no matter what their background is.

Anna E. Cooper 12:02
Yes.

Participant #5 12:11
And so we'd have biology majors and, you know, communications majors, all — a whole range of things. So, it was really important to us that we stressed that everybody was potentially eligible. We did require that the applicants have a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA, and that, again, is across the board for all. They did have to complete at least English 1101 and 1102. So, we did look for some basic English courses in their background and Bs or better in both.

Obviously, they had some additional writing courses above that. And then so we looked at all of those things.
Anna E. Cooper 12:46
Yes.
Participant #5 12:48
They had to have two letters of recommendation from somebody who could speak to the writing ability. So again, it could be an English professor.
Anna E. Cooper 12:54
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 12:55
It could be a history professor, you know. It could be a biology professor if they had written a number of academic-type writing things for that.
Anna E. Cooper 13:02
Yes.
Participant #5 13:02
And so we wanted that, and we put a lot of emphasis on what the faculty said because it was really important to us to see how they interacted with their faculty.
And to see if they've been in an opportunity to maybe work with some of the students in the classroom.
Anna E. Cooper 13:11
Yeah.
Participant #5 13:16
Maybe they took the lead. Maybe they created study group sessions. Maybe they reached out to their classmates to say, hey, you know, can I help you with this?
Anna E. Cooper 13:19
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 13:22
Or they just seemed engaged in the classroom so that they would be engaged with our students if they were working with them. But the biggest thing we looked at—yeah, the biggest thing we looked for was that they had to have a required writing sample—it had to be an academic writing sample.
Anna E. Cooper 13:29
Yeah.
Participant #5 13:36
We generally asked for about a 5- to 10-page paper. We wanted it to be closer to five because we have to read them. So, we didn't want them too long.
Anna E. Cooper 13:43
Yeah.
Participant #5 13:45
Yeah. And we wanted them to be academic, something that they had actually submitted for a class here.
Anna E. Cooper 13:50
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 13:51
Something showing their writing. So, you know, [the ASC director] generally would review

those to see, you know, do they seem to have the mechanics, you know, as well as sort of the larger, the higher skills in terms of creating a piece of work that makes sense.
Anna E. Cooper 14:03
Yes.
Participant #5 14:07
And so yeah, that was really important. And then, you know, that would help us at least to know, does this person understand the structure of the writing process? And then we interviewed them, and we would ask them questions related to that to see how well they could explain that to us, as their interviewees, and that would help us to get a sense of: Is this somebody who has the ability to impart that knowledge or to work with other people to help them become more knowledgeable? So, it's not just that they have to have the content knowledge and the ability. Could they work with other people to help them move along that trajectory? That was really important to us to make sure that they had that skill set, so it's not everybody who's really good at something who's really good at helping other people with that something, you know; it's not always the case.
Anna E. Cooper 14:53
Yeah, that's true.
Participant #5 14:54
It's not always the same skill, so I think that was a big thing. And then once they were hired, if we decided, yes, this person definitely looked like they were somebody who we wanted, we hired them, they accepted it, and they started working with us. In addition to regular training, [the ASC director] met with them. I think it was weekly, right, when you guys met? I think you met once a week, and she provided some additional training because, again, writing is such a unique skill, and the process itself is — so there are so many pieces involved and complexities and things like that.
Anna E. Cooper 15:12
Yes, yes. Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 15:26
Really to kind of keep our tutors always fresh, always kind of on the cusp of what's going on in the writing world. You would meet with them regularly to provide that, you know, training and that conversation and that strategy. And things like that. And I think that was really important because, again, writing is — it's unique in some ways in comparison to other subject areas in terms of how things are done. So, so —
Anna E. Cooper 15:52
Yeah.
Participant #5 15:55
We had a lot of things that were sort of general requirements, and then we had those special requirements that go above and beyond for the writing.
Anna E. Cooper 16:04
Yeah, that makes sense. Thank you for that. So, thinking about the ASC, what tutoring disciplines does this tutoring center support?
Participant #5 16:17
Well, that's changed a lot over the years, and it's kind of fluid. I guess we always had —
Anna E. Cooper 16:21
Mm-hmm.

Participant #5 16:22
Yeah, you know, it sort of depended on the given, you know, year and semester and sometimes just interest levels from people who applied and maybe from faculty that were asking. But as a general rule, the overall center when we started, you know, the idea again behind the initial Student Success Center, which became the Academic Support Center, was to try to centralize the tutoring that existed. So, there were apparently, and I don't know this for certain because I wasn't here yet, but my understanding was there were little pockets of tutoring that were going on.
Anna E. Cooper 16:49
Yeah.
Participant #5 16:52
So, there was the writing center that I think [the ASC director] at that time was the director of, or the coordinator of — there was a math lab, which was, you know, housed in the math department, and they did some sort of tutoring, some sort of support there.
Anna E. Cooper 17:02
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 17:05
From what I understand, that was basically it. So, you have math in one place, you have writing in another place, and there really wasn't much support for some of the other subject areas, and I think there was a desire to bring those together, as well as to maybe expand out those offerings beyond just the two basics. So of course, you know math and writing were always our two most popular subjects throughout the history of whatever iteration we had. Those were probably the two most common requests, but we expanded out to things like foreign languages. So Spanish, French, and German. We even did Russian for a while. Again, other than Spanish, the other languages kind of came and went a little bit because we didn't always get a lot of —
Anna E. Cooper 17:47
Yeah.
Participant #5 17:49
— Request for them. And so sometimes we're like, you know, we've been hiring somebody, and we haven't had a lot of usage and whatever. So, then we might not for a while, and then we get a request. So that was something we also expanded out to the natural sciences. So, we definitely always tried to have things like biology and chemistry, particularly those two. If we were able to, we would always try to have some astronomy and physics as well.
Anna E. Cooper 18:15
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 18:15
So that was a big expansion, and then, humanities, not so much. We didn't necessarily focus on the humanities as much as, like, communications and things. You know, a lot of those students, if they needed help, it was with the writing process.
Anna E. Cooper 18:24
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 18:29
So we would provide that for our writing tutors, but we didn't necessarily provide content-specific things.
Anna E. Cooper 18:32
Yeah.

Participant #5 18:35
The social sciences are kind of the same. You know, we were. It was kind of—it kind of went back and forth. Some years we might have history tutors, and other years we might have political science tutors. It sort of just depended on availability.
Anna E. Cooper 18:49
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 18:53
And budget, to some degree.
Anna E. Cooper 18:55
Yeah.
Participant #5 18:57
Yeah, but the ones that we always tried to have, we always had a, you know, cohort of writing tutors. We always had to have a cohort of math tutors. We always tried to have a few biology tutors and chemistry tutors and at least a couple of Spanish tutors. Those were our top five subjects pretty much consistently over the last, say, 18-19 years. You know, those are the ones that we had and then a lot of those other subjects.
Anna E. Cooper 19:16
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 19:20
If we had demand for them, maybe it wasn't on the level that we had for, say, writing or math. That's where we might look at instead of a tutor, hiring supplemental instruction to lead or facilitate or amend them directly into the classroom.
Anna E. Cooper 19:30
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 19:34
That's what we did with, like, the geosciences. So, you know, the geography classes we often — because they were all in one class anyway, like that intranet geography class, pretty much they all took the same lecture even though they might have four or five separate labs. So, we can capture the entire group by having one person go to their lecture, and so rather than have them over here, we have them directly. So, for those subjects we didn't necessarily want to offer traditional tutoring where they came to us, we would offer the supplemental, and we went to them.
Anna E. Cooper 20:05
Mm-hmm. That makes sense, and you kind of already went into this follow-up question for #5, which is, have these services shifted over time? Because you said math and English were kind of the popular ones at the beginning, and then you all kind of added on.
Participant #5 20:16
OK. So, it definitely had shifted. You know, all the structure of the office of the department has shifted a lot over the years, shifted up, and shifted back. So, you know, like I said, when we first started, like once we kind of started to establish ourselves as primarily a tutoring center and moved away from, like, the advisor and some of the other pieces, we were only doing one-on-one tutoring. So, for those first couple of years, we did not. We had the advising, and we had the one-on-one tutor. We had graduate students that actually did provide some advising throughout campus, and then I did some advising. Like I said with the English department, and then we had a small cohort.

Anna E. Cooper 21:01
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 21:07
We probably had 11-50 students that were mostly working in those high-traffic subject areas. You know, the natural sciences, math, writing, Spanish, whatever.
Anna E. Cooper 21:13
Yeah.
Participant #5 21:17
And then, as I said, around 2008, I learned about the supplemental instruction concept. And I was like, oh, that sounds like something we may want to investigate. And the University of Missouri in Kansas City is sort of the mothership, if you will, of supplemental instruction.
Anna E. Cooper 21:31
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 21:37
They, yeah, they designed it. They created it, and they housed the International Center for Supplemental Instruction. And they do trainings and all kinds of great things. So [the ASC director] and I agreed that it would be worthwhile for me to fly to Kansas City, so I did. And I went to, like, a three- or four-day training, yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 21:54
Oh wow.
Participant #5 21:56
It was fun. It was really interesting. I learned all about how to create a supplemental instruction program and how to manage it and how to hire. So, we started that, and we started with a small program with like seven or eight people, and it kind of stayed at that level and then probably grew a little bit a few years later. And at some point, I'm thinking again, about 2015 or 2016 —
Anna E. Cooper 22:04
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 22:19
The VP that we reported to at that time had put in a grant request to the University System of Georgia. For about 1/4 of $1,000,000 to expand supplemental instruction, the grant was accepted. So that money came to us. And so, we were able to then really expand out the whole program. So, we ended up hiring like 40 to 50 supplemental instruction leaders, and I think we also expanded. So, at that point, at our max, we probably had about 40 tutors and 40 supplemental instruction leaders. So, we had about 80 students providing some type of academic outreach support to students in those two big areas. So that was the biggest, you know, it really got, and then it kind of shrunk back a little bit after that, and now, you know, currently the tutoring is actually not directly housed under me. The tutoring is now done. As you probably know, every —
Anna E. Cooper 23:06
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 23:21
It's done in partnership with a company called Knack. So, Knack actually now hires VSU students and manages them and pays them to provide one-on-one training to other VSU students. And I'm kind of their point person. So, if students have questions or whatever, I'm kind of the on-site person.

Anna E. Cooper 23:35
OK.
Participant #5 23:38
But the management of the program is done through Knack and the paying of the students and things like that. So, the tutoring part is actually no longer directly under me right now. So basically, other than helping with that, the main part of the ASC now is the supplemental instruction facilitator program. We currently have about fourteen of those, and we're hoping to expand, maybe because it looks like we may have a little extra budget, you know, coming forward.
Anna E. Cooper 24:02
Yeah.
Participant #5 24:05
So maybe expand back up to 20 or something.
Anna E. Cooper 24:07
Yeah, that's good. OK. Thank you for that detailed-like explanation of shifting services. OK, so—
Participant #5 24:18
Yeah, it's just a lot of —
Anna E. Cooper 24:20
Yeah. No, those are a lot of changes. It's good to, like, have your answer for that.
Participant #5 24:26
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 24:26
So moving on to number six, how do students provide writing tutoring services?
Participant #5 24:35
Currently you're talking about current, OK?
Anna E. Cooper 24:36
Yes.
Participant #5 24:38
So again, because we no longer oversee direct since I no longer hire or manage or whatever, the one-on-one tutors and Knack do not provide generalized tutoring.
So, one of the issues we had with going to Knack was that Knack only does everything by course, right? So, you have a specific course, you request tutoring for that course, and if a tutor has that course on their list, they match up with you. So, if you want to do something like general writing, maybe you just have questions about something, and it's not—well, of course it's related to a course, but you just want maybe help with the writing process. Knack doesn't have a way to offer that, and I didn't have anybody that I was hiring myself. So, over the last few years we've worked closely with the English department, particularly Doctor Greenfield, who I guess is the graduate coordinator—
Anna E. Cooper 25:28
Yes.
Participant #5 25:28
—To have whatever cohort of graduate students she has in the master's program. Most of them, I believe, work 19 hours a week, which is the standard contract, but they don't necessarily need to be in the English department the full 19 hours.

Anna E. Cooper 25:39
Yes.
Participant #5 25:43
So, she has graciously offered to allow them to spend some of their week, their hours each week, with me to provide the one-on-one tutoring. And so that's been great. So, we had to create a system, because of course we didn't have a way for them to create — like we no longer were using our old scheduling system, and I don't have access to that in that same way.
Anna E. Cooper 26:01
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 26:03
So we created a scheduling system. We have to create a way for them to create a reflection form or client report form. So, it took a while to do that, but that's what we've been doing.
Anna E. Cooper 26:10
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 26:12
So now when students are interested in getting just general writing help, they contact our office either by e-mail or by telephone. And we schedule an appointment with one of the English graduate writing tutors. And we use the Microsoft Bookings calendar to do that. You know, the tutor and the student both got a copy of that e-mail of that calendar invitation. Hopefully everything goes well, and then our proof that — the evidence that it's been a completed appointment—is when the tutor goes back into the Microsoft form and fills out the reflection form to say, Hey, this is what happened, or they say the person never showed up, and we know.
Anna E. Cooper 26:54
Yes.
Participant #5 26:55
So, it is quite different from what it used to be. Actually, the writing tutor process is probably closer to what our old system was in terms of scheduling appointments compared to what we do now with the other subjects.
Anna E. Cooper 27:05
Mm-hmm. OK. Yeah, that makes sense. OK, so #7, what steps does the ASC take to advertise writing tutoring services for students?
Participant #5 27:24
So let me think. So, we've done blast emails to the listservs, you know, in general, probably not specifically on writing, but just in general that, you know, we have various tutoring services available. Some are through Knack, and some are through us. That kind of thing. There are sections on the ASC webpage, so one of the things I had to do at the start of last semester was do a lot of updates to the ASC website because that's when all these changes occurred and Knack started in the fall of 2024. So, I have to make sure that I have the Knack stuff put on the other subject areas and then to make sure that people, if they went on our website, could understand that other than, you know, every other subject, if you wanted help for any subject other than—
Anna E. Cooper 27:54
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 28:07
— Then, for writing, you go to Knack. But writing — I have a separate page on the website that shows this is how you — this is what we do for writing tutoring, and this is how you contact us if you want to make an appointment.

Anna E. Cooper 28:13
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 28:19
So that's right on our website. I probably need to do a little more advertising. Now that you mentioned it, it's probably — I might have to do a blast email to just remind people that writing tutoring is done in-house.
Anna E. Cooper 28:29
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 28:31
So I appreciate you bringing that up because I might make a note to do that. So those are the main things. We don't—we haven't done like Flyers, of course. You know, we work with the faculty, particularly in the English department. Again, not that writing is English, but a lot of the students do come to us through the English department, so I try to have them talk it up. You know, of course we have — we ask people to put information in their syllabi about the services that they provide. So, like a little blurb to say, you know, these services are available through the ASC. This is how you contact us for this or this or this service.
Anna E. Cooper 28:57
Yes.
Participant #5 29:06
So things like that, but I probably do need to do a little more advertising this semester because I haven't done too much in terms of the writing piece.
Anna E. Cooper 29:15
Yes. So, for the last opening question #8, how does writing tutoring contribute to VSU student success in your opinion?
Participant #5 29:24
That's a really good question. Well, I think you know tutoring in general just strengthens everybody's confidence level. I think a lot of it has to do with confidence more than content because a lot of times students really have the ability to do the things they do and have the knowledge base, you know, and things like that.
Anna E. Cooper 29:41
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 29:50
They just don't have the confidence, and maybe they don't have the organizational skills to kind of see the big picture and how the different pieces all come together.
Anna E. Cooper 29:50
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #5 29:59
So I think tutoring in general can help both the tutee primarily and, to a secondary degree, the tutor to strengthen that connection, become more comfortable with their own knowledge, and be able to, you know, step out and say, yes, I can actually do this; I'm not perfect.
Anna E. Cooper 30:08
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 30:15
But I do have the ability, and I can grow to, rather than just say, "This is just something I'm going to shut down with. I don't— I can never do this, and I will never do it." They move to another growth mindset of "I may not be where I want to be yet, but I can get there. I'm moving

there." I think writing is really important because it is so integral to everything we do. I mean, I don't think people really necessarily think about writing that way, but writing is communication, and we communicate all the time. And I think if we become comfortable in our writing skills and competent, we become better communicators on so many levels, not just from writing. But I think in verbal communications and our nonverbal everything— we become more comfortable as communicators. So, to me, I think in some ways, writing is one of the most important skills because it really is the most multidisciplinary. And so, it helps you in everything you do. It helps you just become more comfortable as someone who communicates, and no matter what you do, it doesn't have to be —

Anna E. Cooper 31:15
Yes.

Participant #5 31:25
— I'm not even talking about work, like in life. We do this, and I think that sometimes it seems like, "Oh, I'm, you know, I don't write for my job. I don't do a lot of writing." Well, that may be true. But you communicate, and you have to think about —

Anna E. Cooper 31:38
Yes.

Participant #5 31:39
You want language to be your ally, not your enemy, right? And if you become good at it, you know, if you're somebody who's strong in the language, you can, you know, you can use it to your advantage, whether it's written language or spoken; they go hand in hand. So, I just think that it's super important that people feel confident in their ability to use language, verbally and on paper and in other ways, and writing tutorials is a path to that.

Anna E. Cooper 31:59
Yes. Those are such great points. Thanks for those responses. OK, so that concludes the opening question.

Participant #5 32:13
OK.

Anna E. Cooper 32:15
So we're going to move on to some more direct questions about tutoring.

Participant #5 32:19
Okey dokey.

Anna E. Cooper 32:22
If you need me to repeat any of the questions at any time, feel free to tell me, and I'll repeat it for you.

Participant #5 32:30
Sounds good.

Anna E. Cooper 32:31
OK, so for #1: from an institutional perspective, what are the main goals of the tutoring center, and how did these goals align with the day-to-day tutoring operations and services provided to students?

Participant #5 32:47
So can you just repeat?

Anna E. Cooper 32:54
So from an institutional perspective, what are the main goals of the ASC?

Participant #5 33:01
OK, perfect.
Anna E. Cooper 33:01
How do these goals align with day-to-day tutoring, operations, and services provided to students?
Participant #5 33:07
Gotcha. OK, so I think the overall goals are to improve student success, right, to improve academics, and to provide a path to academic success. I should say we can never — we can't guarantee anybody's success, but we are a conduit to allow students to move toward academic success and competence. Our main goal is to provide that —
Anna E. Cooper 33:28
Yes.
Participant #5 33:32
— Provide paths and opportunities for students to become more academically confident, stronger, and so forth. So, we do that through, you know, providing. Like I said, through the tutoring, through the workshops that we used to provide, and through the supplemental instruction that we provide, we try to give students a variety of tools and opportunities and just different ways because not everybody responds to everything the same way. So, we try to offer our service—we try historically to offer services in a variety of formats to find that even if some students might prefer the one-on-one. You know, some people need the soft skills. Some people just need the group thing. So, we try to provide it in different ways to allow students to become again more confident in their academics and more competent to hopefully, of course, you know, from a more "check the box" kind of thing.
Anna E. Cooper 34:14
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 34:27
Hopefully that will improve their grades, right, in the courses in which they're getting tutoring.
Anna E. Cooper 34:30
Yeah.
Participant #5 34:32
The grade itself is probably not our goal. Obviously, you know that. Hopefully the grade reflects increased confidence and increased understanding and knowledge.
So really, our goal is to increase our understanding of knowledge, which hopefully then is reflected in a better brain. And so, and that of course is a goal of the university. We want higher retention rates. We want our students to feel that they understand the material that they're learning to get good grades, to progress from first year to second year, third year, et cetera, and to graduate to be able to do things beyond.
Anna E. Cooper 35:05
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 35:08
Whether that means going to graduate school or getting into the workforce. But they want—we want them to be able to have those skills and to have the competitiveness with the grades and things to be able to do that. So, I think the institution obviously wants people to be successful, to graduate, and to move on, and tutoring helps to support that larger institutional goal by providing that confidence.

Anna E. Cooper 35:37
That's a great response, OK. So, moving to #2, can you explain your main responsibilities and how you contribute to the ASC? Please include any additional roles you have that further support the program.
Participant #5 35:52
OK, yeah. So right now, my role is — I oversee the — as the ASC arm of the OSSR, of the Office of Student Success.
Anna E. Cooper 36:00
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 36:02
So my main responsibilities are, you know, coordinating—so on the one-on-one tutoring side, it's coordinating with Knack to make sure that we have enough, that we're recruiting students to become tutors, that we're making sure that we're vetting those students correctly to make sure that they have the necessary backgrounds and things like that, making sure that they get through the process to be, you know, to have a profile available and visible on that, to encourage students to — then students who are not interested in becoming a tutor, but making sure that they understand where the tutoring, where the portal is, how they get to know —
Anna E. Cooper 36:29
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 36:41
— How can they set up appointments? How do they schedule that? You know what kinds of things, and if they have problems on either side, they can come to me, and I can either — if I can troubleshoot it from my end, I do that; if not, then I escalate it up to my colleague at Knack to say, "Hey, someone's not able to create a profile, or they can't seem to make an appointment, or they're trying to do their training for their tutoring, and they're getting stuck somewhere. What's going on?" So, we're trying to do that to make sure that we have a number of active tutors on the system and that we're offering tutoring across as many courses that seem to have demand for it as possible. So that's the next piece. I also, of course, work with the English department, as I mentioned, particularly [the Graduate Coordinator].
Anna E. Cooper 37:22
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 37:23
To make sure that the master's students in the English program are using some of their hours, it ranges between four and eight, depending on what semester the student is in. So, they give us up to four to eight hours a week where they can provide tutoring.
Anna E. Cooper 37:36
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 37:41
And for those that are new, and actually, as you recall, I've asked you to help train— [the ASC director] stepped out of that role.
Anna E. Cooper 37:45
Yeah.
Participant #5 37:47
So that's been very helpful. Thank you for that, because I'm not a writing expert.
Anna E. Cooper 37:50
Yes.

Participant #5 37:51
So making sure that they're trained in understanding what, you know, what their role is and what strategies they need. And you know what tools they need in order to be successful. And again, sort of managing them, making sure that they give me their schedule, that their schedule is placed into our system, and that it's available to students and students to make appointments. And then, as they complete those appointments, the tutors are making sure that they do their reflection form. So, we have some data showing, you know, how things have gone and where there may be needs for additional training or changes or whatever. So, I, you know, I work with, I think there are six of you all in the program at the moment, two of you — of course yourself and [another English graduate tutor] work primarily with the Center for International Programs.
Anna E. Cooper 38:25
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 38:34
So you're not over here so much. But again, just making sure that we're working with them to coordinate their needs, you know, helping provide a service to fill the need that [the CIP director] has and her students have.
So that's the writing tutors, and then, basically, the part that I mostly oversee now would be the supplemental instruction facilitator. So, you know, I've always, you know, been looking at where the highest needs are. You know, we have, like I said, right now, about 14 to 15 — a budget for that.
Anna E. Cooper 39:00
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 39:04
So what are those subjects? Those courses that seem to have the highest need. And we look at that by asking, what's the DFW rate? Do they have, like, a lot of students struggling to pass that class or stay in that class? Is it a larger class?
You know, what's the size of the class? Is it 100 students?
Anna E. Cooper 39:19
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 39:21
Or is it just 20? You know, so we look at that to see what's the bang for our buck. How many students can we potentially impact if we're supporting that class? So, we look at that and try to come up with, like, a list of the classes that seem to have the highest need in terms of support, and then we make sure that those departments, that the faculty are teaching them, and the department heads who oversee them are on board and are interested in having this kind of support. So of course, we talk to the faculty and explain to them what the role of a facilitator is, what the benefits are, and what expectations are placed on the faculty, and we try to minimize that.
But there are some, of course — they do have to have some expectation of being willing and able to do that.
Anna E. Cooper 40:03
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 40:05
We get all that together, and then, you know, we try to find the best-qualified candidates, much like we do with the tutors, and we look at, you know, overall grade point average, references

from faculty, grades in the individual courses, and interviews to listen to: Do they seem to have the empathy, the skills, and the toolbox that are necessary?
Anna E. Cooper 40:22
OK.
Participant #5 40:25
Are they willing to commit to a very structured position? Because the supplemental instruction program is much more structured than the tutoring program in terms of how they align their hours and things like that, and so then we hire them, I train them, you know, once they get hired. Hopefully they go through the process.
We try to train them, and then I manage them throughout the semester. Of course, I meet with them regularly. There's some ongoing training and some observations, so that's a big part of what I do as well. As I said, we're mainly hoping to expand that, you know, possibly for, I guess, in the fall.
Anna E. Cooper 40:55
Good for you.
Participant #5 41:00
Now, if there's some additional funding, we may, you know, go to 17 or 18 or 20, things like that. So, I guess that's, you know, kind of where I am now. You know, over the years, I did that now mostly by myself or with a graduate assistant in previous years.
Anna E. Cooper 41:14
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 41:17
The reorganization two years ago, of course, [the ASC director] and I, you know, she was the director, but we kind of co-managed a lot of it. So, a lot of things like hiring, training, and just general management, we did together, you know; we would interview the students together, we would recruit them.
Anna E. Cooper 41:27
OK. Yes.
Participant #5 41:38
You know, I often did sort of the recruiting piece, but we would collaborate on how we're going to recruit. How are we going to train them? How are we going to hire and train them and manage them and things like that?
Anna E. Cooper 41:48
Yes.
Participant #5 41:51
So, you know, it's gone from a two- to three-person kind of, you know, operation down to more of a one-person, 1 1/2. You have the graduate assistant, which is — My current grad assistant has been a godsend, so —
Anna E. Cooper 42:05
And it's really good.
Participant #5 42:07
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 42:08
Well, thank you so much for that detailed response about your duties.
Participant #5 42:12
Mm-hmm.

Anna E. Cooper 42:13
You're just a great person to interview for this anyway, so moving on to the, like, physical aspect of the ASC.
Participant #5 42:16
Thank you.
Anna E. Cooper 42:23
So how is the physical tutoring environment? So, thinking about, like, the building, how everything is kind of set up?
Participant #5 42:23
OK. OK.
Anna E. Cooper 42:31
How does it promote efficiency and productivity for writing tutors and tutees who attend tutoring sessions?
Participant #5 42:38
That's an interesting question because, to be honest, I don't think the current environment, physical or otherwise, is as efficient as it used to be. I think, as you may know, like my office and [the ASC director]'s offices used to be across, like caddy-corner to where I'm currently located in the main library, and I will say, you know, many years ago, we were in Langdale Hall.
Anna E. Cooper 43:00
Yes.
Participant #5 43:05
We were off the beaten path. We were in a residence hall that wasn't particularly attractive. It was kind of falling down around our ears. It wasn't the best place for tutoring when we moved to the library. That was a major improvement in terms of location. We were in the center of campus. It was a brand-new center. They had totally redesigned it. So, it's very welcoming. Of course, it's the academic, one of the main academic general buildings. I mean, when you think library, you think, I'm going to study, I'm going to do research, I'm going to, you know, look —
Anna E. Cooper 43:22
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #5 43:36
For things or whatever. So, it sort of created that, that sense of I'm here, I'm here to study. So, it was great for the tutoring. It was great because it was large, and so the tutors could also kind of interact with each other if they had questions or assistance or, you know, the students —
Anna E. Cooper 43:51
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 43:55
It's also been good. I will say one of the things that's nice about the library is students could be getting tutored, or they could be having a study session, or they could be sitting by themselves. Nobody really knows because it's a more open space, and it's a space that's used by everybody. For so many different things, I think, yeah — In Langdale Hall, when we were there, you know, not that I don't —
Anna E. Cooper 44:09
Yeah.
Participant #5 44:15
— I don't think it was that big of a deal, but sometimes, you know, there are some students who

don't necessarily want people to know they're going to get tutoring or that they're walking into a tutoring center because they're embarrassed or they're uncomfortable or whatever.
Anna E. Cooper 44:22
Hmm. Yeah.
Participant #5 44:27
When they came into our old center in Langdale Hall, it was pretty obvious when they would walk in because that was the only reason anybody would go in there was for tutoring.
Anna E. Cooper 44:34
Yeah.
Participant #5 44:35
So it was a little more ominous. And again, it was kind of off the beaten path, so I think that made it a little more awkward. So, this space has certainly been better in terms of encouraging that. When the tutors were in-house people that [the ASC director] and I oversaw, I think the environment was very genial. It was very collaborative. It was very collegial. I don't see that as much now. The writing tutors, I think, are still there, and they do. Some of their — they do most of their appointments out there. But seven or eight of them. They're very different schedules, so there isn't as much collegiality because, more often than not, when the writing tutors are there, they're there by themselves.
Anna E. Cooper 45:10
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 45:13
There's only, like, [one graduate writing tutor] who might be there right now, and [another graduate writing tutor] comes a little later in the day.
Anna E. Cooper 45:16
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 45:18
They're not necessarily going to interact with her. They're not there at the same time. With [two graduate writing tutors], the same thing.
Anna E. Cooper 45:22
Yeah.
Participant #5 45:23
And so I don't think we have as much of that. Plus, like, I don't have—you know my office, the way it's set up, I don't have the natural ability to—just, it's not as open, so I don't.
Anna E. Cooper 45:35
Yeah.
Participant #5 45:35
I don't feel as interactive, and then the Knack tutors, of course, sometimes can go there as well. We encourage them to do a face-to-face appointment, and we ask them to do it here in the ASC. There's no way for me to enforce that. I'm sure most of them do; a lot of them end up doing online appointments, so they probably don't have to be there. I don't know who they are.
Anna E. Cooper 45:55
Yeah.
Participant #5 45:56
I actually don't know who they are. So even if they're having their student appointment, I really don't know what they're doing because I don't know who they are. You know, so I can't necessarily tell —

Anna E. Cooper 46:04
Yeah.
Participant #5 46:05
— Oh, that's the tutor. That's the tutor. When you guys were there— "Oh, there's Anna working. Clearly, she's having a tutoring appointment. All right, look it up on the schedule."
Anna E. Cooper 46:10
Yeah.
Participant #5 46:13
"Oh, I haven't had a tutoring appointment." I don't have that, so I think we've lost some of that. I think we're trying to get some of that. One of the suggestions Karen had, which we're looking into, is perhaps hiring some in-house tutors again, but not like the way you all did it where you had 10 hours a week where you had scheduled appointments, but —
Anna E. Cooper 46:18
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 46:33
Maybe doing them, having a few hours a week where they're just available at a table, and it would be kind of a drop-in. Sort of like what they're doing over in CIP, what you and Tyler are doing over there.
Anna E. Cooper 46:39
Oh yeah, yeah. Yes.
Participant #5 46:42
So they can be available a few hours a week. Students can come in. They drop in their question, and then you kind of back-end an appointment into the system, saying, "I met with such and such student between this time and this time. This is the class we were working on for the project, and this is how things went." You know, so we're looking.
Anna E. Cooper 46:58
Yeah, I think that on-demand would be helpful.
Participant #5 47:01
Yeah. So, I think it would create a little more activity in here again because, as you might recall, you know when you all were working over here and things were the old way, it was a fairly active space.
Anna E. Cooper 47:11
It was.
Participant #5 47:13
And it felt like people were doing stuff, and it kind of created some energy, and people felt like, "Oh, you know, this is a good place." Like, "I'm going to study here because these people seem to be doing that. There seems to be this intellectual energy going on, so this is a good place if I want to do this."
Anna E. Cooper 47:29
Yeah.
Participant #5 47:29
I think I still have some of that, but it's not as much. It's definitely not as—I'd like to try to see some of that come back.
Anna E. Cooper 47:32
Yeah, that's a good point. So, you probably answered some of this question already, but this follows up with the physical tutoring environment.

Participant #5 47:43
OK.
Anna E. Cooper 47:46
So, have there been any major changes in the tutoring center's environment and structure in terms of the building itself, services provided, and levels of student engagement?
Participant #5 47:46
OK. You're talking from the very start to now?
Anna E. Cooper 48:02
Yes. So, thinking about your time working, you talked about the Student Success Center and now working at the ASC.
Participant #5 48:07
Right. OK.
Anna E. Cooper 48:10
So what are the major changes in the environment and structure in terms of the building, the services provided, and the levels of engagement?
Participant #5 48:14
OK. So again, going back to the very beginning, like I said, after the first semester, we were actually located in the old President's House for a very brief while in the first semester. But once the space in Langdale had become available— they had been renovating it—in the spring of 2007, we moved into Langdale, and that's really when we started really ramping things up. So, they had a space in Langdale Hall, which had originally been part of the multipurpose room. They had had, like, an upstairs—there's an annex area, which I think they had, like, maybe a ping pong table and a pool table, and they moved some of that. They moved all of that out, and they created—they enclosed the space and created some offices and some common space and a little conference room. And then they opened the external door so that people can access it through the external side of the building. So, they didn't have to come through Langdale Hall and basically created what became the Student Success Center. So, starting in spring of 07, we were basically in this second-floor annex of Langdale Hall. So [the ASC director] had an office in one corner. I had an office kind of at the other end; our secretary sat at the main desk like we had. We had, like, a reception desk on the main floor on the upper floor. And then the tutoring kind of occurred—we had tables and chairs set up around the room and various formats, and we had some whiteboards and things. So, most of the one-on-one tutoring was going on in that fairly small space, and then we had the conference room, and when we started the supplemental instruction, we were able to do some of the supplemental instruction and the study group sessions in there, but eventually —
Anna E. Cooper 49:51
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 50:05
— We started encouraging them to move out of our building and try to get rooms in the buildings in which their classes were being held, so Bailey, or West, or Nevins, et cetera.
Anna E. Cooper 50:15
Yes.
Participant #5 50:16
Because our space was just really small, it was really small.
Anna E. Cooper 50:19
Mm-hmm.

Participant #5 50:20
And then a couple of years later, when they opened — you probably don't remember, but you know we had the old student union. When I started here, we had a different student union.
Anna E. Cooper 50:29
Wow.
Participant #5 50:30
And yeah, they knocked that building down a couple of years later and eventually built the one that we have now. So, they extended the bookstore. At that time, the bookstore was actually two floors.
Anna E. Cooper 50:35
OK.
Participant #5 50:42
So it was on the lower floor and the upper floor of the student union. So, it's quite long.
Anna E. Cooper 50:47
Oh, I remember that.
Participant #5 50:48
Yeah. And they moved the tech shop. If you remember, the tech shop had been a separate location. It was actually on the first floor of Langdale Hall, right below where the Student Success Center was. So, they moved the tech shop into this new version of the bookstore. So, they moved out of that space that was below us.
Anna E. Cooper 51:04
Yeah.
Participant #5 51:06
So they gave us that space. So now, they renovated the lower space, and [the ASC director] and I —
Anna E. Cooper 51:10
Oh.
Participant #5 51:14
— So, [the ASC director] and I stayed upstairs, and we created some offices and another little mini conference room downstairs and, again, some common areas.
Participant #5 51:23
So we were able to expand. We basically doubled our space. We had our own bathroom, and we had a kitchen area. It was really great. So that doubled our space, and it also allowed people to enter the Student Success Center through the first floor.
Anna E. Cooper 51:29
Oh wow.
Participant #5 51:37
They didn't always have to go upstairs because we were really not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act because we were forcing people to come upstairs in a way that —
Anna E. Cooper 51:47
Oh yeah.
Participant #5 51:48
Yeah, it was a nightmare because we had this chairlift that broke. It was embarrassing. Terrible.
Anna E. Cooper 51:53
Oh no.

Participant #5 51:55
So anyway, having that first-floor option at least gave access to students who had physical disabilities. Because at one point we ended up — we had a tutor who was wheelchair-bound. She was able to get upstairs, so it was great to have. By the time she had gotten hired, we had the downstairs space.
Anna E. Cooper 52:03
Yeah.
Participant #5 52:10
It was all to do with her tutoring downstairs and other people who felt comfortable; if they wanted to, they could move upstairs. And so, we were able to, you know, spread people out a little bit more and create a little less noise.
Anna E. Cooper 52:19
Yeah.
Participant #5 52:20
That was helpful. But again, it was still that issue of having to come to Langdale.
It's off the beaten path. It's a residence hall. Everybody knows you're going into the success center. So, we had —
Anna E. Cooper 52:33
Yeah.
Participant #5 52:34
— We had been agitating for years to move to the library, and really — I mean, people kind of agreed with us, but there was no money or there wasn't really anything that could help. You know, we couldn't do it for a while. And then eventually, when our new VP got hired and we moved into his division, he said, "Hey, this is something I'd like to see happen." So that's when they moved us into the library, and they totally renovated this space. So, this used to have shelves and books and the usual stuff, and they basically, you know, cleared it all out and created this collaborative space. They call it a "Learning Commons." They actually gave [the ASC director] and me the two offices across the hall. So, she had the one in the back, and I had the one in the front. We had a little space in front of that. [the ASC office manager] had an office then, over across from us, so that she had a space. So, she had a private office, not at a front desk. And then, you know, they created this really more mobile space where we didn't just have the normal tables and chairs. We had, you know, all kinds of pushy chairs plus hard chairs, regular tables, you know, benches, you know, the study rooms that had technology, and just —
Anna E. Cooper 53:37
Yeah.
Participant #5 53:43
— All the plug-in strips, all around the copy machine, all of this. So, we created a much better space. And so, I think, you know, students have always been engaged.
I do think when we moved here, we definitely saw probably an uptick overall in the level of engagement that students had with their tutors or with each other and the tutors with each other because the space was more comfortable.
Anna E. Cooper 53:58
Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 54:08
You know, and it would probably also encourage more students who maybe weren't getting

tutored to come to use the space because, again, you know, people didn't necessarily come to the old Student Success Center unless they needed tutoring help.
Anna E. Cooper 54:14
Yeah.
Participant #5 54:20
Whereas here it was more —
Anna E. Cooper 54:21
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 54:22
It's a common space. It's an open space. So, students were using it regardless of whether they came to us. It made it so much more challenging sometimes to know who our people were and what was happening, but that was something we had to overcome. And so, that's probably a challenge for us to try to engage more with the tutor.
Anna E. Cooper 54:35
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 54:40
So, we have to make maybe a little more of an effort—myself, [the ASC director], or [the ASC office manager]—to step out and walk around and talk to people.
Anna E. Cooper 54:45
Yeah.
Participant #5 54:47
I mean, our space was great, and we were there, but we had to make extra effort and just kind of be aware of what was going on. But I think in general we've always found, you know, after the first couple of years where, you know, it took a while for us to become part of the culture. You know, in that first year or so, a lot of people, a lot of the faculty, did not want to send their students.
Anna E. Cooper 55:02
Yeah.
Participant #5 55:06
The students weren't that comfortable with it, so they didn't know who we were. But eventually, people, you know, started to realize, "Hey, this center seems to be an ongoing concern. They seem to be doing a good job of managing it. They seem to be hiring students who are both knowledgeable and empathetic and, you know, have good interactive skills and collaborative skills." So little by little people started not only accepting us but really looking out, like saying, "Hey, you know, we really want to partner with you and get our students over there."
Anna E. Cooper 55:35
Yeah.
Participant #5 55:35
So that happened years ago, and it's probably gotten stronger over the years. Probably a little less so in the last two years because, again, you know things have changed.
Anna E. Cooper 55:46
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 55:46
My level of engagement with faculty is not as strong as it was two years ago, or five years ago, or ten years ago, but I think the students—I don't know. I think the writing — I don't really know the level of engagement in the last two years between students and tutors as much. My

impression is that everything is going well, but I don't have a good sense of how deeply engaged the students or the tutors are. I will say up until the time that we did the reorganization, I would say that there was a great sense —
Anna E. Cooper 56:11
Yeah.
Participant #5 56:17
— Of collaboration between people and engagement between people. Does that answer the question?
Anna E. Cooper 56:23
Yes, that was perfect. It's just really good to see, like the differences, especially between the Student Success Center location and the ASC. So that's really helpful.
Participant #5 56:33
Yeah, yeah, yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 56:35
So we're going to move on to the next question, which is basically focused on inclusivity in the ASC in the writing center.
Participant #5 56:44
OK.
Anna E. Cooper 56:45
So I'm going to state this question, but I'm going to say it twice so that you can get a good grasp of it because it's kind of long.
Participant #5 56:53
OK.
Anna E. Cooper 56:54
So how does the ASC navigate student sociocultural factors, welcoming tutees of various backgrounds and identities? Some examples are freshman students, graduate students, international students, and students with disabilities.
Participant #5 57:08
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 57:14
What programs or strategies are in place that promote inclusivity in the writing tutoring environment? So how does the ASC navigate student sociocultural factors, welcoming studies of various backgrounds and identities? Some examples are freshman students, graduate students, international students, and students with disabilities. What programs or strategies are in place that promote inclusivity in the writing tutoring environment?
Participant #5 57:45
OK, OK, cool. So, I don't know that we had any specific things that we did.
I think it happened naturally, a lot of it. I think in our overall hiring process, we always — you know, we opened our application process to all students, primarily to undergraduate students. We, you know, even back in the day, we had a limited amount of graduate student tutoring. And I'll touch on that in a second. The majority of our tutoring was undergraduates-to-undergraduates.
Anna E. Cooper 58:18
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 58:22
So I think, with [the ASC director] and me, we would kind of set up what we were looking for in

terms of tutors and what those minimum criteria were in terms of GPA and courses and references and things like that. And what kind of skill sets we were looking for. And I found, you know, this was not something we ever really made a point of, but it was interesting how, as we would hire people each semester and we would create a new cohort of tutors, writing tutors, et cetera, they would just sort of naturally diversify. So, we, our tutoring staff, really ran a gamut from, you know—racially, we had people from pretty much all races.

Anna E. Cooper 58:59
Yes.

Participant #5 59:10
So we had African American and white.

Anna E. Cooper 59:11
Yeah.

Participant #5 59:12
We had Hispanic. We had Asian. So that was kind of natural. We always had a really good split between those who identified as male and those who identified as female. We actually did have some that identified somewhere else on the gender spectrum, maybe they were genderfluid in some way, and we were very comfortable with that.

Anna E. Cooper 59:28
Yeah.

Participant #5 59:32
We had a number of students over the years who were transgender. A number of tutors who identified, you know, as trans in some way. We made it very clear that we were comfortable with that. I always use my pronouns in my signature line to make sure people know that that's important to me. We have a number of students who identified as gay or as bisexual as well as heterosexual, and again, we created an environment that allowed for that, I think. One of the things I think that was great in terms of international — you mentioned that we hired quite a few international students over the years as tutors, and I think it was great for them because they had very limited options in terms of working on campus, and many of them needed some money. They needed an income, but they couldn't work in the local community because that's not allowed on their visa. And so, working at the Student Success Center for the Academic Support Center, the pay was decent, the hours were fairly decent, the environment was good, and the work was challenging and interesting.

Anna E. Cooper 1:00:29
Mm-hmm.

Participant #5 1:00:35
So that was really helpful. So, I think when you have a diverse staff like that, that itself represents a cross-section of sociocultural backgrounds and people, it makes it more comfortable for other people, people who might be in those groups, who might identify with those groups or in those marginalized communities —

Anna E. Cooper 1:00:45
Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Participant #5 1:00:56
— To come into the center and say, "Hey, I see myself there. I see other people who seem to look like me or sound like me or think like me or feel like me. And so, I'm going to come in, and I'm going to work with them."

Anna E. Cooper 1:01:03
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:01:08
And so I think that was always really helpful, and, you know, there was never any judgment. People came in, and we just helped, you know.
Anna E. Cooper 1:01:16
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:01:17
Now I will say that most people that came in probably were first- and second-year students.
Anna E. Cooper 1:01:25
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:01:26
If they had any questions or concerns about what we did, we always made it very clear in all of our literature that, you know, we were open to anybody, anytime, anywhere. So, you can be a first-year, second-year, third-year, or fourth-year, right?
It didn't matter if you had questions and you needed help. Please come to us.
We can help you. You can be in your own major and have questions, right?
Anna E. Cooper 1:01:41
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:01:43
Just because you're a math major doesn't mean sometimes you don't struggle with the math class. And it could be an upper-level math that — maybe you can come to our tutor, and that happens to be one area where that tutor is stronger, and they can help you, and vice versa. Maybe down the line you help them with something else.
You know, so don't be embarrassed about struggling with subjects in your own area.
Anna E. Cooper 1:01:58
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:02:02
You could be a student who's truly struggling. Maybe you're barely keeping your head above water. Maybe you're even on probation. Obviously, we want to do what we can to help you, but maybe you're the person who has a D in a class, but with a little extra push or a little extra, whatever you can make that A, well, that's fine too.
And we always made that very clear. So, you didn't have to — just because you're not struggling or failing the class doesn't mean you can't get help.
Anna E. Cooper 1:02:22
Yes.
Participant #5 1:02:27
So you know, just because you're a good student, don't think you can't come to us, you know, again. We did always offer some graduate writing. We were limited in that, and that's historically been an issue that we don't really offer graduate-level content tutoring, but we did. We always tried to have a couple of graduate students even before the changeover. We would have a few that work for us. Or again, we would borrow them from the English department, and they would spend time with us, and they would provide writing tutoring to other graduate students. I believe on Knack, there may be some more graduates—like, you know, again, because they have more flexibility in what classes they can tutor.

Anna E. Cooper 1:03:05
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:03:05
They have to have the ability to put graduate-level courses on there, so I'm guessing that there may be some content-related tutoring that may occur. I don't think there's a huge amount of demand for those classes, but there may be some, so that may be one advantage to Knack, that they can offer tutoring in some content areas that we chose not to do, which would be like graduate stuff.
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:14
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #5 1:03:28
And then, of course, you know, we always had writing tutors that maybe had higher comfort levels with people who were perhaps international, whose first language was not English. So, we would often try to direct the students who maybe — where English was not the first language— to certain tutors who maybe had a certain level of comfort or knowledge or ability.
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:54
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:03:55
Sometimes we try to do that in terms of students with disabilities. We work very closely with the Access Office, so if they needed some additional tutoring, say, for example, sometimes for students who have certain kinds of psychological disabilities, maybe coming someplace like the Academic Support Center can be daunting.
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:13
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:04:17
So, we might send our tutor over to the Access Office, where they can set up a private room so they can have a quiet space and private space. So that they wouldn't have, like, a social anxiety issue.
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:27
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:04:28
Also, the tutors often would come to us and say, "Hey, we need somebody to do a reader for a student who has visual acuity issues." So, the tutors were able to do these other things for other departments, and that created some bonds with the students and allowed them to get out around the campus a little more so that students could see them in a more natural environment and say, OK, and again, hopefully —
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:51
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:04:53
Reduce that, quote-unquote, discomfort that a student might have with coming.
to us. So, I think overall we had students who worked for us with physical disabilities.
We had students who, you know, had disabling conditions that — maybe they had to be in a wheelchair or other things, but they were —
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:05
Mm-hmm.

Participant #5 1:05:12
— They were excellent tutors, and so we looked past that to, you know, "Do you have the content knowledge? Do you have the skill set?"
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:21
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:05:22
So I think by doing that, it leveled the playing field so well that we just naturally created an incredibly diverse population of tutors.
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:32
Yeah, that's a really good point. That was a great breakdown.
Participant #5 1:05:36
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:37
OK, so that was number 4, so #5: What major institutional changes have impacted the ASC's focus or ability to meet students? Have students' needs, like the tutees themselves, shifted or stayed the same? And how has the tutoring center made adjustments to support these needs?
Participant #5 1:05:56
I definitely think there's been institutional — I mean, there's been constant institutional change, and I think that's been an ongoing challenge. You know, we've had various presidents over the years. We have had various vice presidents over the years. We've moved from division to division to division. We've gone under different deans over the years, starting with the original dean who actually submitted the original proposal for us to create the center. Obviously again, the structure of the office has changed. In terms of the kinds of services, what services we provide, you know we did first-year programs for a while. We did advising for a while. We did student employment for a while. We were supposed to do counseling, which never happened. So, you know those kinds of things have created constant challenges. You know, in the more recent iteration of the last two years—you know, like [the ASC director] ended up going back to faculty. I became the coordinator, changed my title, and changed my pay structure. It changed my reporting structure and changed the way the ASC is, the hierarchy in which it is located. It's not a standalone, so I definitely think in some cases, those institutional changes have been — like when we changed to one VP some years ago. That was when we changed our name to ASC and moved to the library, and those are some positive changes, but I think there have been some that have been negatively impacting, and I think the more recent ones have certainly done that.
Anna E. Cooper 1:07:23
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:07:31
I definitely think institutional change here is—there's a lot of it, and it seems like it's a little bit impromptu and not thought out as well as it could be. And I think that creates challenges for all departments and ours. You know, it certainly has created challenges for us to be able to continue offering services to our students. I think that we've generally overcome them, and we've generally risen above them, but I think these last couple of years have been particularly challenging as well because again, the tutoring's being taken away, and I guess you could say that's kind of a response to some of the institutional changes.
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:04
Yeah.

Participant #5 1:08:11
Budgetary problems and issues have propped up in the last couple of years by moving the tutoring over to Knack and allowing them to manage it, and things have certainly lowered the budget that we spend. To do that with them is perhaps lower than what we would have spent had we been hiring those people ourselves. But I don't have as much control or as much input or as much say in what goes on. I worry sometimes about the quality. I don't think there's a problem, but it certainly has been a concern. Are the tutors actually as qualified and as good as they were? I don't really know because I don't know who they are, and I don't really know what they're saying.
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:47
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:08:48
They have these appointments, so I definitely think that's a challenge, and I'm not sure how to overcome that one because I really don't have any way to monitor them to the same degree that I would have, say, a couple of years ago.
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:57
Mm-hmm. So, the second part was, "Have the students that come in for tutoring help — have their writing needs shifted or stayed the same? And how has the ASC made adjustments to support these needs?"
Participant #5 1:09:17
I don't know. I do think, in general, students seem to have more talent in the last couple — I think academically, they're less prepared than they were five or 10-15 years ago.
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:23
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:09:30
They're less confident than they were five or 10-15 years ago. They're more — I don't want to say needy, but there is a greater need, and I think social anxiety has become a big problem.
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:37
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:09:45
COVID certainly has affected people in the world a lot. You know, there were several years where most of us were sitting behind a computer screen and not interacting directly with people.
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:48
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:09:54
A lot of the students in school now, you know, maybe didn't even have, like, a high school graduation.
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:55
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:10:03
They couldn't get together, so I think there are definitely some challenges there, and I think, you know, just trying to—I'm not really sure that we've made major changes. I think that, you know, just trying to meet students where they are all the time, that's always been our goal. It's never to try to meet them where we are, you know, like say where you, as a writing tutor, are—
Anna E. Cooper 1:10:22
Yeah.

Participant #5 1:10:27
You know, very competent, very knowledgeable, very — you know, understands the process pretty well and things like that. So, if you make the assumption that every student that comes to you has that same knowledge base, then you're doing a disservice to the students, and the first step in that is always to say, "What is it?"
Anna E. Cooper 1:10:40
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:10:43
"Where are you? What are your concerns?" Kind of feeling out, you know? And I don't think that ever has to change. I think that sometimes the place where those students are is perhaps further down than it used to be. So, there may be more challenges to the tutors to try to get them up.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:02
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:11:03
So it's probably putting more stress on the tutors, you know, because they're having to do a little extra work. I haven't heard of any of ours currently complaining of that, but I imagine there is some of it, and because they're such professionals, they don't necessarily complain. They —
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:12
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:11:20
— Just do what they can do and the best they can do. But I do think, I think basically you're always trying to meet people where they are with whatever skill level. They're trying to figure out where they are and then go back 1/2 a step.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:30
Yes.
Participant #5 1:11:34
And then bring them up. And I think that's what we try to do, whether it's tutoring, writing, or whatever.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:41
Yeah, that's a really good point. OK. So, the next question: what are the institutional policies or administrative duties that writing tutors are expected to follow and complete? How do these duties support the ASC's effectiveness?
Participant #5 1:11:59
OK. So, I guess the main thing is we try to encourage our writing tutors to get out in the field a little bit. So, they go and meet with the faculty and talk about the services, let — you know, the faculty in those particular writing-intensive classes. So, like some of the basic English and maybe some of the other classes where there may be intensive writing, like history or science.
Anna E. Cooper 1:12:13
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:12:26
Try to, you know, get out in some way, whether it's physically or—emails to those faculty or flyers that they can send out, you know, electronically to say, "Hey, you know, we have this service, we're available, we have writing tutoring on site with, you know, graduate writing to this or, you know, at least, you know, experts or, you know, moving to an expert in their field, and we can help." So, doing things like that, I think, is really important. Making sure that you

know courses. You know, having those appointments with the tutees and finding out what's going on. You know, what is it they're working on? What is the project? What is the paper or the writing assignment that they're working on? What materials do they have with them that the tutor can use to assist? You know, where are they getting stuck?
Anna E. Cooper 1:13:13
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:13:14
How can the tutor help make sure that the tutor is allowing the tutee to guide that session? I think that's really important —
Anna E. Cooper 1:13:22
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:13:23
— That you know, "Yes, I'm here to help you. But it's your work. So, I want to know from you what's going on. And I want you to develop the strategies and the steps that work for you to go from where you currently are, which is maybe, you know, not where you want to be, moving toward where you want to be." So, I think it's really important for them to have that sort of mindset and then to provide them with some tools to help them make sure that they understand that, you know, not everybody writes the same way. So, there may be different strategies available to get this person versus that person to become more comfortable or aware of their issues and kind of overcome them and become a stronger, more confident writer. So, I think it's important for them to sit with the student and kind of create an environment that doesn't feel "teachery," you know? If you're sitting at the table together, maybe sit on the same side so that you're sort of working together as opposed to, "I'm telling you what to do or I'm judging you in some way," which of course none of our tutors do, but it could be perceived that way. You're sitting across a desk from somebody, and it's like, "I'm the teacher. You're the student, and you have to do what I tell you." Again, you know, letting the tutee kind of guide that.
Anna E. Cooper 1:14:42
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:14:46
So I'm not telling you what to do. I'm just giving you suggestions. You can take them, and I will listen to your suggestions. And I want you to be thinking out loud, if you will, and out-of-the-box to do that. And I'm just going to kind of gently push you along the path to success. It's obviously important for them to make sure that we encourage students to make appointments and to keep their appointments. If they need to change them, we ask the tutor to work with them to see if they can find another appointment. It's important for the tutor at the end of the session to do that reflection form so that we can see how did things go? And also, if there was any kind of an issue during the session, it allows us to have that information. So, if there's a follow-up meeting, the student, you know, says something, or there's something going on, or there's another tutor that's going to be working with that tutee in the future, we have a little bit of a background. "OK, so these are some of the things the student has worked on; this is what they were able to do. This is what they kind of didn't do."
Anna E. Cooper 1:15:45
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:15:46
Or, "This is where we had some challenges, and we weren't able to overcome them.
So you may have some of the same challenges." They may have some of the same issues, so it

just helps to be aware of what we get so that you know where you can start— because we all kind of want to keep on a similar page in terms of how we interact with the students. So, I think it's really important. In terms of the paperwork type of thing, do follow up with that so that we have evidence of what happened, and if there's any kind of question, you know we —
Anna E. Cooper 1:16:11
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:16:20
— Have some data, if you will.
Anna E. Cooper 1:16:23
Yeah, I do think session reflection forms are helpful to look back on.
Participant #5 1:16:29
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:16:31
So for the next question, how does the ASC provide writing tutors with peer and staff support? How does the ASC promote tutor and staff cooperation and collaboration?
Participant #5 1:16:44
OK. So again, we're doing less of that now than I used to, but historically, writing tutors, as I mentioned, over the 1st —
Anna E. Cooper 1:16:50
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:16:55
—17 to 18 years, so from 2006, when the center started up, until 2023, when it changed, the writing tutors were required in addition to just hiring, you know, we always had training, right. So, we had training before the semester. All of our tutors got together and did group training. So, it was more general. It wasn't specific to writing, but they were more about the tutoring process. You know, what are some things that, as a tutor, you need to be aware of? And what are some of the obstacles that you may face, and how do you overcome those? And how do you work with each other? So, a lot of it was about the tutoring process and the skills and the tools that you used to make the tutoring process successful. In terms of the writing, if we had five to six writing tutors in a given semester, [the ASC director] and then later on you would meet with those tutors regularly to provide some additional skills. And so, there was, you know—it was a course. I don't know if you remember that, but back in the day there used to be a mandatory —
Anna E. Cooper 1:17:56
Really?
Participant #5 1:17:57
Yeah, there was a writing tutoring course that all writing tutors had to take, either right before they got hired by us or in that first semester; they had to be enrolled in it. Otherwise, they couldn't be a writing tutor. [The ASC director] actually taught that class. I think it was a one- or two-credit class. But they didn't—it was weird because they had to pay for it. And so, you know, they had to pay however much it was.
Anna E. Cooper 1:18:19
Crazy.
Participant #5 1:18:20
And you know, it didn't count toward anything, of course, because they couldn't use it toward their degree. It didn't fit any of those boxes, you know, in terms of the degree requirement. So, we did that for several years, and [the ASC director] was always uncomfortable with that,

making people pay for it to work.
Anna E. Cooper 1:18:37
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:18:38
So, she ended up getting it off the books as a formal course. And that's when it became kind of an informal class where she would just meet with you all once a week. So, she would do a lot of the same things she did in the formal course, but she would do it as a meeting, and you guys got paid for it, right? It was an hour of your time, and you got paid for it rather than having to pay for it. And so, that was really helpful. But I think, you know, she was able to provide you all with collaborative skills and strategies that were specific to writing.
Anna E. Cooper 1:18:52
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:19:08
Again, because there were so many things that were just unique, and a lot of students just struggle with writing as an academic skill beyond other things. And so, I think that was really helpful, and that continued after [the ASC director] moved out that first year. You know you kind of took over that a little bit with me.
Anna E. Cooper 1:19:21
Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:19:28
So I appreciate that you stepped into that void because I didn't feel comfortable doing that in the last year.
Anna E. Cooper 1:19:30
Of course.
Participant #5 1:19:34
That really hasn't happened. We haven't had too many new tutors, so I haven't felt the need as much — you know, with the writing tutors we have now. I know you did a little bit of training with the two newest ones; you know [the two graduate students]. And then the others are all kind of continuing: [other graduate students] and yourself. So, you've all got years of experience.
Anna E. Cooper 1:19:50
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:19:52
So it wasn't as much of an issue, but I don't really do as much in terms of providing specific collaboration or training. I communicate with them regularly, trying to make sure that they have what they need in terms of —
Anna E. Cooper 1:20:05
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:20:06
— Of location, making sure that if they have to change their schedule, we're communicating, but it's not in terms of providing skill support. It's more just providing structural support.
Anna E. Cooper 1:20:21
Yeah. Thank you for that breakdown.
Participant #5 1:20:24
That, yeah, I did. I feel like I didn't answer the second half of the question.
Anna E. Cooper 1:20:37
Yeah, that was a good response.

Participant #5 1:20:39
OK, cool.
Anna E. Cooper 1:20:40
Thank you so much. You had great responses. Very detailed.
Participant #5 1:20:45
I'm very talkative, as you know.
Anna E. Cooper 1:20:47
Of course. Thank you. So, #8, it's going to be longer. So, I'm going to repeat it twice for you.
Participant #5 1:20:57
OK.
Anna E. Cooper 1:20:57
So the ASC usually highlights the importance of social collaboration in tutors connecting with tutees during the writing process. How are writing tutors trained to tutor so that collaboration is implemented during tutoring sessions?
Could you share some writing tutoring training practices that help tutors focus on engaging with the tutee throughout the writing process, rather than the tutor only focusing on the final writing product, so the ASC highlights the importance of social collaboration and tutors connecting with tutors during the writing process?
How are writing tutors trained to tutor so that collaboration is implemented during tutoring sessions? Could you share some writing tutoring training practices that help tutors focus on engaging with the tutee throughout the writing process rather than the tutor only focusing on the final writing product?
Participant #5 1:21:59
OK. Yeah. So, collaboration, you know, social collaboration in writing tutoring is absolutely imperative. And I think again, the big part of that is that we have trained the tutors, and the tutors understand that the process needs to be led by the student, right? The tutor is there as a kind of like — leading from behind, right? So, they're there to support. They're not there to do the work. They're not there to make the decisions. They're not there to —
Anna E. Cooper 1:22:20
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:22:26
— To demand or command or, you know, require anything. They're there to support.
So I think usually, at the beginning of a session, I think establishing kind of what — first of all, what the concern is. What is the tutee looking for? What exactly is the project? What is the goal of the project? Where are you hitting those roadblocks?
What can I — establishing that and then establishing kind of like, here's what we can do.
Anna E. Cooper 1:22:48
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:22:51
Here are some things you know, maybe over the next half an hour to an hour—here are some things that I think we can try to accomplish. Do we agree on that kind of thing? And then, again, using a lot of, you know, questions. What is your goal there? What were you thinking there? What is the purpose of the paper? Who was your audience? I'm asking a lot of those questions.
Anna E. Cooper 1:23:14
Yes.

Participant #5 1:23:17
What format are you using? How formal is it supposed to be? And I'm not a writing expert, so forgive me if I make statements that don't totally make sense.
Anna E. Cooper 1:23:30
No, they do.
Participant #5 1:23:31
Yeah. So, understanding that helps the student to think out loud about how they want to write that. What is it that they're doing? And it also helps the tutor, too, of course, to be more effective in providing that kind of, you know, help. So, if you're writing a paper that's to an internal audience that understands lingo versus a totally external audience that may have no knowledge —
Anna E. Cooper 1:23:53
Yes.
Participant #5 1:23:53
— You're going to write very differently. If you're writing to a group of, you know, high school students versus, you know, PhDs, you're going to write very differently.
And so, knowing who the audience is and knowing what the purpose of the paper is, that can really, really help. Again, I think the idea of both sitting on the same side of the table creates a natural feeling of collaboration as opposed to, I don't want to say competition, but maybe — I know Doctor P —
Anna E. Cooper 1:24:18
Yes. Yeah.
Participant #5 1:24:25
— Was always advising you all to sit on the person's non-dominant hand's side, right?
Anna E. Cooper 1:24:30
Yes.
Participant #5 1:24:31
So that — oh, no, I think you sat on the right-hand side, right? So, their writing hand would block, right?
Anna E. Cooper 1:24:34
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:24:36
So you were always on the side where the paper was in front of them, having them read the paper, right? Having them read things that they had already done so that they could hear that what they're saying —
Anna E. Cooper 1:24:41
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:24:48
— Makes sense. "Am I missing stuff? Does the flow sound good?"
Anna E. Cooper 1:24:50
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:24:51
"Do I have these comma splices or run-on sentences? Are there obvious issues here with transitions between thoughts? You know? I meant to say this, and I totally jumped." So, they'll start to see those things. So, they will become more engaged in the paper itself. I think we always

encourage students to not wait until they're at the final stage of the process before they come and get tutoring help.
Anna E. Cooper 1:25:15
Yes.
Participant #5 1:25:17
So you know, when I talk to students, and I'm sure [the ASC director], for all of us, you know — one of the things I always said is "writing is not an event. It's a process," right?
So, like, it's not just sitting there and writing the paper at the end of handing it in. The prewriting and the thinking part are really the main parts. The writing is kind of a smaller part of the end, so if you know you're struggling with it, don't wait until you're at that point where you've had this paper, this writing assignment, for the last four weeks, and you're not waiting until two days before, where you have to throw this thing together. Let's start at the beginning, when maybe you're just doing the brain dump and that kind of stuff. And you're just doing some of the basics and getting the ideas down and just, you know, word vomiting everything out.
I think when you do that and you can help the students, like, "Let's just get some ideas on paper, OK? So now we've got some of those. Let's try to go through those and think about how those work. Do they work?"
Anna E. Cooper 1:26:14
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:26:14
"Let's try to start integrating them into maybe a thesis statement. Let's start integrating them into, like, an introductory paragraph" so they can sort of see naturally that it is a process. It is actually something that gets built, that you build a paper. You don't just write it. You kind of build it. Kind of like, I don't know if you remember the Guinness commercial. They always take, you know, Guinness is unlike other beers because you actually have to build it, right? You actually build it.
I don't know if you ever saw them do that, but they literally build it in front of you.
They pour a little bit, so it's kind of like that. You build it, you know, over the course of time, and it can take several weeks, and so it also causes, you know — by doing that, you can say, look, come see me when you're starting, and —
Anna E. Cooper 1:26:42
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:26:52
— Then let's have a regular meeting, maybe once a week, over the next four weeks with this paper, and we'll continue to build that.
Anna E. Cooper 1:26:57
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:26:59
Start with the basics and then build on to the next level. Do an outline.
Build on to the next level. Do a thesis statement in the first paragraph and build on to the next level. You know that kind of thing. And then at the end we can do a review to make sure that you feel pretty comfortable. Do some cleanup on it, and then you're ready to submit. And that helps to really establish, I think, a long-term relationship with both the tutor and the tutee. But it also establishes a relationship between the tutee and the Academic Support Center because they see that they've been coming here regularly and the progression from a blunt paper to a finished

product that they can be proud of, that they actually did themselves, that the person who's sitting next to them guided them through and gave them some ideas and gave them support.
Anna E. Cooper 1:27:31
Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:27:42
But ultimately, they can say, "I did this. I wrote this paper, and this is my work, and I feel proud of it." And then, of course, the tutor came as well. So, I think some of those kinds of things, I think those are the things we encourage our tutors to do too—
Anna E. Cooper 1:27:55
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:27:56
— To create that bond, that social collaboration.
Anna E. Cooper 1:28:01
Yes, yeah. The best instances of tutoring writing have been with regular students that come in. So that's a really good point.
Participant #5 1:28:08
Yeah. Yeah. And I've always encouraged that.
Anna E. Cooper 1:28:12
Yes, so question #9. Based on your observations, do writing tutors typically study English and literature? If not, how do you ensure that peer tutors of other disciplines have the same writing skills as peer tutors who study English?
Participant #5 1:28:30
OK. Yeah. So going back to what we started talking about at the beginning, I would say that right now all the writing tutors we currently have on staff are, in fact, all English master's students.
Anna E. Cooper 1:28:34
Hmm. OK.
Participant #5 1:28:44
But historically, I would say it was more of a 50/50 split, probably in the very first couple of years. It probably was primarily English majors who were coming in as writing tutors, although we never mandated that. It's never been a rule.
Anna E. Cooper 1:28:48
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:28:58
Umm. However, over the years, you know, as people become more comfortable, more knowledgeable, you know, knowing who we were, we started to definitely see students from outside of English applying to become writing tutors. So, we've had psych majors, history majors, and political science majors. We've had computer science, we've had biology, all kinds of really diverse —
Anna E. Cooper 1:29:14
Hmm.
Participant #5 1:29:17
— We've had people from, like, the health sciences, like nursing, and I think what we do —
Anna E. Cooper 1:29:20
Yeah.

Participant #5 1:29:23
— Some of the ways we make sure that they all have at least the same toolbox and skill set — again, we do require that all writing tutors come in with at least English 1101 and 1102.
Anna E. Cooper 1:29:36
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:29:37
All writing tutors have to have two letters of recommendation from faculty who can attest to their writing. So, if they send us something from somebody in a math class and they're talking about their ability to, you know, solve formulas and equations, we're going to say, Unfortunately, it's great, but we need somebody who can talk to you about your skills as a —
Anna E. Cooper 1:29:52
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:29:58
— Writer. So, you know, even if it's a biology teacher, you have to do two or three solid academic papers for them.
Anna E. Cooper 1:29:59
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:30:05
That's OK. And so, I think that's really important. And then, of course, they always have to submit that paper, and it does have to be a paper that had been submitted to a faculty member, preferably on our campus.
Anna E. Cooper 1:30:18
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:30:18
We did accept those that were submitted to faculty at other campuses. We generally asked that they get a recommendation letter from that faculty, so maybe like a Wiregrass or something like that or like Kennesaw? Because we don't necessarily know exactly who that is or whatever. And then, we would look to see, you know, do they seem to have a mastery of the writing process? And again, that was where [the ASC director] kind of stepped in more or less on her own. To read and say, "Does it have all of those? Does it seem to have higher-level thinking involved? Does it have the mechanics? Like, does it flow correctly?"
Anna E. Cooper 1:30:54
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:30:55
Does it use quotations correctly or, you know, in-text citations? Do they transition from paragraph to paragraph? Does there seem to be an overall theme involved? Do they use good grammar? Is the spelling, right? Is all of that right?
Anna E. Cooper 1:31:16
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:31:17
You know, so we look at all of that. And so that's regardless of where they come from. It has to be an academic paper submitted to a college professor for a grade, and it has to be a minimum of, you know, three to five pages at least. And it has to show evidence of maybe not perfect mastery of the writing process but understanding of the process and things like that. And then of course, once they're hired, you know, as a writing tutor, then in addition to all the training and supervision you —

Anna E. Cooper 1:31:35
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:31:46
— Give to all of them; they always had that additional meeting with [the ASC director] or whoever to constantly have strategies and toolkit-building for writing. So, you know how no matter how good they are or were, they were always going to get this continuous weekly kind of touch-base with her and me.
Anna E. Cooper 1:31:57
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:32:04
I believe she gave you guys some homework in between that. You'd have some readings to do, and maybe you'd have to make comments or whatever and do some assessments.
Anna E. Cooper 1:32:07
Yes. Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:32:11
So that helped her to see, you know, who's doing well and who might need a little addition. And she might call somebody and say, you know, I'd like to talk to you a little further because I think you're struggling with some of these. Let's talk about this and that kind of thing. So, I think by doing that, it didn't really matter where they came from, in terms of their background, because they leveled the playing field. And I think it helped because not everybody who came for tutoring for writing was necessarily in English classes.
Anna E. Cooper 1:32:32
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:32:39
So, you know, having most of our English and writing tutors would probably be most comfortable — would say, for example, You guys do MLA, right?
Anna E. Cooper 1:32:49
MLA, yes.
Participant #5 1:32:51
MLA. Sorry. That's right.
So MLA, so having somebody from a history background or maybe an education background was great because then we would have somebody who was more expert in APA or Chicago. So, not to say that you all didn't have knowledge of each or the ability to help students point to those resources, but it was not —
Anna E. Cooper 1:33:01
OK.
Participant #5 1:33:06
— It's always nice to have that diversity, because sometimes, you know, maybe there was somebody who had a paper, and working with a history student or history writing tutor might be more effective because they're more —
Anna E. Cooper 1:33:15
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:33:16
— Comfortable with that process and that style and the expectations of those faculty, and then the English writing tutors might be more comfortable with English or language, you know.

Anna E. Cooper 1:33:21
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:33:26
So I think just having that diversity again was natural too. So going back to your question about inclusion, that tended to happen without our input; we didn't try to do that. It just happened.
Anna E. Cooper 1:33:37
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:33:38
You know, we tried not to. We didn't always want to have everybody be English, but sometimes that happened, but more often than not it was natural that we just had a variety of writing tutors from across different disciplines. And we loved that. It was great.
Anna E. Cooper 1:33:51
It's very interesting what you said about MLA versus APA because they're actually making it so that all English 1102 classes now are just teaching APA, while the 1101 class teaches MLA. And I think it's really helpful that they change them.
Participant #5 1:34:04
Wow. Wow, how progressive. That's so cool.
Anna E. Cooper 1:34:09
Yeah. So, I had to. When I was doing my 2nd 1102 class, I was like, I have to reroute.
Participant #5 1:34:17
Well, yeah. I mean, you're probably in a better spot than others by having tutored.
Anna E. Cooper 1:34:17
But I think it's helpful.
Participant #5 1:34:21
Hopefully if you, you know, use APA over the years. So yeah, yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:34:24
Yes, that is true. And for my education major undergrad that I had, luckily, they did APA.
Participant #5 1:34:28
Oh, right. That's right.
Anna E. Cooper 1:34:32
So that did help me as well.
Participant #5 1:34:34
Yeah, yeah. Well, yeah, because for me. You know, the first time I really was forced to do anything in a citation format was actually for my doctorate in my undergrad.
Anna E. Cooper 1:34:42
Wow.
Participant #5 1:34:43
And I mean, we didn't really. They didn't really seem to impose that on us as much. Both my undergrad and my master's.
Anna E. Cooper 1:34:49
That's so interesting.
Participant #5 1:34:51
So that was a challenge for me, though. Oh my gosh. Now I've really got to stick to something.
Anna E. Cooper 1:34:56
Yeah. Well, this is a follow-up question for the one you just answered.
Participant #5 1:35:02

OK.
Anna E. Cooper 1:35:02
So since the ASC provides tutoring for not just writing but other subjects, what are the benefits of not separating writing tutoring from the other tutoring subjects?
Participant #5 1:35:09
Mm-hmm.
Anna E. Cooper 1:35:14
And what are some drawbacks of combining the two into one program?
Participant #5 1:35:19
OK, I think the main advantage is just that cross-collaboration that occurs, you know? That sort of pollination if you will. In many ways, you know, there's no discipline that is completely standalone, right?
Anna E. Cooper 1:35:27
Yes.
Participant #5 1:35:36
Everything kind of, you know, anthropology and history and geography and art and music. I mean, they're all kind of — you know, there are pieces of each other in each other, right? Music and physics, even, right? We don't always put those two together, but there's a lot of cross-pollination between those two subject areas. So, I think having those, those, all of those kinds of tutoring options, or, you know, the subjects being tutored in the same center, allows for that, allows for people to —
Anna E. Cooper 1:35:51
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:36:07
— Understand more. And maybe for the tutors to be able to foster that or encourage that by, you know, maybe talking to each other while they're with the tutees. So maybe say, "Hold on a second. You know, that's a really good question. Let me bring in my colleague who's actually on the physics side or on the music side, who might have some insights on that. Let me ask them and bring them over for a minute. They happen to be sitting right next door. You know, they don't have an appointment."
Anna E. Cooper 1:36:29
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:36:32
So I think that's the biggest thing, and I think it also encourages the tutors to seek tutoring when they need it because they become more comfortable, they become aware of, you know, all these other tutors in subject areas, and they're like, hey, you know, I'm great at writing, but math has always been an area where I'm challenged, but I've gotten to know the math writing students so well.
Anna E. Cooper 1:36:50
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:36:52
They're my colleagues. They're my friends now. I'm going to set up an appointment with so-and-so to help me, whereas maybe last year, if it was separate, I might have felt a little uncomfortable going over to the math lab. Now I don't have that same discomfort.
Anna E. Cooper 1:36:58
Yeah.

Participant #5 1:37:06
It allows the tutors to sometimes be aware of their own limitations. Because sometimes as a tutor, you know you tend to be a good student, and sometimes you don't want to admit that you're not always good at everything. Or there are areas where you could —
Anna E. Cooper 1:37:17
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:37:19
— Be better, and so that might help to do that. So just having that, you know, the ease of moving around can be really helpful. I guess the biggest challenge, I understand, is there might be some muddling, you know.
Anna E. Cooper 1:37:39
Yes.
Participant #5 1:37:40
So maybe one challenge could be particularly in this space, which is a very open space, and it's not just a tutoring space; it's also just a space where students can hang out. And there are all kinds — it can be very noisy, right? So, I think we have lots of different people talking about lots of different things, and having different reasons for being in here can —
Anna E. Cooper 1:37:53
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:38:01
— Create a kind of lot of noise and a lot of distraction. This is really open, like, I mean, the front door is right next to us, right?
Anna E. Cooper 1:38:10
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:38:10
Even you can see the outside from here. So, I think that that can sometimes create challenges for students who maybe have some sort of—if they have any kind of like an attention issue, you know, they're already struggling with ADHD.
Anna E. Cooper 1:38:25
Yeah, that's a good point.
Participant #5 1:38:25
So I think finding ways to get around that—so maybe using one of the small study rooms—can help. I don't know that it completely does for everybody, but it may be an option, or again, maybe allowing them to move to a site where they might have a little more quiet can be helpful. But I think when you have them separated in a writing center or math lab, everybody's kind of on the same page. And so that might reduce that noise level or that confusion for everybody kind of doing the same thing.
Anna E. Cooper 1:38:54
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:38:58
And then I think just again that muddling that can occur. In the sense that, you know, there might be like — you know, they're hearing things maybe at the table next to them, and they're kind of muddling what's going on at their table with what's going on at the other table because maybe there's a mass tutoring going on over here, and you're sitting with a tutor doing some writing tutoring, or maybe you're working on an English paper with somebody, and somebody else is

next door, and they're working on a history paper, and they're talking about, you know, Chicago, when you're talking about MLA.
Anna E. Cooper 1:39:27
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:39:30
So, I think there can be a little bit of muddling, but I don't think that's been a main issue. It's not an issue I heard of a lot over the years.
Anna E. Cooper 1:39:40
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:39:40
I'm sure it happened, but I think the biggest one will probably just be the confusion and the noise.
Anna E. Cooper 1:39:45
Yeah, that's true.
Participant #5 1:39:47
And particularly here in the library, because you might just have people hanging out and, you know, talking and eating and crunching their paper and creating all kinds of noise, and people in the study rooms are sometimes playing music or they're watching a video, and it's kind of loud.
Anna E. Cooper 1:40:00
Oh yeah.
Participant #5 1:40:00
So we try to keep ahead of that by saying, "Hey, you know, if you don't mind, we understand that, you know, the library is for everybody, but we do have some tutoring sessions going on right next to you, and your noise is kind of distracting. We don't want you to turn it off, but if you can at least turn it down so it's not quite" as"—so, you know, we would make efforts to do that, and more often than not, people were amenable to it.
Anna E. Cooper 1:40:26
Yeah. No, that's a really valid point for the drawback, OK.
Participant #5 1:40:31
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:40:32
So to conclude the directed questions, #10 is, what should writing tutoring look like, and how are the writing tutors evaluated for success? Is there data or feedback that is assessed to measure writing tutoring effectiveness?
Participant #5 1:40:52
Oh. That's an interesting question. I don't know that we have. I mean, it's hard for me to say that there isn't any real direct measure of —
Anna E. Cooper 1:41:05
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:41:06
— Success, I mean. I think when we see the indirect measures — maybe just the fact that the students become more confident and do seem to catch their own mistakes and kind of see where their limitations are and sort of figure out what needs to be done in order to improve the process of their paper or the way that they're writing, the way that they're thinking, you know. Because again, it's writing, you know; it's a twofold kind of thing. There are the mechanics of it, you know.

Anna E. Cooper 1:41:39
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:41:40
Are you structurally creating a paper that makes sense? Is it laid out correctly? Is it flowing correctly? Is it getting somewhere? Is it saying something? Is there something interesting to be read through that paper? And so, I think the higher-thinking skills sometimes — students, you know, they go kind of for the basics, like they're just, "I just want to get the paper done, and I'm not really going to put a lot of thought into how challenging or expansive my ideas are."
Anna E. Cooper 1:42:22
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:42:24
"I'm just going to write something." So, I think we can see that they've kind of stepped it up a little bit and that they're thinking more deeply, and that's being reflected in the paper in addition to the paper just flowing better. It's actually written in a more physical—you know, laid out—way better.

Anna E. Cooper 1:42:39
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:42:46
Certainly that can be reflected in comments that they get from their faculty. The grade they receive, but also the comments, you know, I think a lot of times with papers, not only do you get a grade, but hopefully you get some comments, right? Like —
Anna E. Cooper 1:42:57
Yes.
Participant #5 1:42:58
— "Here are some things that I saw that were really good, and here are some things that I think you could have done better on." And you know, as you see them moving away from that, moving more toward "Wow, you know, I've really seen, you know, an improvement in how you put this paper together and the level of thinking that has gone in and the higher-order thinking and conceptualization that you've been able to impart on this one versus 3 papers ago at the start of the semester. I can see where the tutoring has definitely helped you with that." So, I think that's important for us. I think that's something that, I don't know that we necessarily see that at the tutoring center, but the student and the faculty member can see that result, and maybe that's shared at least with the student. "Hey, thank you so much. You know, look at my grade and the comments. I got this time versus, you know, five weeks ago when I started."
Anna E. Cooper 1:43:46
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:43:47
So I think that's at least something in terms of how the tutors themselves are assessed. I guess, you know, looking at those reflection forms. You know, we always try to look at what you know, so particularly if they have a particular student and they have a regular session with them, to look to see, is there evolution? Is there movement? Does it seem like the student is actually learning based on what we're seeing in the reflection form? Obviously, we have those conversations with the students to say, you know, "What has been happening?" We notice that you've been with this student a lot. It seems like in some areas they're growing, but in others they're not, you know? What are the challenges? Why is that not happening?

Why is this happening but not that?" And then to provide them, maybe with some additional support or information or skills or whatever, or ideas to help them overcome some of the things that they're struggling with.
Anna E. Cooper 1:44:27
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:44:38
And so I think maybe that would be what we've been doing, you know, historically.
Anna E. Cooper 1:44:47
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:44:47
Maybe you're asking in the question. That's more informal assessment, yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:44:50
Yeah, but that's still —that makes sense what you're saying.
Participant #5 1:44:55
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:44:57
OK. So that concludes the directed questions. Now we just kind of have two open-ended questions that are going to allow you to just reflect on the major changes that the tutoring center has gone through and then provide some possible —
Participant #5 1:45:00
OK. OK. Okey doke.
Anna E. Cooper 1:45:14
— suggestions for improvement. So, for question 11: during your employment — you have talked about this throughout the interview, but think about what the major changes have been—
Participant #5 1:45:16
OK.
Anna E. Cooper 1:45:26
— That you've noted of the tutoring center over time? And also think about how the writing tutor's role has changed, such as how the tutoring center approaches how writing tutors tutor writing.
Participant #5 1:45:40
OK. Well, the big changes have been lost. So, we've changed our name, and we've changed our location.

Anna E. Cooper 1:45:47
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:45:50
We've grown and shrunk in size multiple times.
Anna E. Cooper 1:45:54
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:45:55
We've changed our reporting structure many times. So again, going from one dean to another dean to another dean to a vice president to another vice president, another dean to another vice president, another dean — from being a standalone office to being in another office.
Anna E. Cooper 1:46:08
Oh.

Participant #5 1:46:12
So there's been a lot of, you know, budgetary changes, you know, increases in budget some years. We've never really had major cuts to our budget over the main part of our existence, but, you know, there were challenges. There were years where budgets were definitely tighter, and we had to be more cognizant of not over-hiring or limiting what we could do because we didn't have the budget. I think the kinds of services we've provided have grown and shrunk and added and subtracted. So, you know, we went from doing advising and tutoring, and we had graduate student advisors. We had, like, 28 graduate students when we started, and they were doing advising across the campus and, you know, doing a little bit — the tutoring was a smaller part.
Anna E. Cooper 1:46:48
Oh wow.
Participant #5 1:46:55
The advising was a bigger part, myself included in that, and then the advising began to fall away. And the tutoring started to grow, and then we added the supplemental instruction, which then became the facilitation program.
Anna E. Cooper 1:47:07
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:47:07
That went from being very small to being a little bit bigger.
And then it grew dramatically when we got that grant from the USD. So, you know our number of tutors we've had — the subject areas that we've been able to support have changed up and down.
Anna E. Cooper 1:47:17
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:47:25
You know, we've always had some basic cores we talked about. So, we always have, you know, writing, math —
Anna E. Cooper 1:47:26
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:47:32
— You know the biology, the chemistry, and Spanish, and then some of those other, you know, natural sciences, social sciences, and other things have kind of added —
Anna E. Cooper 1:47:39
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:47:41
— And subtracted both in the regular tutoring side as well as on the facilitative supplemental instruction side. So, I mean, there have been constant changes there.
And I think in terms of writing tutoring, I guess the biggest changes have been that they've gone from directly reporting to myself and [the ASC director]—they never really reported to me in a strict sense. Of course, I worked with them, but that was kind of her special group because of her background. And so, I guess they used to have that really strong support from her and that, you know, that ability, that strategizing, and —
Anna E. Cooper 1:48:11
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:48:25
— that constant interaction with her and with each other, and, you know, using the different

systems that we had to make their appointments and that ability to interact with all of the other tutors by being in this common space. That has changed.
You know, they don't have her. And I'm not really, you know, while I've done something, you've helped with it; they don't really have that level of support in terms of strategizing and skills and creating, you know, offering those strategies.
Anna E. Cooper 1:48:48
Yeah.

Participant #5 1:48:53
Of course, they don't really interact. You know, they don't really report to us directly. So, their reporting structure has changed. They're all graduate students now, which was totally opposite of what it used to be. We used to pretty much only have undergraduate students, with maybe one graduate student doing exclusively graduate writing tutoring. Now all of our writing tutors are graduate students primarily doing undergraduate writing and tutoring with whatever graduate students might come across their purview as well.
Anna E. Cooper 1:49:23
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:49:25
So that is switched a lot. Of course, they actually report to [the graduate coordinator], not to me.
Anna E. Cooper 1:49:29
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:49:29
So I kind of work with them as opposed to—they don't work for me. They work with me, you know.
Anna E. Cooper 1:49:35
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:49:35
Which is fine. I love that. I mean, that's fine with me. So, I think those are big changes that have happened. In terms of how they deliver assistance or the support that they're providing to their students, I don't know that that's necessarily changed. So, the inner workings of the tutoring sessions, I would think, have not necessarily changed that much. We still use the same kinds of ideas in terms of, you know, student-led — the student is doing the writing, you know.
Anna E. Cooper 1:50:07
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:50:09
Asking questions or developing — kind of getting the sense of where the student is at and what their what, what's the purpose of the paper? Who's the audience? What are the issues that they're having?
Anna E. Cooper 1:50:17
OK.
Participant #5 1:50:18
Where are they in the writing process? What's their goal? And you are there to provide the support for that, but the student is leading the discussion, leading the building of the paper. They're doing all the writing; they're doing all the thinking. So that has not necessarily changed, and the way that they assess those appointments in terms of a client report form—I mean, it's

changed in terms of we use different portals, but ultimately the kind of things that they're doing in terms of assessment haven't really —
Anna E. Cooper 1:50:42
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:50:46
— Changed. You know, how did the session go? What was their engagement?
What were you working on? How successful were you? How long were they going?
All of that is more or less the same. It's just maybe they're using a different portal than they might have used at some point. And so, you know, that hasn't changed. But I think the way that we interact with those writing tutors and who those writing tutors are and who they serve has maybe changed.
Anna E. Cooper 1:51:12
Yeah, that makes sense.
Participant #5 1:51:14
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:51:15
So the final question's going to just have you consider ways that the tutoring center could be improved. So, you talked about your involvement with the writing or the tutoring center.
Participant #5 1:51:22
Replay.
Anna E. Cooper 1:51:29
So you did mention some of the administrative challenges, such as, like —
Participant #5 1:51:30
Mm-hmm.
Anna E. Cooper 1:51:36
— Employees, institutional support, and resources. How could you address any challenges that you've seen?
Participant #5 1:51:39
Right.
Anna E. Cooper 1:51:42
Or possibly improve how writing tutoring works at the ASC.
Participant #5 1:51:48
Well, I think from an administrative standpoint, one of the things that I would like is —when I, when we started the center, we actually reported to the dean of what was then the College of Arts and Sciences, which of course no longer exists because it got —
Anna E. Cooper 1:52:01
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:52:03
— Split, but at that time we just had the one college that had all the math, science, humanities, and social science in the one college. So that's who we reported to. We always thought that it made sense because, you know, most of what we were doing was providing assistance to courses that were in The College of Arts and Sciences. But really, we were providing, you know, resources to everybody. So, we always felt like at some point we needed to move out of that college, and eventually we did, and we moved into the division of Academic Affairs. So, then we reported to, like, an AVP or an AVP of academic affairs. And that's where I think we were most—we felt that was the most appropriate connection, right? So from an administrative

standpoint, I think it's unfortunate that over the years we have moved out of the academic affairs division into what was then the division of student success, which, you know, was there for a couple of years when that one VP came in, and then when he retired, they dissolved that division, and they kind of merged that with the division of Student Affairs and created enrollment in student affairs, which is what they call it now, and we had moved into the Student Success Division. So, when they got merged, we moved into the student affairs.
Anna E. Cooper 1:53:13
Hmm.
Participant #5 1:53:14
And so I do think that has not been the most positive move for us.

Anna E. Cooper 1:53:21
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:53:22
And then of course, you know, having moved, having done under the reorganization, having moved to become not a standalone office, and becoming an office that is now housed somewhere else. It works, but I think we've lost something in terms of our identity and our connection to the faculty. And of course, the university's changed.
Anna E. Cooper 1:53:38
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:53:44
So a lot of the departments that we worked with very closely don't exist in the same way they did. Or maybe the majors that we worked with closely, like math—the math major doesn't exist anymore on this campus. There are no undergraduate majors in math, which is odd. Yeah. So, like, our applied math major was gone. Our regular math major was gone.
Anna E. Cooper 1:54:00
No. Hmm.
Participant #5 1:54:07
Our physics major is gone. Our astronomy major is gone. So, all of those majors that used to be housed in the math department or something similar, they don't exist.
And so we don't have that same cohort of students to pull from because it kind of doesn't exist. So that's been really difficult for all of us. And because I don't have direct control over the tutoring, like I think you know, I don't know for sure if going back to having the tutors being directly hired by me would be more helpful. I feel like it would be. I would feel more comfortable because I definitely feel like I'd have more input in what's going on, and I'd have more ability to troubleshoot and help and support if they worked directly for me and I hired them and I trained them and I managed them and I paid —
Anna E. Cooper 1:54:52
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:55:01
— Them.
Anna E. Cooper 1:55:02
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:55:04
Either with me and, you know, a colleague or whatever. So, I do think those are some challenges that we continue to have that have just affected all of our tutors. And again, the writing tutors —

I honestly think the writing tutors, in some ways, have landed in a better way than some of the others, because, you know, or at least the writing tutoring has. Because, I mean, I know who they are, and I know that they have the skill set because even though I didn't hire them, I don't pay them, and I don't directly manage them, I do have more direct interaction with them and have a better handle on their background because I know that they're all master students in the English department. They've been vetted by Doctor Greenfield and others.
So I feel more comfortable with them sometimes because I do feel like I have a more direct relationship with the writing tutors than I do with the non-writing tutors. When it comes to writing tutors —
Anna E. Cooper 1:55:56
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:55:58
— I just feel like they're in a better spot from my perspective. I don't know how they—I'm not sure that they would necessarily agree. I do think —
Anna E. Cooper 1:56:14
Those are valid points, though.
Participant #5 1:56:16
I feel like there have been some definite challenges in these last couple of years, and I feel like there's another piece to the question at the end, maybe that I haven't quite answered, but definitely — in general, those are some of my thoughts on that.
Anna E. Cooper 1:56:30
Yeah, no, you answered just how to improve any challenges or address problems that you've noted.
Participant #5 1:56:36
OK. That's what it was. I wanted to make sure because I knew I felt like I was bogged down with the problem. OK, OK, good. OK.
Anna E. Cooper 1:56:40
Yeah. No, I made some long questions. Thank you so much for that response.
So before that's the end of the open-ended question. So before concluding the interview, I just want to provide you with a chance to mention any additional insights or comments about your time at the ASC.
Participant #5 1:57:02
None, really, other than — you know, it's been generally a very positive one after the — And I got hired by her back in 2006. I always had a very strong relationship with her, and even though we don't see each other, I still feel that I, you know, I wish that things hadn't changed in the last couple of years.
Anna E. Cooper 1:57:17
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:57:22
You know, she and I, I just think we had a good thing going. We worked well together. I thought the center was effective and well-respected and provided —exceeded, really—the level of service that we would have liked. You know, I mean, it met, and it's exceeded those things, and I think we were recognized a lot on campus by faculty. And I would often get comments from people saying, "Thank you so much for what you all do."
Anna E. Cooper 1:57:39
Yeah.

Participant #5 1:57:49
"It's so important that we have a central focus on campus, and you guys do a great job in, you know, creating a welcoming environment with tutors that are not only knowledgeable but, you know, easy to work with and connected and, you know, engaged with their students and that kind of thing." So that was always helpful because I always told people, like, you know, [the ASC director], I mean, not so much [the ASC director], because I think she definitely was involved more in terms of sometimes doing direct tutoring, but I was like, look, you know, our biggest thing that we do well is hire really good people.
Anna E. Cooper 1:58:17
Thank you.
Participant #5 1:58:22
You know, I've gotten really good at telling that the tutors do all the work.
Anna E. Cooper 1:58:23
Mm-hmm.
Participant #5 1:58:26
The tutors were great, and I think the peer-to-peer thing has always been great because I do think that creates a level playing field for students when they come in. If they're getting tutored by somebody who's older and who has a PhD, that can be more challenging because that's part of why they're struggling in the classroom because they feel that disconnect between themselves and the faculty member or that they were intimidated in some way, whether they should be or not.
Anna E. Cooper 1:58:42
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:58:50
Which most of the time they should be. But that's just something that's natural when they're working with another student who's maybe a sophomore in their freshman class or a junior in their sophomore class.
Anna E. Cooper 1:58:58
Yeah.
Participant #5 1:58:59
That difference sort of disappears and melts away a lot. So I think the idea that we created a center that was peer-to-peer and we managed it well and we knew how to hire people and keep them engaged and give them the support and the training and the skills and the knowledge that they needed, not so much the content piece but that piece that was — I think something that we just did well, we continue to do well. And so, I'm not really sure why they had to change it.
Anna E. Cooper 1:59:28
Yeah, that's a good comment to make.
Participant #5 1:59:32
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:59:33
So I just want to thank you so much for your time and your willingness to participate in this project.
Participant #5 1:59:38
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:59:40
It's really going to help me by looking over the responses from you and Brittany, just to give a

good, thorough understanding of what the Academic Support Center is like in my thesis. Since I do talk about the three different programs that VSU has had.
Participant #5 1:59:53
Yep. Right.
Anna E. Cooper 1:59:59
And so you and [the ASC office manager] gave me good advice; y'all both talked about the Student Success Center, some of which was also very helpful. So.
Participant #5 2:00:06
Good, good. Yeah, yeah, because. You're very welcome. And I probably over-talk.
Anna E. Cooper 2:00:07
Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.
Participant #5 2:00:11
So we went over time.
Anna E. Cooper 2:00:12
No, there's no such thing as over-talking. It's just more for me to be able to analyze.
Participant #5 2:00:15
OK, OK. Well, it sounds good. Let me know if I can be of additional help.
Anna E. Cooper 2:00:18
Of course. Thank you so much, and I hope you have a great rest of your day.
Participant #5 2:00:22
Right, same to you. We'll talk to you later.
Anna E. Cooper 2:00:26
OK, bye.
Participant #5 2:00:27
Bye-bye.

◉ **Anna E. Cooper** stopped transcription.

Participant #6 Transcript

February 5, 2025, 8:31PM
Anna E Cooper 0:05
OK, this is interview number six with participant #6. I'm going to start by reading the research statement by the IRB. OK, you are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled "VSU Writing Centers: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies," which is being conducted by Anna Cooper, a graduate student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to show how three of Valdosta State University's writing centers, The Writing Center, Student Success Center, and Academic Support Center, have changed over the years. This research will analyze what has changed and what has stayed the same through each iteration of tutoring writing at VSU; you'll receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about possible paths forward for tutoring writing as VSU adjusts to rapidly advancing technologies and changes in the larger environment. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately at least 55 minutes and at most 85 minutes, or one hour and 25 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded to capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the interview recording has been transcribed, the recording will be immediately deleted from recording devices, and your name will be deleted from the interview. Transcripts and pseudonyms will be used to anonymize your data, which will be included in the research study's references chapter. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding, or to skip questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to leave the study, audio-recorded conversations and any written information linking you to the research study will be destroyed. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Anna Cooper at aecooper@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review under federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by federal law, protects the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB administrator at 2292532947 or IRB@valdosta.edu. So, now we are going to begin with our opening questions just to get to know you as a staff member for VSU in the tutoring center, and then we're going to move on to direct questions that talk more about tutoring itself and your role, and then conclude with open-ended questions that allow you to give your opinions and to reflect on VSU's tutoring center's major changes. So, the first opening question: what is the name of the tutoring center you work with currently or you have worked with in the past?
Participant #6 3:59
So the tutoring center that I started with was the writing center, and that was in 2004. I was director of The Writing Center for two years, and then I was asked to direct an experimental office that was a grant-funded office. The grant was from the University of Georgia Board of Regents, and it was for the Student Success Center. And the success center galvanized all of the tutoring on campus in one spot. The vision was to create a one-stop shop for tutoring, counseling, and advising. So, it was a huge idea that didn't work. First of all, the counseling center backed out immediately because there were privacy issues. There was no secure place to store student files and have very private conversations, and so they backed out. And for the

advising, we were given funding to hire, I think it was 30 graduate students. Train them to be advisors and then lend them out to all of the departments on campus. It was VSU's ongoing attempt at trying to make advising more efficient, and that did not go over well at all. I had hired 2 professional advisors. Do I name names? Two professional advisors to train and manage the 25 graduate students, and those professional advisors received a lot of pushback. But once they saw that the graduate students actually did a fabulous job with their students, they asked to keep the program going. So, the Student Success Center had a three-pronged approach that quickly became two-pronged. And then, let's see, it was the Student Success Center until 2018, but in 2010, I was also asked to be the department head for the Oasis Center for first-year programs and advising. So, there were these two different advising departments on campus, and when the department head for the Oasis Center retired, they told me that they wanted to merge those two departments, so we began a three-pronged approach, dropped one, and then added the first-year experience program, and we tried to integrate the advising on both those ends. Yeah. So that went on for, I think, three years, and all of the proposals we gave to the Dean of Arts and Sciences at the time, she rejected, and I didn't understand until later that I was just a placeholder for the Oasis Center for advising and 1st-year programs until they could reorganize. So, even though they told me my job was to put the two offices together, that didn't happen because all of our ideas were rejected, and so I was directing two different programs with two different budgets and two different staffs. I would spend half my time over in the University Center, where the first-year Oasis was, and half my time over here in Langdale Hall, where the Student Success Center was.

Anna E Cooper 9:03
OK. Thank you for your first response. So, you started to mention the different years that these different programs were going on, so if you had to recap, how many years did you work for each?

Participant #6 9:21
So 2 years as The Writing Center director. From 2006 to 2010, I did the Student Success Center. I directed the Student Success Center from 2010 to 2013. I was the director of the Student Success Center and the department head for the Oasis Center of first-year programs and advising from 2013 to 2018. I was moved back to just being director, and the advising part of everything dropped out. So, I was just in charge of training tutors. And then from 2018 to 2023, we moved into the library, and we became the Academic Support Center.

Anna E Cooper 10:41
OK. Thank you. So, #3, what is your current job position or the positions you have had? If you could recount how many years you have worked for each, that would be great.

Participant #6 11:18
OK. So, for all of those positions that I named, I was the director of the program with the addition of department head for the Oasis Center, and that's it.

Anna E Cooper 11:38
OK, so #4: During the hiring process, how are writing tutors typically hired, and what qualifications should an ideal writing tutor have?

Participant #6 11:55
So when I was directing The Writing Center, pretty much the process had been the same for decades, and that is we solicit recommendations from faculty, and they don't necessarily have to be writing faculty or English faculty. Potential tutors can be great writers in any field. So, we need one or two letters of recommendation. We ask for a writing sample, and we ask for an

interview. The resume and stuff came later with the Academic Support Center. So, we didn't get that formal in The Writing Center in the early days, but we formalized it a little bit by asking for an additional letter of recommendation and a resume. Oh, plus the writing sample. But we've always looked at writing samples, and we've always solicited recommendations from professors.

Anna E Cooper 13:07

OK, question #5: What tutoring disciplines does your tutoring center, the Student Success Center, support, and have these services shifted over time at the different tutoring centers you've been with?

Participant #6 13:28

I forgot to mention in the other question that students need to make a B or better. OK, perfect. So, in the early days of the Student Success Center, the most popular subjects for tutoring were Spanish and math. So, I guess it was Spanish, math, and English. And then as we grew, we hired more tutors, but fewer and fewer people came for Spanish, and we think that's because the modern and classical languages faculty reorganized and rethought their curriculum in their classes so that they had a lot more availability to help their students as they moved online. There were a lot more online opportunities for students to practice, and so there were fewer requests for Spanish, but we did pick up Russian and French. Math has pretty much been the number one subject people want help with. As we evolved, chemistry became #2. English and biology had the same number of people. Yeah, so writing and math have always been in demand. The other slots have fluctuated.

Anna E Cooper 15:19

OK, number six, how do students receive writing tutoring services?

Participant #6 15:35

OK. So, in the Student Success Center, I had been trying for quite a few years to train our tutors to work in online environments. So, we had an early program called Ask Online, which was just a platform that students could upload their essays to, and then one of our tutors would offer feedback, written feedback, and it would get back to the student. It wasn't very popular, and the tutors didn't like it very much, but they did it because I asked them to. But mostly students, via word of mouth and recommendations by their professors, would come in for one-on-one tutoring, and they were generally for hour-long or half-hour-long slots. And we used lots of different scheduling programs to do that. I do remember people calling, making appointments with the secretary, and the secretary writing down, you know, appointments in a book, yeah. And then, as we evolved, more and more of the tutoring was being offered online, and I was asked by the administration to hire specifically online tutoring companies, vendors that offered professional tutoring.

So students had a choice of using VSU face-to-face tutors or using an online professional tutor in an online platform, and of course that got really popular during COVID, yeah.

Anna E Cooper 17:23

OK. Thank you. #7. What steps does the tutoring center take to advertise writing tutoring services for students?

Participant #6 17:36

Even back in the writing center days in the early 2000s, class visits were always the most effective way to get students to come visit, so we've kept that throughout the 16 years that I was there. So, class visits were #1. We advertised through the e-mail system to all faculty, staff, and students. The assistant director and I would actually visit classes upon invitation and do entire workshops on study skills and how to work smarter, not harder, and we also created flyers and

brochures, and those were handed out during class visits. So, all of those things—invitations to class, e-mails, giant posters, and lots of brochures. And the tutors themselves would talk to students as they worked with them.

Anna E Cooper 18:50

OK. To conclude the opening questions, #8: So how does writing tutoring contribute to VSU student success?

Participant #6 19:02

Well, there's still the myth operating out there for probably centuries that we ride alone, and that's just not true. So, being able to work with a tutor who's taken the classes that you've taken and understands the pressures and the little idiosyncrasies of the professors is really helpful, because a student coming in for help with writing also tends to get help with navigating the university and how to talk to people. The tutors point students to resources, but it's a writing myth that you write alone. We are really interdependent, and the motto used to be, I used to tell my tutors, "We're trying to put ourselves out of a job. We're trying to help students become independent writers." And over the decades, I've recognized that that's not true. What we're trying to do is create confidence so that students are unafraid to work with other people on their writing to get feedback and to offer feedback.

And that's how you improve the writing, so that's why I think one-on-one conversation is the most valuable way. Conversations about writing that generate ideas and provide tips and just give real-time feedback from a human being.

Anna E Cooper 20:42

Good point. OK, so. Moving on to the direct question, we're going to have 10 main questions, and some of them will have some follow-up questions. If you need me to repeat any of them, just feel free to ask me. So, #1, from an institutional perspective, what are the main goals of the tutoring center, and how do you feel like these goals align with the day-to-day tutoring operations and services provided to students?

Participant #6 21:15

So the goal of the tutoring center is to help students develop confidence in their ability to do the work, to enhance their ability to think critically, and to learn the conventions of whatever it is they're trying to learn, whether it's math, chemistry, or sociology. Or, how to write an English paper. That's the goal: to create confidence and to help students learn how to connect with other people. Yeah, because that's really been lost since COVID. And then the second part of that question was, how do the goals align with the day-to-day tutoring operations, and how is this provided? How do the goals align with the day-to-day operations of the tutoring service? How do these goals align with the day-to-day tutoring operations and services provided to students? OK, so the goal of helping students become confident, critical thinkers who are engaged in their learning aligns with what we do.

Because they can make individual or group appointments with the tutor and have these conversations that help them learn the lingo of the field, but also the basic operations. And I'm hoping that it will empower students to actually come back and apply to be a tutor, because now they've got the confidence. Why not pay it forward?

So there's this fabulous story. When we first started, a physics tutor had a group of students who were nontraditional older returning students. I think there were five men who had retired from the Air Force and were coming back to school who took this physics course. Got a D on the 1st test, and they all came to see [this tutor], who taught them and caught them up to speed. They subsequently got As on these tests, and the next semester they came back, and [the tutor], all he

did was sit there and listen to them as they worked stuff out on the board. Occasionally he would say, oh, let's try it this way or that way, but they were completely independent. I tried to talk them into perhaps being tutors, but they were kind of busy, but that's what we want to happen—people to come back, tutor somebody else, and keep paying it forward.

Anna E Cooper 24:11

That is a very neat story. So, #2. Can you explain your main responsibilities and how you contribute to the tutoring center? Please include any additional roles you have that further support the program so your main responsibilities.

Participant #6 24:34

My main responsibilities were to manage a budget—that was quite substantial for a while—and hire, recruit, and train tutors and provide tutoring support for professors. So, that included writing yearly reports, you know, budget and data reports, to my various bosses. I had like eight or nine different bosses because they moved our center around, but it was always with an eye towards providing the data that clearly showed the positive impact we were having on retention. So, a big chunk of my job was to prove that we were worthy and prove that we were effective in the mission of retaining students. That was the biggest thing, and pretty much everything I did, from hiring and training tutors to managing the budget, was to meet that goal.

Anna E Cooper 26:07

Thank you for that breakdown. OK, #3. How does the physical tutoring environment promote efficiency and productivity for writing tutors and tutees who attend tutoring sessions? So, thinking about, like, the physical surroundings of the Student Success Center, kind of the ambience and the feeling in there. Kind of go into the environment. And then, just reflecting, have there been any major changes in the tutoring center's environment and structure in terms of the building itself, services provided, and levels of engagement? I can repeat those.

Participant #6 26:50

OK, so from the very beginning, The Writing Center, The Academic Support Center, and The Student Success Center have all been wide open spaces, so they've all been very public. I've described our tutoring services and built the atmosphere as the front porch of the university, welcoming people in and having casual conversations about school, work, and how to navigate the university. So, the atmosphere has always been casual, and I prefer it that way. I mean, that's how I ran the writing center at the University of Arizona. It was in a tiny little house on the outskirts, and we had coffee and couches, and so I really wanted it to be very welcoming. When we moved into the library, we were given some rooms where people could do one-on-one or very small group conversations that cut down on the noise, and I think that was helpful for a lot of people, but it was largely wide-open space, hopefully inviting. And that's the ethos that we tried to establish. Say the last part of that question. OK. So, the building changed; we moved from a dorm. Oh no. Oh my gosh, we were a little computer lab in the English department with computers lining all the walls.

And this, just like [another The Writing Center staff member] described, students would come in and we would show them how to format their papers in MLA while the teacher just sort of stood there and watched what was happening. But it was nice because the students could do their work and the tutor could be behind them helping. I mean a big table in the middle where people could actually handwrite stuff if they wanted. So that was a computer lab. And then we moved to the president's old house off-campus. That big two-story thing there, that's now the Honors College. We were there, and it had lots of little different rooms. It didn't have that open feel, so it kind of made the tutors congregate in little areas, and they didn't interact as much. So, we moved into

Langdale Hall, a dorm room or residence hall, as they like to call them. We had two floors there, which again created that separation, but the two floors were wide open spaces with plenty of computers for people to work on. And then we finally moved into the library, which is what I wanted from the beginning, because all of the great resources are there—all of the research, the great librarians, the new Media Center, interlibrary loan, computer labs—everything is there. So why not have a tutor station there too? So, that space was again another wide-open space with the additional individual rooms where people could go for a little bit of privacy. Was that? Did I answer all of it? Did it impact levels of engagement? Yeah, I think it did. I think the little computer lab was a good space, and we got a lot of business, but the house was not so great because there were lots of small rooms, and the football players would come in at night because we used to be open till 9 o'clock. The football players would come in at night and open the windows upstairs and smoke, and like, yeah, the whole trying to work with helping football players has been a challenge for a long time, and then when we moved into the residence hall, we thought, "Oh, this is going to be great, because we are right where students live, and they'll surely come to see us." And they did, but they also complained that, you know, "This is my living space. I don't want to study in my living space." But again, it was a wide-open space, and we did get a lot of business. I think the best spot was in the library, but I also think that business dropped off when we moved to the library, and I'm not sure why. And then what? Two years later, COVID hit. Yeah. And that was really the latter part of 2019, so we were only in there for a year and a half before things really, visits really tanked. But I think also contributing to that decrease in visits was the online tutoring program. Yeah. So.

Anna E Cooper 32:53

Thank you for that thorough response. How would you say the tutoring center navigates student sociocultural factors, welcoming tutees of various backgrounds and identities? Some examples are freshman students, graduate students, international students, and students with disabilities. If you can think of any programs or strategies in place that promote inclusivity in the writing center environment, please mention those. And I can repeat that question if you need me to. So, thinking about how the tutoring center welcomes different tutees?

Participant #6 33:33

How does the tutoring center—I'm trying to remember.

So, my recollection of the writing center is back when we were in the computer lab in the English department. Tutors were mostly English majors and mostly white, and as we grew, especially as we became the Student Success Center, we inherited a lot of tutors from a lot of other disciplines. And that meant a wider variety of students, so we had all different ethnicities. We had international students as tutors, and it just became a much richer and more interesting place, and people started to interact more, except when we were in the President's House. And so, we, I really wanted to make sure that when we hired students, I was really proud of the fact that a lot of different kinds of students would come. So, we welcomed LGBTQ+ students and students who are neurodivergent or on the autism spectrum. Students, let's see. We had a couple of students with a physical disability. One was an English tutor, and one was a Spanish tutor. In fact, she was blind. Oh my gosh, a blind Spanish tutor was back in the Student Success Center. And we got bigger; we had a hundred students and one hundred tutors at one point, I know. So, I'm really proud of the diversity that we've supported, and we try to be really fair in our hiring and vetting practices. In fact, I've made some faculty a little angry because I don't take their favorites. I take the people who are good at it, yeah. I tried anyway.

Anna E Cooper 35:53

Perfect. OK. So, #5, what major institutional changes have impacted the tutoring center's focus or ability to meet students' needs? And then kind of reflect on whether tutees' writing needs have shifted or stayed the same and how the tutoring center has made adjustments to support these needs. So, what major institutional changes have impacted the tutoring centers' focus or ability to meet students' needs? Yeah, let's do that. Yeah.

Participant #6 36:28

So, the major institutional changes that have impacted our ability to meet students' needs. We, the Office of the Student Success Center, and the Academic Support Center, have been moved around, like, who wants to supervise us? We're pretty easy to supervise, I mean, anyway, we started out in the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, so we were under a college, and I had argued for a long time that because we had tutors from all different colleges, we needed to be at the university level.

And so then we were put under, like, three different deans and then the vice president. And then there was all of this happening during a time period where there were seven different presidents of the university. So, there was lots of change over the cabinet, and they kept shifting us around. Ultimately, when we moved into the library, that was because they hired a vice president of student success. So, they created a whole new division that was university-level but a completely different entity and more aligned with the student services side of the university. So, less the academic.

And that was a mistake because we have an academic service, we support academics, and yeah, so. I think that impacted the decrease in visits we had from students. As things evolved, because when we were under the division of student success, that other reason we changed our name to Academic Support Center was because people got confused. Oh my gosh. Yeah. So, there was the division of student success, and we became the Academic Support Center. Yeah, to distinguish between where we are in the hierarchy of whatever. That whole reorganization, I think, was confusing, and it affected people's motivation to become a tutor. Because we have also developed the SI Program, Supplemental Instruction, where tutors are embedded in historically difficult classes. So, that became actually bigger than the individual tutoring. What was the next part? Do you feel like students writing needs have shifted or stayed the same? And how has the tutoring center made adjustments to support these needs? Do I feel like students' writing has shifted? Why their needs have shifted. I don't think their needs have shifted. Everybody struggles with how to organize, and everybody wants to focus on the grammar when that's not the real problem. The real problem is you don't have a point, and it's not organized. So, that has stayed the same. What has shifted is students' preparation for college writing. They have much more fundamental needs than they used to, but the research shows that they're writing more than ever. Isn't that interesting? They're writing more than ever, but they're writing a wider variety of things, and what they're writing is longer than it used to be.

So, there's a disconnect between their preparation and how much writing they're actually doing. And of course, with the advent of AI, that's become something some people, some students, are terrified of. And some students are using it unethically. Mm-hmm. So, now the emphasis, the real emphasis now, is how do you use AI in a way that's going to be helpful for you? That makes your life a little bit easier, but you still get the critical thinking practice. How do you do that? So, one of the focuses in my classes now is you have I give you an essay assignment, and I want you to submit it to AI, but I don't want it to rewrite it for you. I want it to help you brainstorm and come up with a way to organize, but don't change your wording. Don't take the content but take the suggestions. So, how can you be a prompt engineer? So, you have to be a prompt engineer to

use AI. So, I think that is a huge shift in how tutoring might be offered now. Yeah, that's got to be a huge part of the training. If I were still in charge, that's what we would do.

Anna E Cooper 42:34

That is so true. So, thinking about the Student Success Center, what are the institutional policies or administrative duties? Or I should probably say, what were the institutional policies or administrative duties that writing tutors were expected to follow and complete? And how do you think these duties supported the SSC's effectiveness?

Participant #6 43:03

Yeah. The administrative duties that I asked of tutors, I didn't think were onerous, but it was very hard to get tutors to follow through. So, after each tutoring session, you fill out that lovely. What do we call it? Session reflection form. But we've been doing a version of that, even handwritten. I remember after every year, that standard writing center practice for decades. What? Yep, after your tutoring session, reflect on what happened, and somebody needs to look at that, and we need to have a conversation about it so that we can improve what we're doing and share ideas about it. Not punitive, but it helps us solve the problems that we keep coming up against, so session reflection has always been a part of it. I've asked year after year for end-of-semester reflective letters. Mm-hmm. And I try to get tutors, no matter what they're tutoring, so tutors of any subject, to write a reflection where you're telling specific stories of sessions that challenged you and sessions that were successful, and a series of other questions like, What's your favorite strategy? What do you see? The more patterns, the more we learn about that as administrators, but it also gives us the evidence we can use in writing recommendation letters. And I tried to sell it like that, and it was like pulling teeth. I was hounding people for these things at the end, and when they would ask me for a recommendation letter, if I didn't have any record of their reflection, I was like, "Nope, sorry, I'm not going to. I know you're a great tutor, but you didn't document anything." And do you remember? So, documenting your work is part of it, right? Yeah. So.

Anna E Cooper 45:16

OK. Those are some good points. So, let's see, moving on to #7: How did the SSC provide writing tutors with peer and staff support? And how did the program promote tutor and staff cooperation and collaboration? So, peer and staff support?

Participant #6 45:46

I think we did the best job with the writing tutors because we had weekly meetings, and this is true from the writing center. In the little computer lab, we would have weekly meetings where we would sit around and just talk about what the tutoring sessions were like, but in the early days and for probably 10 years when I would hire tutors, one of the ways we vetted them was they had to take a tutoring writing course. It was English 3050, and anybody could take it, but it was specifically if you want to be a writing tutor, you have to take this course. And so, we read a lot of the writing center literature. How tutoring one-on-one happens, but this was only for the English tutors, only for the writing tutors. Oh, the math tutors. Two, that's right. They had to take a course, but they took it from a math professor. And they had to take it if they wanted to tutor, so that was part of the deal. I forgot to mention that.

In the course, yeah, they were both three-credit courses, so they were substantial.

But I dropped that course. I argued to drop the course because students were paying to take a course, and I was paying them to be tutors at the same time. So, whatever money they were earning, they were having to pay for this course as part of their training. And if I hire you, I pay for the training. You see what I'm saying? It's a better business model, even though I am not

really a business advocate, so we dropped the tutoring writing course. We basically kept the curriculum, so people still had to read writing center literature. I distilled it down a lot. We still had weekly meetings where we did a lot of troubleshooting. People wrote in class or in these meetings, and we would look at lots of sample writing from students and practice giving feedback. The other tutors and all the other subjects, they just—I mean, math had to take that one course, but like not the chemistry people, not the physics people, not the language people. I just trusted that they knew what they were doing. But I should say we always offered training at the beginning of the semester. You know those great big training meetings where everybody got together, and we all had lunch together? And we, yeah, we, well, yeah, I would cater it. I would bring the food to us, but it was really about team building, everybody talking. Everybody else and we would practice all these different things that would be this one giant day. Yeah, role-play. One giant day of this massive training every semester, and that was hopefully the galvanizing team-building stuff.

Anna E Cooper 49:31

OK, #8. The tutoring center usually highlights the importance of social collaboration and tutors connecting with tutees during the writing process. How are writing tutors trained to tutor so that collaboration is implemented during tutoring sessions? Could you share some writing tutoring training practices that help tutors focus on engaging with the tutee throughout the writing process rather than the tutor only focusing on the final writing product? So, what are ways that writing tutors are trained to collaborate with the tutor?

Participant #6 50:11

The top—what do I have? The Top Five Writing, Top Five Strategies for Tutoring Writing. And the first one is always "sit on your hands," because you want the tutee to read their work out loud. That's the best way for them to hear where their mistakes are. A little bit of social pressure, yeah, attunes them to, oh, does that sound right?

That doesn't sound right. And then the tutor can step in and say, "Yeah, you're right, that doesn't sound right." Let me try these different ways. And then I, oh my gosh, I don't even remember what the other ones were. I know one of the last ones was

"Fluency before correctness." So yeah, higher-order concerns over lower-order, so higher-order stuff is organization and developing ideas, and lower-order stuff is punctuation, mechanics, and maybe style. Another common one is "clear is kind." So, learning how to be direct and truthful doesn't mean you have to be rude. It just means that when you say things like, "I'm confused here; you're giving an honest reaction." You're not judging so much. "More curiosity, less judgment," I think, is another one. Yeah. So, asking lots of questions is a really helpful strategy. It gets them to talk about themselves. You've asked them questions about the writing. Yeah, but, I mean, ask them about their ideas. Why do you think that? Why did you say it that way? What are you trying to do? I don't remember the others. So, I'm trying to remember, dang, these are the main ones.

Anna E Cooper 52:07

Thank you for that breakdown. For #9, based on your observations, do writing tutors typically study English and literature? If not, how do you ensure that peer tutors of other disciplines have the same writing skills as peer tutors who study English?

Participant #6 52:29

So in those weekly meetings we talked about writing strategies that cut across disciplines, and so especially ways to organize, remember the paragraph development with PIE. Point, Illustrate, Elaborate, Exemplify, Illustrate, and then PIE. Point, Illustrate, Explain, or Example

Explanation. Yeah, I was just thinking, it's just PEE, but then PEA, which is Point, Example, and Analysis. Mm-hmm. So, all of those have a main point supported by details and analysis, and that cuts across every writing genre. So those big things. And it's really the interpersonal communication, the getting students to read their work out loud, asking lots of questions. So, even though in fact I think it's kind of helpful sometimes if you're writing a paper on literature and the tutor you're seeing has a major in criminal justice but still is a stellar writer, they can say, "Yeah, I'm totally confused." Can you explain it to a layperson? That makes the writer slow down and actually explain what they're trying to say. So, there's an advantage in not being an English major.

Anna E Cooper 54:14

OK. Finish that one, OK? So, since the Student Success Center did include writing tutoring with other tutoring subjects, what are the benefits of not separating writing tutoring from the other tutoring subjects? What could be some drawbacks of combining the two?

Participant #6 54:38

OK. The advantages in my mind include the tutors recognizing that their approaches are similar, like the learning process is similar across disciplines, like we talked about.

I'm pretty sure we talked about this in training, where you've got learning, those concentric circles, where there's the comfort zone and then there's the stretch zone. And then there's the stretch or challenge? That's where the learning takes place, yeah.

And then the outer ring is the, oh my gosh, I'm overwhelmed. Yeah. So, we want to be in that sweet spot between comfort and stretch, and that goes across, and I think it really helps for tutors from just a different discipline to notice patterns of student mindset and attitude. And how do you overcome the apathy or the fear? So, you talk about the common things that everybody brings in, and then the drawbacks are just the tendency to still stay in our little silos. You know, our little specialties. And you know the math and science people like roll their eyes at the creatives in the room, you know, and the creatives are like, "Oh my gosh, you math and science people are so nerdy and you have no fun." But I still think those are productive conversations. So, yeah, that's true. So, I really don't see a drawback, but I can see where other people would. Some people have mentioned noise.

Anna E Cooper 56:47

OK. Thank you for describing those positives and negatives so, #10. What should writing tutoring look like to you?

Participant #6 57:04

What should writing tutoring work like? Well. I think that the person-to-person, individual discussions about writing are way more helpful than just relying on an online tutor or AI. Yeah, especially now. You really need somebody sitting next to you with the AI, ChatGPT, open and learning how to do it and be a prompt engineer. Yeah, because I really do think that AI is helpful. Yeah, there are so many things, but how can you? How do we help students use it to assist them in their critical thinking, not take it over? But that's just like the training for all of the tutors, where we go over how not to do a student's homework for them because you don't need AI to do that. Tutors can easily do somebody's homework for them, but what's the advantage of that? How did they learn to become editors, or how do they learn to become engineers or computer programmers or biologists if they don't actually do the work?

So, I think tutors really need to become as expert as they can on using AI. So, that would be my main focus in helping tutors if I had a group of them right now.

Anna E Cooper 58:52

OK. This is just a follow-up to that previous question of what writing tutoring should look like. Going back to the Student Success Center, how are writing tutors evaluated for success? Is there data or feedback that is assessed to measure writing tutoring effectiveness? And you can always state how this has changed.

Participant #6 59:27

We did for a couple of years have a—what did we call it? It was the two weeks around midterms because that's when we had the most business, and we handed out surveys. They were sheets of paper that were surveys that solicited feedback from the students who came in for tutoring about how effective their session was. And we tried to, so we would generally get about two hundred of those surveys. They were anonymous. The tutor was asked to leave the table after they gave the student the survey, and they folded it up and put it in a box, like a suggestion box.

So we collected those for years, and that gave us a good idea of how effective we were. And then I would share that data with them during the beginning of the year training, and then there were other little things we would do. That's really the major way, but we would also collect hard data on the number of students who came for tutoring, how many visits they made, and the difference between their midterm and their final grade. So, students who came three or more times improved their grade from midterm to final. Those who came ten times over the course of a semester got the highest jump in their grade, and that was a consistent number. That's after 3, 5, and 10 were the magic numbers, with 10. You know, you get the highest-grade point there. So, we gathered that data from the Institutional Research Office. OK, mm-hmm. Oh.

Anna E Cooper 1:01:37

So that concludes the direct questions. We are now going to move on to the two main open-ended questions. There are going to be some follow-up ones with it. So, reflecting on major changes is what number 11 is about. So, during your employment, how has the tutoring center changed over time?

Participant #6 1:02:03

Well, it has a long answer, and I think I said much of it, yeah. So, we've had lots of different bosses. We've been located in several different buildings. One, two, three, four different buildings over the 16 years that I've directed. Probably seven presidents and maybe 5 bosses and 5 supervisors. We consistently got more visits in the fall, but we have brand-new freshmen because everybody's pushing, "Go get tutoring. Go get tutoring." But less in the spring. But visits for both fall and spring started to drop off when we moved to the library. Mm-hmm. And then COVID impacted that even more. Yeah.

Anna E Cooper 1:03:13

OK. Thank you for that overview. Also, how is the writing tutor's role changed?

Such as how the tutoring center approaches how writing tutors tutor writing.

Participant #6 1:03:43

I don't think the approach has changed. Maybe it's been refined a little bit, like the Top Five Strategies for Tutoring Writing developed over a series of years of me saying the same thing over and over and over. And so, when we moved from having a class that students had to register for to be trained as tutors to a non-credit, this is part of your job training. I tried to distill a lot of the strategies into a one-sheet thing, and we could talk about those five strategies endlessly in every meeting because every student that presented a challenge had to do with one of those things. We did less reading and more talking and strategizing, you know, and I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. I know that other people would say, "Oh my gosh, you know, you've really lost a lot in eliminating these readings." And they may be right, but my job got

more complicated too. And we were so huge that we hired graduate students to help us organize the massive numbers of tutors and SI leaders that we had. And I started to branch out into offering mindfulness and meditation stuff for faculty, staff, and students. Yeah, that was all over that COVID period where it was awful. Yeah, it was very, very difficult to keep tutors connected with each other, even with me. And it was just a really tough time period, and I was trying to deal with my own stuff. So, I was like, I don't have the energy to be the cheerleader for everybody else. Yeah, I'm trying to survive my own thing. So anyway, it was a crazy time. So yeah, I think I decreased the reading; we talked more about strategy and basic principles. So, did that answer the question?

Anna E Cooper 1:06:41

OK. Thank you. #12 is during your involvement with the writing center. What are some administrative challenges that the tutoring center experienced, such as employees, institutional support, or resources?

Participant #6 1:07:03

In the more recent years since COVID, it has become really hard to recruit tutors from any discipline. Nobody wants to recommend them. Students don't want to be tutors, and even though everybody's scrambling for money, the $10.00 an hour, which had been that way for two decades. Ten bucks an hour—that was just not enough for people. And you know, just the whole COVID thing really made it hard to recruit people. Ask me the question again. Tutoring center, yeah, employees, institutions, support resources we had. It was kind of hard to keep administrative assistants in our time because we grew so big, and it was hard for the administrative assistant to keep on top of the scheduling and directing students to where they needed to go and all that stuff. And some of our administrative assistants just got burned out, and some of them tried to do more and got burned out. So, there's a lot of turnover there. We never really had a budget. Well, we did okay, so there were a couple of years where the president's cabinet, whoever my boss was, would come to me and say, "You need to decrease your budget by 10%," and luckily, every year they asked me to do that, it just meant hiring fewer tutors. I didn't have to fire anybody. It's really good, but we did argue for raises for people like the SIs. And when we created those layers of responsibility with, you know, people being team leaders and whatnot, we tried to get those folks paid a little bit more. What, a dollar? A couple dollars more? We did that, and then human resources came back to us and said, "You can't do that. You have to take that money back. You have to sit down with these people and say, "You don't get this extra money." Yeah, so that sucked. I've had to fire tutors. Mm-hmm. But the big, you know, gut punch was even after yearly data clearly proving that we have a positive impact on retention, they decided to eliminate our program, along with a bunch of advising. Like we were lumped in with advising, which we have nothing to do with, and they didn't give us any reason for it. Like, this is the data we're looking at that says this isn't worth funding anymore. Yeah. That was a huge problem, and I don't even know what's happening over there now. They've changed the focus of that office to be intervention. So, focus on the students with the problems and try to put resources in front of them, and then most of the tutoring is now with an online vendor. Appointments like that moment: they have to wait longer. Yeah, and English 1101 isn't even on the list of the KNACK they've been doing. So, you know, I don't know what kind of data they're collecting or how they're collecting it or what the deal is. Yeah, our large turnover of presidents who come in and change everything and hire people and fire people and get their own favorites in. That's like what's happening on the national scene. But yeah, OK.

Participant #6 1:11:51

I thought my job would always be me, I thought. Tutors were always being very nice.
Anna E Cooper 1:12:04
So to follow up with that question, thinking about these challenges, what are potential suggestions of how these challenges could be improved or addressed?
Participant #6 1:12:26
Interesting question for people. I don't know. That's OK. OK. So, no. Here's one idea. I think that all of the departments should take their tutors back. So, math should have math tutoring. English should have English tutoring. So, instead of having this central place, I mean, if the choice is online or in person, each department can go back to having their little pool of face-to-face people, so kind of like The Writing Center. Yeah, take The Writing Center, which goes back to the English department. Mm-hmm, and whoever needs help from across campus can still come, but it's managed within the English department and not part of this one-stop thing that has never really worked. Anyway, that would be my one.
Anna E Cooper 1:13:25
Makes sense, yeah. Thank you for your feedback. So, before concluding the interview, I just wanted to provide you with a chance to mention any additional insights or comments about your time at each tutoring center.
Participant #6 1:14:11
I think the magical thing about directing a tutoring center is that it's voluntary. Students voluntarily come in for help, and so the need to be there is genuine, and they're generally invested. And that creates a much friendlier situation than being required to come visit. And I found that to be true in every tutoring situation. And I'm sad that there's no, there's no writing center. There's no math center. There's just this vague academic support center thing over there that I don't know. I don't know what they're doing. Yeah, that's good. So, I think we're in a huge transition, and we just have to wait and see what's going to happen. I'm glad I'm retiring, yeah.
Anna E Cooper 1:15:18
OK. Thank you so much for your time and your thorough responses. We have officially concluded the interview, and your participation was very helpful for my thesis project.

◉ **Anna E Cooper** stopped transcription.

Participant #7 Transcript

February 6, 2025, 3:06PM

[Note: This transcript also includes information from Participant #8].

Anna E Cooper 0:03
OK. OK. It's working now. It's working now. OK. OK. So, I'm doing interview #7, and I'm about to read the IRB research statement. OK. So, you are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled "VSU Writing Centers: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies," which is being conducted by Anna Cooper, a graduate student at Valdosta State University.
Anna E Cooper 0:35
The purpose of the study is to show how three of Valdosta State University's writing centers, the Writing Center, Student Success Center, and the Academic Support Center, have changed over the years. This research will analyze what has changed and what has stayed the same through each iteration of tutoring writing at VSU. You'll receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about possible paths forward for tutoring writing as VSU adjusts to rapidly advancing technologies and changes in the larger environment. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in the study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately at least 55 minutes and at most 85 minutes, or one hour and 25 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded to capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the interview recording has been transcribed, the recording will be immediately deleted from recording devices. Your name will be deleted from the interview transcripts, and pseudonyms will be used to anonymize your data, which will be included in the research study's references chapter. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding, or to skip questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to leave the study, audio-recorded conversations and any written information linking you to the research study will be destroyed. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Anna Cooper at aecooper@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review under federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by federal law, protects the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB administrator at 229-253-2947 or IRB@valdosta.edu. So, I've completed reading the research statement. So, we're just going to make sure that the participant agrees to the research statement.
Participant #7 3:04
Yes, I agree.
Anna E Cooper 3:07
OK, perfect. So, now we're going to move on to the questions. So, we're going to begin with the 8 opening questions. What is the name of the tutoring center you work with currently or have worked with before?
Participant #7 3:26
I directed the writing center, which was part of the English department, not a separate entity.

Anna E Cooper 3:35
OK, how many years did you work for each tutoring center? Or the one you just mentioned?
Participant #7 3:40
To begin, I was the director from 1995 to 2004.
Anna E Cooper 3:48
OK, what is your current job position and positions you have had? How many years have you worked for each? If you can recall.
Participant #7 3:58
After being The Writing Center director, I mean, I was an English professor the whole time, but I was the writing across the curriculum coordinator. No, I'm sorry. I was the writing project director from 2005 to probably 2012. And then, I was the writing across the curriculum coordinator from 2012 to maybe 2015. And then I became the department chair of English, maybe in 2016? I'd have to check, OK. And I did that as interim for two years and then as actual department head for three years. So, a total of five years. And starting this year, so 2024, I'm the general education coordinator.
Anna E Cooper 5:04
OK. Thank you, #4. During the hiring process, when you reflect on the writing center, how were writing tutors typically hired, and what qualifications would you say an ideal writing tutor should have?
Participant #7 5:21
Most of the writing tutors were English majors, but that was not a requirement.
They were nominated by a faculty member or expressed interest and then received a letter of reference from a faculty member. But they were mostly English undergraduate students, and then a graduate student or two was kind of like a supervisor or assistant director of sorts for tutors.
Anna E Cooper 5:52
OK. What tutoring disciplines did your tutoring center support, and have these services shifted over time?
Participant #7 6:02
Because we functioned within the English department, I got one course release to direct the writing center. We were strictly writing, so we helped mostly with composition 1101 and 1102, and then maybe some upper-division classes if students had writing to do in those, or if students had writing in other disciplines, they could also come to us. But really, the bulk of the work was 1101 and 1102.
Anna E Cooper 6:33
OK. So how did students receive writing tutoring services?
Participant #7 6:41
Still, my time as writing center director was face-to-face tutorials. But we did when I was the director—sorry, let me back up and say we were also in a computer lab. So, we had a classroom with computers around the periphery. So, 25 computers, and then we did tutoring in the middle, and we had another office right next door. I don't remember the office number, but it's where an [English professor's] office was and where [another English professor's] office is now. That was also part of The Writing Center. That was where we kept records, and that's where we did some tutorials. So, most of that was face-to-face. But we did experiment with using new modes, which was a synchronous writing environment to do tutorials. And I did some publications on that, and then we had [a student] who was an undergraduate tutor create a synchronous code and create a synchronous tutorial system for us to use.

Anna E Cooper 7:46
OK. Thank you, #7. What steps did the tutoring center take to advertise writing tutoring services for students?
Participant #7 7:57
We did classroom visits, but we also printed bookmarks, and we often used writerly quotes like —I think it's the quote by Hemingway about why he wrote the ending to A Farewell to Arms 39 times? And he said to get the word dried or something. So, we printed those, and we would distribute them in classes, but we would also often take them to the bookstore and have them put them in the bags when students bought their textbooks. Word of mouth. We also did report forms, so when a student came in for a tutorial, we filled out a note and sent it to the professor. So, the professor would know the student was seeking help in case it encouraged the professor to look more favorably on the student's writing.
Anna E Cooper 8:46
OK. Thank you. To close the opening questions, #8: How do you feel? Like, how does writing tutoring contribute to VSU student success?
Participant #7 8:58
I can't quote the data, but I have been quoted the data before that shows that students who take advantage of The Writing Center, the Academic Success Center, or whatever it's called in its recent iteration. They are retained at higher rates. They have higher grades. Often, real benefit accrues to the people who tutor. They learn the material better, and they become better writers themselves. They become better teachers. So, it's a win-win if we can support it financially.
Anna E Cooper 9:30
OK. That concludes the opening questions. We're going to move on to the direct questions pertaining more to the writing center and tutoring. So, #1, from an institutional perspective, what are the main goals of the tutoring center, and how do these goals align with day-to-day tutoring operations and services provided to students? So, the main goals of The Writing Center.
Participant #7 10:04
The main goals of The Writing Center were to help students succeed. I think in all its iterations [tutoring] has been about student success, and also, to be fair, the other thing The Writing Center did when it was within the English department was help with computer use, which was still fairly new at that time. So, we did orientations for almost every comp class on how to use Word and how to set up papers. I mean really basic kind of stuff, because at that time there were no computer classrooms. So, students would come in, and we would teach them how to do that. And then when the center wasn't being used for classroom visits by teachers because they could reserve it as well, just to let their students type, students could use it as an off-campus lab so students could come in and work on their paper also. So, we were teaching them how to set it up, and we probably had as much of that use as we did tutorials at the beginning.
Anna E Cooper 11:06
OK. Thank you for #1. OK. #2, can you explain your main responsibilities and how you contributed to the writing center? Please include any additional roles you've had that further supported the program.
Participant #7 11:24
Mostly as director, my job was to select tutors, train tutors, and make sure the center was staffed at reasonable hours. We kept —because it was also a computer lab—We kept it open until 9 o'clock at night, probably for students. So, we had to keep people working, and we also had to make sure it was safe for people to be working. So, sometimes that meant two people working at

night. There's a whole lot of budgeting stuff, and I don't—I was not as prepared for my first year. Turning in timecards, doing all the backside [tasks]. Also, we had some funds, very limited, but some funds to support tutors attending conferences and presenting at conferences, so a couple of times I co-presented with our undergraduate or graduate student tutors at conferences in Atlanta or relatively close, Savannah maybe. So, we used money to support those efforts too.

Anna E Cooper 12:33

OK. Moving on to #3, how did the physical tutoring environment promote efficiency and productivity for writing tutors and tutees who attended tutoring sessions?

Participant #7 12:46

The setup probably wasn't optimal in West Hall because most students thought of that as a computer lab, and then we moved tutorials to the other office for the most part. We did a lot of tutorials; we had a table in the center of that classroom with computers around the edges so we could do maybe two tutorials in the room with the computers, which is of course what happened at night when there were very few people there. But we also had that other office where we could do tutorials. It probably wasn't the best environment, but what happened because of the computers is we eventually started tracking on-demand tutorials or how we answered quick questions about writing that came up while people were writing, which weren't really tutorials as much as quick conversations about writing skills.

Anna E Cooper 13:41

OK. Did you witness any major changes in the tutoring center's environment and structure in terms of the building itself, services provided, and levels of student engagement?

Participant #7 13:54

Probably the main thing, the main change during my time, was the movement toward trying to do synchronous tutorials. We were opposed to e-mail the whole time because we thought it would turn into correcting students' papers. But the synchronous tutorials, those were a lot of fun to experiment with and play around with, and I think beneficial to all of us.

Anna E Cooper 14:19

OK, #4, how did the writing center navigate students' sociocultural factors, welcoming tutees of various backgrounds and identities? Some examples could be freshman students, graduate students, international students, and students with disabilities.

Participant #7 14:40

We dealt primarily with freshmen. You know, overwhelmingly with freshmen. We always try to hire students who come close to matching the demographics of the school. So, you know, we were not all white tutors tutoring white and African American students. Probably some of the biggest conflicts came around international students because we weren't really trained well enough about how to work with the particular language issues that population might have had. So, I did a lot of that. It was an area of research for me for a while because I was trying to make sure I understood what we could and couldn't do. And sometimes I would just take those students myself or talk about what I did. Like when I had a student from Vietnam, where, at the time, from everything I understood, there were no verb endings in that language, so verb tense was really a confusing issue. So, we did minimal marking. Haswell's minimal marking, where I was just going to check on the line that had a problem and he would try to find it, and we would work until we did. And so, we shared that strategy. There were a whole lot of "Let's get together as a community and talk about how to deal with this issue."

Anna E Cooper 16:14

OK. Thank you. Were there any strategies? You kind of mentioned one already in place. Or

programs that promoted inclusivity in the writing center's tutoring environment?
Participant #7 16:31
I don't know that there were programs per se, but I think for the most part the staff consisted of people who were empathetic and looking for ways to help. And so, while no programs existed, I think we were always careful to check privilege and try to investigate our own biases.
Anna E Cooper 16:55
OK. Moving on to question #5, were there any major institutional changes that impacted the writing center's focus or ability to meet students' needs?
Participant #7 17:07
Umm. No, I mean there are never enough resources at a state institution for what needs to happen. It would have been nice to have more tutoring possibilities, and VSU definitely needed tutoring in areas outside of writing, but that was beyond the scope of what The Writing Center did.
Anna E Cooper 17:31
OK. Did you notice that the tutees' writing needs shifted or stayed the same, and did the writing center make any adjustments to support these needs?
Participant #7 17:48
I don't really remember. I suspect the biggest shift was a movement from mostly in-class essays to out-of-class essays and drafting, printing drafts, and turning in drafts.
Probably some of the biggest changes during that change had mostly happened.
I think the drafting and responding and how to revise based on faculty feedback was probably more of what we worked on.
Anna E Cooper 18:20
OK, number six. What were the institutional policies or administrative duties that writing tutors were expected to follow and complete?
Participant #7 18:35
The administrative duties really just consisted of filling out the tutor report forms and putting those in our campus mail to get to faculty members, and then we filed—it was a triple kit form, so we gave a copy to the tutor, sent a copy to the professor, and put a copy in a folder we kept of our tutorials. So, that was filed by student name so that if you were working with a student, you could pull it up and see what had been worked on. You could flip through those forms if we had returning people, graduate students who were kind of like supervisors. We had two GAs usually; maybe we just had one. I don't remember. And they were kind of like a supervisor. So, they made sure that we were checking issues; they kind of kept me informed about any problems or struggles that were happening. I did all the training. We had a tutor training class for that, but they were kind of eyes and ears and feet on the ground. And my office was actually, I don't know the number, but you know where [English professor's] office is? So, 2107 or 2108. One of those, the one on the same side, is [an English professor's] office. My office is where [an English professor's] office is. The Writing Center was right there, and then the office across the hall is the tutoring part and the record-keeping part. So, we were all—I could listen in on The Writing Center every day, and tutors could pop in right there.
Anna E Cooper 20:09
OK. Thank you for that explanation. So, following up on that question, how did these duties support The Writing Center's effectiveness?
Participant #7 20:24
I think we were still working on visibility, so the tutor report forms were helping faculty know

that tutoring was happening and helping to quell any fears that faculty might have that we were proofreading papers for students. So, it was kind of just a statement of, here's what we did. She came into work on this, and here's what we worked on. Let me know if you have any questions kind of statement. That's visibility. That was also just keeping lines of communication open. I'm not sure I answered your question.

Anna E Cooper 21:03

OK. Thank you for #6. So, we're going to move on to #7. How did the writing center provide writing tutors with peer and staff support? How did the program promote tutoring and staff cooperation and collaboration?

Participant #7 21:21

I think for probably the first eight years, it was almost like a family within a larger group of people that were really close. It was a very small staff. We might have had eight people total who did the work, so it was small and cohesive. We would occasionally have a student or two who were on Pell grants, who were on student work study, who were assigned to us, or we requested English majors if any English major was on work study. We were like, "Oh, come tutor for us," because that was free money for us, and they got to do something relevant to their major. So, it was a very small group. Sometimes it was just somebody who did the orientations but didn't tutor or who kept the place open at night. So, it was a really small group, and most of them got along really well. In fact, one of them, one of the grad tutors and undergrad tutors, ended up dating, and they got married. They just published their story on the VSU page where they're asking for Valentine stories: "Did you meet at VSU?" There was not a lot of dating in The Writing Center, but that was one. But also, because we were fairly close, often I would take them, like I said, to conferences, and so they also got professional development.

Anna E Cooper 22:53

OK. Thank you for sharing those stories. So, moving on to #8, the tutoring center usually highlights the importance of social collaboration and tutors connecting with tutees during the writing process. How were writing tutors trained to tutor so that collaboration was implemented during tutoring sessions? Could you also share some writing tutoring training practices that help tutors focus on engaging with the tutee throughout the writing process rather than the tutor only focusing on the final writing product?

Participant #7 23:30

Basic strategies I remember were really starting a conversation with your class, "How's it going? What are you working on? What do you want to work on?" So, it was always within the client's control, and then some of the same strategies, when possible, sit on the same side, keep the paper in front of them, and have them read aloud so that you're listening and responding rather than taking over and marking up the text. But also, I think it helped that all the tutors, most of the tutors, went through the same composition classes. So, at that time, there wasn't a whole lot of AP or dual enrollment or anything that took those students out of composition classes. So often the tutors not only had been through those same classes, but they also had those same teachers that kind of knew what somebody expected, or—so I mean, we worked on that, but of course there were always problems where, you know, sometimes there might be an accent issue or somebody is super soft-spoken. So, maybe the tutor would read.

Anna E Cooper 24:46

OK. So, thank you for those strategies. So, #9 is based on your observations. Did writing tutors typically study English and literature? If not, how did you ensure that peer tutors of other disciplines had the same writing skills as peer tutors who studied English?

Participant #7 25:07
Most of our people are English majors, but because I taught comp, I also kept an eye out for strong writers who weren't. So, one of the people I was talking about [a writing tutor] was actually a theater major. She was a really good writer in my 1102 class, so I asked her to be a tutor, and she was a really good tutor. And still, I would probably say 99% of the tutors were English majors because they had an investment in doing that kind of work. So, even though they're good tutors, I mean, good writers who weren't English majors, they wanted to do stuff relevant to their major, not writing.
Anna E Cooper 25:45
OK.
Anna E Cooper 25:45
That makes sense. So, this is the follow-up question for that one. Since The Writing Center did not include writing tutoring with other tutoring subjects like math or science, what are the benefits of separating writing tutoring from the other tutoring subjects? And what are some drawbacks you can think of when separating the two?
Participant #7 26:11
I think—pushing back a little bit against the question because it assumes that both of those were an option at that time, and I don't think across the curriculum wasn't an option. So, The Writing Center was still fairly newish, I think. I'll have to look back and see when it was created. And I don't know how long the person who directed it before me directed it, so I don't know what the gap was between one [The Writing Center director] and another [The Writing Center director] who's not here anymore. And then I took over from [the second The Writing Center director], but I don't think we were just trying to do something in English that would help students as writers, since every student had to take two comp. classes, and I think math has often done tutoring as well.
Anna E Cooper 27:10
OK, so #10 to close the directed questions. What should writing tutoring look like?
Participant #7 27:22
I think I've been out of the writing center field too long to know what's going on there now. But I mean, I think writing tutoring should always follow what the student needs. So, the goal is always to help students become better writers and thinkers to communicate more clearly and succeed in whatever assignments are in front of them, in whatever discipline is in front of them.
Anna E Cooper 27:49
So these are the follow-up questions to that question. How are the writing tutors evaluated for success? Was there any data or feedback that was assessed to measure writing tutoring effectiveness?
Participant #7 28:06
No, I don't think we really had anything other than the occasional compliment or complaint that would come back from faculty. I don't think we had anything. We did not survey students, for example, on how successful their interactions were, and we did not collect—we were not a data-heavy institution at that time, so there was not a lot of data to collect.
Anna E Cooper 28:37
OK. This concludes the directed questions, and we're going to move on to the open-ended questions. So, we're going to reflect on major changes you've seen and then any suggestions that you have. OK. So, question 11 is, during your employment, how did the tutoring center change over time? And also, how did the writing tutor's role change, such as how the tutoring center

approached how writing tutors tutored writing?
Participant #7 29:27
When [a previous dean] was dean, she had a vision for tutoring across the university, across disciplines, and I think that was exactly where we needed to go. So, I think that move was a good one, and I think there were definitely resources put in to support that. I think it was also a good move to move tutoring from Langdale Hall to the library and put it in the center of an academic building that probably doesn't get as much student use as it should, and I mean the visits to the library increased dramatically after that move was made, and the space is nice. That's a nice setup, yeah. So, I think all those moves were great for the institution. The problem is, there's been a little bit of whiplash lately, like we're reeling from one thing to another. So, I think the move to shrink those services again or to farm those out—it doesn't seem to me like farming out stuff like the bookstore or farming out stuff like housing or farming out stuff like food prep and dining services. I don't have the big picture, so I have zero ideas about cost savings, but I'm not sure those are in the best interest of our students, so I have some concerns about that, but I honestly don't know enough. I will say tutoring across the curriculum is absolutely something that should be happening; whether that happens in a central place or whether that happens in individual colleges, it needs to happen.
Anna E Cooper 31:11
OK. Thank you for number 11. So, #12, during your involvement with the writing center. What are some administrative challenges that the center experienced, such as employees, institutional support, or resources?
Participant #7 31:28
These are the institutional challenges: I think the last year I got kind of burned out on it, mostly because of personnel issues. We had very few personnel challenges over time, but the ones we had were big. So, like, we had a graduate advisor who we had to remove for inappropriate conversations with undergraduate tutors and scents that suggested that he was intoxicated for, you know, just problems. And that was handled OK. And then the second one was towards the end of my time as writing staff director. There was an undergraduate who I was fearful of, with mental health issues and potential suicide attempts and just serious concerns, but also a lot of drama, a lot of drama, and I wanted to walk away. So, it worked out perfectly because another colleague and I, she wanted to walk away from what she was doing. I wanted to walk away from what I was doing, so we just switched, and so it worked out perfectly.
Anna E Cooper 32:46
OK. So, following up on that question, how could the challenges you experience at the writing center be improved or addressed for future writing tutoring at VSU?
Participant #7 32:59
I think that kind of stuff has already been addressed. There's a whole lot more human resources training given to pretty much everyone. So, I think a lot of us have sought out conflict management support. A lot of us have gotten a lot more savvy about how to use the structures that are in place that I did not know anything about when I became The Writing Center director, and I had not really been in charge of other people before at that point. And the academy had, you know, jobs elsewhere, but not here, and the situations are completely different. So, I think some of those things are already happening.
Anna E Cooper 33:41
OK. That concludes the open-ended questions. So, before concluding the interview, I just wanted to provide you with a chance to mention any additional insights or comments about your time at

The Writing Center—if I didn't ask any questions about things you wanted to mention.

Participant #7 34:12

When you contacted me about the interview, I realized that I didn't know a lot about the history, so I reached out to a former colleague (Participant #8) who's retired and asked him what he remembered about it. And I'm just going to share some of what he told me. He talked about The Writing Center starting downstairs at Pound Hall, on North Campus, because West Hall was being renovated. They had 26 Apple 2E computers, and they spent a lot of time introducing students to basic word processing, which we were still doing when I took over. Like, look, you can have spell check, and you can copy and move sentences around. I mean, just really basic stuff. How to do bibliography entries, that kind of thing. And it sounds very rudimentary now, but it was almost revolutionary at the time because it was that new, and this would have been in, OK, the 80s, I think. It made editing easier. It made writing more of a process than a one-shot production. In the early years, they spent a lot of time having students write their papers over two periods in The Writing Center, while their teachers paced the room and answered questions. So, during that time is when writing moved from like 305 to 500 words written in class to longer essays that were at least drafted a little bit. So, he also thinks that's when graduate assistants first started in the English department. It was to help with The Writing Center. [An English professor] got a one-course reassignment to be the director, but he had to drive to North Campus a lot. He taught tons of word processing classes through that, and he named some people. [A graduate student] was an early grad assistant, and another [graduate student]—one was from lit. and one was from journalism, which was kind of what the department was at that time. And there were some undergraduate tutors too. In fact, I remember that I was a student when [an English professor] was the writing center director, and I did not become a tutor until I was a grad assistant. So as a grad assistant, I was a tutor, but I remember going over there to that writing center. In terms of administrative support, Tom Dasher was the department head, and he was really interested in composition. So, he helped push this through to get a writing center started. Louis Brown was the vice president of academic affairs at the time and very supportive, so what happened when West Hall finished being renovated? They created a room for The Writing Center, put the computers in there, and it was directly across from the English department, you know. You know the setup. I'm describing where it is OK—created graduate assistant assistantships to help staff it, and all of that visibly demonstrated that the college at the time was committed to making writing composition central to the English department. OK. I think that's most of what he gave me, and like I said, there was one director between [another English professor] and me, and that was [an English professor], who's no longer here. I think he went to Matthew Lipscomb College in Nashville, TN; I don't know. It's been a long time.

Anna E Cooper 38:09

OK. Thank you so much for your time and your thorough responses and for including other staff members' experiences at The Writing Center. We're now going to conclude the interview and thank you again for your contribution to my thesis.

◉ **Anna E Cooper** stopped transcription.

Participant #9 Transcript

February 7, 2025, 2:13PM
Anna E. Cooper 0:05
OK. This is interview #9, and I am about to read the IRB research statement to the participant. OK, you are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled "VSU Writing Centers: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies, which is being conducted by Anna Cooper, a graduate student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to show how three of Valdosta State University's writing centers, The Writing Center, Student Success Center, and Academic Support Center, have changed over the years. This research will analyze what has changed and what has stayed the same through each iteration of tutoring writing at VSU. You'll receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us Learn more about possible paths forward for tutoring writing as VSU adjusts to rapidly advancing technologies and changes in the larger environment. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately at least 55 minutes and at most 85 minutes, or one hour and 25 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded to capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the interview recording has been transcribed, the recording will be immediately deleted from recording devices. Your name will be deleted from the interview transcripts, and pseudonyms will be used to anonymize your data, which will be included in the research study's references chapter. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding, or to skip questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to leave the study, audio-recorded conversations and any written information linking you to the research study will be destroyed. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Anna Cooper at aecooper@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review under federal regulations. The IRB University Committee, established by federal law, protects the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB administrator at 229-253-2947 or IRB@valdosta.edu. So, before beginning our questions, does the participant accept the research statement?
Participant #9 3:18
Yes, I accept.
Anna E. Cooper 3:20
OK, perfect. We are going to be looking at questionnaire number one for the tutors.
So, we're going to begin with the opening questions first. So, the first question: what was the name of your writing center called?
Participant #9 3:40
It was called just The Writing Center.
Anna E. Cooper 3:46
OK, perfect. How many years or semesters do you remember tutoring writing?
Participant #9 3:55
I started out on the quarter system, so it ended up being year-wise. See, I started in the fall of '97, and I believe that I stopped working in The Writing Center as a student tutor at the end of 1999.

It was either spring or summer of 1999.
Anna E. Cooper 4:33
OK. Thank you so much. So as a writing tutor, did you have any additional roles or duties in the writing center?
Participant #9 4:36
Mm-hmm.
Yes, the writing center was located in part of a computer lab that was open and available for anybody at the institution to use, and we would, in addition to, of course, helping students with their writing, also lead classes in a kind of overview of how to use the computers. So, if classes were coming in, we would talk to them about how to format their paper, and we would then open up Word and show them, here's how you double-space.
Anna E. Cooper 5:21
Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 5:33
Here's how you center, and there's how you do the hanging [indent].
Anna E. Cooper 5:35
Oh yeah.
Participant #9 5:37
Yeah. So, and then we would also, if there were any—if anybody encountered any type of technological issue while they were working, we would attempt to troubleshoot.
Anna E. Cooper 5:49
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 5:49
Some of us were better at that than others.
Anna E. Cooper 5:54
Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 5:57
But, but that was something else that we also would do.
Anna E. Cooper 6:02
OK. Thank you so much. So, #4, what made you want to become a writing tutor? And how were you hired?
Participant #9 6:14
I didn't know I wanted to be one. Honestly, I took, at the time it was English 102 before it became 1102, and the summer prior to me being hired, the professor for the course happened to be the director of The Writing Center at that time. I did not know that. But one of the things that we did as part of our class was give feedback on two or three other students' papers and their drafts. And so, we would have to exchange, and after maybe the first go-round of that—
Anna E. Cooper 6:55
OK. Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 7:03
The professor was very interested in the level of detail that I went into with my comments.
Anna E. Cooper 7:13
Oh, that's so cool.
Participant #9 7:14
And the feedback that I gave, it wasn't just grammatical, but it was also asking questions and pointing out things that maybe needed to be expanded or whatever, and.

Anna E. Cooper 7:27
Yeah.
Participant #9 7:29
And then she actually said in the class, "Hey, if anybody, you know, wants really good feedback, go to her, and then he approached me".
Anna E. Cooper 7:38
Hmm.
Participant #9 7:41
Not long after that, she asked me if I would be interested in working in The Writing Center, and I asked her what all that entailed and what that was all about, and so I said, "Absolutely, I'm interested." I want to say, and I honestly don't remember. I feel like I may have had to fill out, like, an application or something. I was already working on campus as a student assistant, so that part of the paperwork was already done. But I don't remember necessarily if there was any type of interview process or anything.
Anna E. Cooper 8:06
OK. OK.
Participant #9 8:17
He approached me about it.
Anna E. Cooper 8:18
OK. That's really cool.
Participant #9 8:21
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 8:22
What was your major when you were tutoring?
Participant #9 8:26
I was an English major.
Anna E. Cooper 8:27
OK. What courses? If you can remember, did you support it whenever you were tutoring writing?
Participant #9 8:36
At that point, there was not a writing across the curriculum initiative or anything like that that existed at Valdosta State, so.
Anna E. Cooper 8:46
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 8:48
Anybody who had any writing would come in.
Anna E. Cooper 8:52
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 8:52
Of course, you would see a lot of people within the English department just because of proximity. So, when there was a business writing course, and you know you're typically English 101 or 1101, 1102, as you know, it changed into the semester system, but—
Anna E. Cooper 9:14
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 9:15
There were students, even in psychology and criminal justice, and some of those we would see as

well.
Anna E. Cooper 9:21
OK. So, you kind of began to go into question #7, but if you have any additional answers, you can mention them. So, which students did you tutor in writing, such as a specific class or a variety of students?
Participant #9 9:41
I honestly serviced everybody across the institution, so it was never class-specific.
Anna E. Cooper 9:46
Mm-hmm. OK. OK. That makes sense. OK, so #8, how did these students learn about writing tutoring services that came to the writing center?
Participant #9 10:02
You know. I'm not really sure. I imagined some of them, I think by virtue of the fact that we were in a computer lab, and, you know, because the students would come in and they would work on papers, they could do it in the library too, but those were primarily the two locations that had computer labs available, and we were running off of DOS.
Anna E. Cooper 10:32
Really.
Participant #9 10:34
When I first started, it was old. It was old. This is like the dark ages before Google-type stuff, but—
Anna E. Cooper 10:42
That is crazy.
Participant #9 10:44
I know it's insane, but I think some of them did because it was, I imagine their faculty probably told them about [tutoring].
Anna E. Cooper 11:00
Yeah.
Participant #9 11:02
But then there are others where I'm sure it was literally proximity. You know, cause it was.
Anna E. Cooper 11:13
Yeah.
Participant #9 11:14
The writing center was across the hallway from the English department.
Anna E. Cooper 11:21
OK.
Participant #9 11:22
So, or, you know, the main office for the English department. That's my guess.
Or them coming in and working on an assignment and then realizing that the people who are sitting around at the big table in there are available to help them.
Anna E. Cooper 11:39
OK, I could see that. OK. So, to conclude the opening question #9, what makes writing tutoring beneficial or important to you?
Participant #9 11:52
I'm a big advocate, even still to this day. Professionally, I'm a big advocate of always having another set of eyes on anything you write.
Anna E. Cooper 11:58

Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #9 12:03
I actually even started doing that before I worked in The Writing Center. My mom started out her career as a high school English teacher, and I would just give her my papers and say, "Will you read this and make sure I didn't do anything stupid?"
Anna E. Cooper 12:18
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 12:23
Stupid, which was a translation for "Are my ideas making sense?"
Anna E. Cooper 12:24
Yeah.
Participant #9 12:28
Is everything flowing right?
Anna E. Cooper 12:28
Yes.
Participant #9 12:29
All the stuff. But I think getting that outside perspective because one of the things that tends to happen, and even more so now, is that we're so used to writing shorthand through texting and other types of mobile communication.
Anna E. Cooper 12:50
Yeah.
Participant #9 12:54
And then the idea of nothing is ever, everything online, and I'm generalizing, of course, that we see so many mistakes and errors and poorly written things that we start to internalize that.
Anna E. Cooper 13:11
Yes. Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 13:18
And then there's also that idea that happens when students type. Their brains go faster than their fingers sometimes, and so they can omit things. And then you also have the phenomenon of when you re-read.
Anna E. Cooper 13:36
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 13:37
If you're reading your own work, you're reading what you think you wrote instead of what's actually on the page, and so having another set of eyes is always going to benefit you to make sure—
Anna E. Cooper 13:46
Yes.
Participant #9 13:49
That the goals that you set out to achieve were met because you are too close to what you wrote to be able to objectively, sometimes, determine that yourself.
Anna E. Cooper 14:11
Yeah, that's a really good point. OK. So that concludes the opening questions.
Participant #9 14:19
Mm-hmm.
Anna E. Cooper 14:20

Now, we're going to move on to the 10 direct questions. So, if you can remember, what writing tutoring training did you receive before becoming a writing tutor? As a writing tutor, do you complete further training through meetings, classes, or training sessions?
Participant #9 14:42
We were required to take a tutor preparation course. I want to say it was—it may have been like a one-hour credit course, keeping in mind the era of the quarter system at that time.
Anna E. Cooper 14:57
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 15:01
Of the quarter system at that time. So, you know we have five classes instead of three-hour classes, but I want to say it was like a one-hour class.
Anna E. Cooper 15:03
Yeah. OK.
Participant #9 15:11
And, like I said, I can't 100% recall, but I feel like I had to register for it.
Anna E. Cooper 15:15
Yes.
Participant #9 15:18
I feel like it was a pass-fail type thing, probably, but I do remember we went over pedagogy, we went over approaches, we had readings, and we had to meet weekly to talk about—
Anna E. Cooper 15:22
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 15:36
Best practices and stuff.
Anna E. Cooper 15:38
OK. So how did these training sessions or classes help you assess and adjust your writing tutoring effectiveness?
Participant #9 15:52
It really set the stage for trying to have the student do their own work.
Anna E. Cooper 16:03
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 16:06
You know, it wasn't just, "I'm going to go through and I'm going to correct all your grammar."
Anna E. Cooper 16:13
Yeah.
Participant #9 16:14
But look at it more holistically, which is kind of when I was doing those peer-review feedback things in English 102. I was doing a combination of both, but if I saw something grammatically incorrect, then I would mark it.
Anna E. Cooper 16:34
OK.
Participant #9 16:36
But that wasn't the only thing I was marking, you know. So, it kind of helped put the whole process in perspective as far as what that relationship and that role are between the writer and the tutor.
Anna E. Cooper 17:03

OK. Thank you for that breakdown. So, that completes #1, so #2. Can you discuss the main goals of the writing center where you worked?
Participant #9 17:20
They were helping students with their papers, you know, helping students.
Anna E. Cooper 17:30
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 17:33
And you know that the side goal was also the computer lab, and I'm using air quotes here.
Anna E. Cooper 17:45
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 17:46
Because there were probably maybe 18 or 20 computers. It was like up against the wall, like in a big circle around the room. So, also, you know, helping them know how to format as well.
Anna E. Cooper 18:01
Yes.
Participant #9 18:02
But it was helping students with their writing.
Anna E. Cooper 18:08
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 18:08
No matter where they were in the process, yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 18:11
So at the time, what were your professional goals, and how did these goals influence your writing tutoring practices?
Participant #9 18:21
At the time when I grew up, I wanted to be a book editor.
Anna E. Cooper 18:25
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 18:26
And I loved the idea of it. I have romanticized the idea of it, but I went into college thinking this is what I want to do.
Anna E. Cooper 18:41
Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 18:42
I was a bookworm. I learned in high school that I was really good at writing papers, and so I had a student teacher in my junior English class who said that he had a friend who was a book editor and worked from home.
Anna E. Cooper 19:04
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 19:04
They would send that person manuscripts, and they would, you know, do their thing and send it back. And I thought, man, that's the greatest thing ever.
Anna E. Cooper 19:14
Yeah.
Participant #9 19:15
You can read published books before they're published. Sign me up.

Anna E. Cooper 19:19
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 19:20
That was my initial goal.
Anna E. Cooper 19:27
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 19:28
And most of what I wanted to do through my undergraduate career was that was what I wanted to do. When I grow up, so. Having that perspective, I was all about looking at people's writing and giving them feedback. Looking at the big picture and the little picture that I would see in their writing. So, it aligned perfectly. It was like the ideal job.
Anna E. Cooper 20:03
OK. Yeah, that's perfect. OK, so #3, can you explain your approaches for tutoring a student in writing? Please run me through how a typical writing tutoring session with you would go.
Participant #9 20:25
We did not operate, to my recollection, on any type of appointment basis, so there might be two or three of us students in there. There was, I want to say, we always had a graduate assistant working, but there would be at least two of us on duty at the same time, sometimes three, and they would come in and just say, you know, "I need help with my paper," and whoever was available would sit down with them.
Most times, I don't recall too many sessions being earlier in the writing process; most of the time, they were later in the writing process.
Anna E. Cooper 21:17
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #9 21:22
And I wanted to make sure everything was clean. But I would sit down with them and say, you know, "I'll, I'll help you. What are you working on? What are you interested in? What kind of help are you looking for today? I took 2 approaches.
Anna E. Cooper 21:48
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 21:49
One I would —I practiced, and there was an article. Oh gosh, I can't remember.
Anna E. Cooper 21:57
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 21:58
From what? The early 90s, maybe that Michael Pemberton [wrote], who's, you know, huge in the writing center world. Michael Pemberton had—I wanted to say it was Michael Pemberton; I might be lying—an article about minimal markings and how you would just, like, make a mark in, you know, whether it be a check mark or a dot or a star, or, you know, you would mark in the margins where there were problems.
Anna E. Cooper 22:10
Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #9 22:24
So that you could discuss them.
Anna E. Cooper 22:30
Mm-hmm.

Participant #9 22:30
And I sometimes would take that approach; sometimes I would make the student read the paper to see —you know, out loud. And then sometimes I would start reading, and a lot of times they would be, you know, shorter assignments anyway.
Anna E. Cooper 22:53
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 22:53
I might read through and then start talking, and we would talk about, "OK, let's talk about commas, you know, or we've got an issue with a comma before every single—and why?"
Anna E. Cooper 23:07
Yeah.
Participant #9 23:09
And things like that, so we would talk. Sometimes it would be looking at their bibliography. If you know they were doing a research paper, you know, wanting to make sure that it was following MLA style.
Anna E. Cooper 23:21
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 23:27
You know that it is formatted correctly.
Anna E. Cooper 23:30
Yeah.
Participant #9 23:30
How do I format this?
Anna E. Cooper 23:33
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 23:33
So, a lot of it would depend, but I would try to have the student take ownership.
Anna E. Cooper 23:45
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 23:48
They weren't always open to having that pen in their hand, but I mean, it was always printed. The laptops were not a huge thing then, so they were printing the paper out and bringing [a draft], or they had a handwritten paper, you know?
Anna E. Cooper 24:04
Yeah.
Participant #9 24:10
So you know, we would talk through what their concerns might be if they got one giant paragraph. What's going on here? We need to organize this in some way, or, you know, you love commas. Let's talk about some rules with commas, and then here you go.
Anna E. Cooper 24:29
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #9 24:34
Fix it if you want to come back; we can look at it, but here are some basic comma rules to keep in mind. Now take that and run with it.
Anna E. Cooper 24:43
Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. OK. So, moving on to #4, how did you explain the writing

process to students, and how did you encourage students to work with you on their writing?
Participant #9 24:55
This one I'm having to reach deep back into my memory because of the 10 years I spent in the writing center here.
Anna E. Cooper 25:13
Yeah.
Participant #9 25:19
But, we explained the writing process to students if they were struggling, and then, like I said, it was rare that they would come in [during] those early stages.
Anna E. Cooper 25:31
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 25:33
We would focus on, like, your one, A, B, 2-3, you know, outlining ideas.
Anna E. Cooper 25:40
Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 25:43
We would talk about thesis statements, introductions, and conclusions. You know, we would talk about the basic components of an essay, since most of them were some type of essay.
Anna E. Cooper 25:59
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 26:04
Encouraging them was really trying to make them more [engaged]. They were more reluctant to drive.
Anna E. Cooper 26:18
Yes.
Participant #9 26:19
They wanted to sit in the passenger seat. They wanted to be a passive participant.
Anna E. Cooper 26:25
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 26:26
And sometimes, to get them going, you just had to be the one to push a little bit.
Anna E. Cooper 26:35
Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 26:38
But I would always try to get them to explain, "What did you mean here?" Especially if you have, like, a couple of sentences of just gobbledygook, and it would be nonsensical.
Anna E. Cooper 26:45
Yeah. Yeah.
Participant #9 26:52
It would be nonsensical because they were trying to sound too smart. They were editing, and things were getting cut, and they didn't realize that ideas weren't piecing together properly.
Anna E. Cooper 27:13
Yeah.
Participant #9 27:13
So, I would always try to make them read things out loud back to me.
Anna E. Cooper 27:20

Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #9 27:23
And have them explain almost like their perspective, "OK, so tell me why you put a comma here."
Anna E. Cooper 27:32
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 27:33
You know, that kind of thing. And you know, one of the things I mentioned earlier, I learned, and I have used this example. I mean, even recently I've used this example.
Students, when I say, you know, before that you read what you thought you wrote, what you actually [wrote] is not what is actually on the page.
Anna E. Cooper 28:04
Yes.
Participant #9 28:05
There was a student who had an entire phrase missing from their paper.
Anna E. Cooper 28:09
Oh my gosh.
Participant #9 28:10
And because, like, I mean they're in within the sentence, it was like there's something missing here. I know something's missing. I don't know what it is, and it was just, you know, a small little prepositional phrasing-type thing. But I asked the student to read the sentence back, and they read it. And I said, "[This is] what they thought they wrote." I said, "No, no, no. Read it again. Read it out loud and read what you wrote."
Anna E. Cooper 28:32
Yeah.
Participant #9 28:32
And they read it again, and they still filled in what was missing.
Anna E. Cooper 28:44
Oh my gosh.
Participant #9 28:46
And I said, "No, put your finger on every single word, and read every single word, and when they got to that part, they tried to read it. And they're like, "There's something missing, and I see."
Anna E. Cooper 29:00
Hmm.
Participant #9 29:02
This is why you need to have somebody else read.
Anna E. Cooper 29:02
Yeah.
Participant #9 29:06
This is why you have to disrupt that reading pattern and, you know, read it backwards, read it from the last sentence up to the first sentence, and each sentence at a time.
Anna E. Cooper 29:10
Yeah, that's crazy.
Participant #9 29:18
Because you're looking at the sentence and what you said and not what you actually wrote on the

page, because you will auto-fill and auto-correct.
Anna E. Cooper 29:27
Yeah, yeah.
Participant #9 29:29
So that was one of the biggest things I learned. The other one is that sometimes they don't care. They're just wanting somebody to fix everything before they turn it in.
Anna E. Cooper 29:50
Yeah, those are really informative stories. That's crazy that happened.
Participant #9 29:56
Well, I did —
Anna E. Cooper 29:56
So that —Oh, what were you saying? Sorry.
Participant #9 29:59
Go ahead. I did have one student, and I have told the story, even within the last year or so. I did have one student come in, and they had class. It was like 1150 or something like that, and they had sociology or something. It was like an 18-page paper-type thing, and they handed it to me.
Anna E. Cooper 30:24
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 30:26
They wanted help, and so I started, like, marking a few things that I wanted to talk about. And then, they said, "Don't write. Just tell me what I need to write out. And I said, "What?" And their paper was due at noon.
Participant #9 30:50
And they're just like, "I just want you to tell me what I need, what I need to fix before I'm fixing it, and turn this in." And I looked at the student.
Anna E. Cooper 30:57
Oh my gosh.
Participant #9 31:00
I handed the paper back, and I said, "You're going to need a lot of whiteout. I'm sorry I can't help you."
Anna E. Cooper 31:05
Yeah, that is crazy.
Participant #9 31:07
It was, yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 31:09
It is so interesting to hear about, like, people bringing more physical copies, because that's not something that we see often at all.
Participant #9 31:17
Yes, and that was exclusive. Like I said, laptops were not a thing, you know, so.
Anna E. Cooper 31:24
Yeah.
Participant #9 31:26
So, they had to print. Of course, we had the printer in there. There were no print limits or anything like that, and so you had to print it out and bring it with you.
It was crazy.
Anna E. Cooper 31:36

Yeah. So, that kind of answers the last question for number 4 of what did you learn from the students you've tutored? Unless there is anything else you wanted to mention.
Participant #9 31:50
I don't.
Anna E. Cooper 31:52
OK, perfect.
Participant #9 31:52
I don't think so but remind me if we don't cover it. I have a great story about resilience at some point.
Anna E. Cooper 32:08
OK. OK. Yeah, there will be some time at the very end if you want to mention any other additional stories that would be great.
Participant #9 32:19
OK, perfect.
Anna E. Cooper 32:21
Unless it comes up with any of these questions, which works too.
Participant #9 32:25
OK.
Anna E. Cooper 32:26
OK, perfect for #4. So, #5, during your time tutoring, how would you describe the tutoring environment? So, think about the physical location, the physical surroundings of The Writing Center, and also factor in the aspect of what the ambience or the feeling of the environment at The Writing Center is.
Participant #9 32:53
This space was, like I said before, a computer lab, and so, immediately when you walked in the door, there was the printer. It was also the printer that faculty would use, so there were always professors who were coming in and printing things, some of them cursing because it didn't print what they wanted. That was funny, but like I had said previously, there were about 20 computers, 18-20 computers probably, and they were facing the wall, and they were just like in a big, not U-shaped, but they went around from when you walked in the door immediately to the left, along the wall all the way around.
Anna E. Cooper 33:48
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 33:49
And in the middle, there were two large tables that were put together.
Anna E. Cooper 33:52
OK.
Participant #9 33:53
They were almost like kind of almost like big square tables. You know, it wasn't just like a six-foot table or anything, but there were big tables, and we had some reference books and stuff on there.
Anna E. Cooper 34:00
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 34:06
That was all we had. And so there were people in there working. Sometimes there might be a class in there working in there. Sometimes, you know, there might not be anybody in there, but

the environment was not very cozy or warm because of the bright lights and all that.
Anna E. Cooper 34:36
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 34:36
I mean, it was just like a classroom or any other space, so it could be distracting at times because you're trying to work with somebody, but there are people who might both be working with somebody, and there is just one student who has a computer problem, then somebody has to interrupt and get up and address that. And so, it wasn't the most efficient, but it was available, and we worked within it.
Anna E. Cooper 35:16
So to answer, did you find this tutoring environment efficient? You would say that it wasn't the best.
Participant #9 35:23
It wasn't ideal, but we made it work.
Anna E. Cooper 35:31
Yeah. OK, perfect. That's for #5, so #6.
Participant #9 35:33
So yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 35:39
How did you adjust your writing tutoring approaches? If you can recall how you supported various students, consider how sociocultural factors such as a tutee's background or identity impacted your tutoring sessions. Freshman students, graduate students, international students, and students with disabilities are some examples.
Participant #9 36:04
I don't feel like reflecting on it that I did too many—
Anna E. Cooper 36:14
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 36:19
That I adjusted too much.
Anna E. Cooper 36:23
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 36:25
Yes. We [had] graduate students and upperclassmen.
Anna E. Cooper 36:37
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 36:38
[Upperclassmen] typically had more complex issues they wanted to discuss as far as, like, what? Their flow and ideas organization. You know more global issues.
Anna E. Cooper 36:55
Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 37:01
And then you know your typical freshman and lower-level writers were more interested in mechanics.
Anna E. Cooper 37:09
Yeah.
Participant #9 37:18

Umm. International students were prevalent. We did see students who were, and I don't even know if it still exists at VSU. We had a requirement when I was there that students had to pass the Regent's exam. It was a University System of Georgia-wide. You had to pass. It was a basic reading and writing or reading comprehension and writing test.
Anna E. Cooper 37:56
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 37:59
And you had to pass it before you could graduate. I mean, I know people who it took eight times to pass it, which is hysterical.
Anna E. Cooper 38:11
Oh my gosh.
Participant #9 38:12
Yeah, I mean, the reading comprehension was easier than the SAT and any other type of standardized test you've ever taken.
Participant #9 38:20
And then the writing portion was, you know, your five-paragraph essay on the topic. And as long as you had a thesis and supporting paragraphs and it wasn't too grammatically rife with errors, you could pass it.
Anna E. Cooper 38:36
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 38:37
But there were students who would have to come in, and because they would, if they didn't pass it, they had to go into, like, a remedial class to prep for it until they took the test again.
Anna E. Cooper 38:45
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 38:49
That's that quarter or that semester, which was usually around midterms, and they would have like drafts of practice Regents essays that they would need assistance on to, you know, to get feedback. Otherwise, there wasn't anything as far as —it was very vanilla. At that point in the issue, there wasn't a lot of or a big focus on diversity and inclusion. So, it was never even a consideration for me to think about somebody's background. You came in. You needed help, and I'm going to help you. It didn't matter. There was a student who we all really enjoyed working with because she was a non-traditional student. She graduated high school and could not read.
Anna E. Cooper 40:15
Oh no.
Participant #9 40:16
And she taught herself how to read. She worked so hard at it and taught herself how to read.
Anna E. Cooper 40:19
Hmm.
Participant #9 40:25
And she finally, you know, became a college student.
Anna E. Cooper 40:33
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 40:34
And when I say non-traditional, I mean she could have been in her late 20s, and she was old, you know, to us.

Anna E. Cooper 40:39
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 40:40
But she would come in, and she was so genuinely interested in being a better writer.
Anna E. Cooper 40:57
Yeah.
Participant #9 40:58
And so she wanted to focus on global issues more, so she didn't care as much about the grammar because she wanted to get the ideas articulated well.
Anna E. Cooper 41:08
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 41:09
And so she was always fun to work with.
Anna E. Cooper 41:15
Yeah.
Participant #9 41:19
And I want to say her name is like [student's name] or something. Something random like that, but I mean she would spend so much time in there, even just on the computer, working on papers and stuff. That was the story I was referencing a little bit ago. That was a student who shared all that information with us, and it didn't adjust how we worked with her, but she was so much fun to work with for that reason.
Anna E. Cooper 41:53
Yeah.
Participant #9 41:53
You know, we knew her background.
Anna E. Cooper 41:56
Well, thank you for that story. That concludes number six, so #7. What writing needs did you see most often, and did students' writing needs stay the same or change over time?
Participant #9 42:14
I think I've already covered a lot of this. It was a lot of times students either wanting me to check their grammar.
Anna E. Cooper 42:24
Yes.
Participant #9 42:25
And you know, for a bibliography, you know, how do I format this in MLA?
Anna E. Cooper 42:31
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 42:35
Sometimes you can get them talking about the global issues, but they were more focused on the nitty-gritty.
Anna E. Cooper 42:45
Yeah.
Participant #9 42:46
So it was always an attempt to try to get them beyond that as much as possible.
Anna E. Cooper 42:53
Mm-hmm.

Participant #9 42:54
But you know, also, while still wanting to provide them with service, it was consistently like that the entire time I was there.
Anna E. Cooper 43:07
OK. Thank you so much. #8. What institutional policies or administrative tasks were you responsible for following and completing as a tutor, and how did these duties impact your writing tutor role?
Participant #9 43:31
An administrative task, so to speak, was more than just kind of being like de facto tech support for the computer.
Anna E. Cooper 43:42
Mm-hmm. Did y'all ever complete any session reflection forms?
Participant #9 43:49
I don't recall doing any of those.
Anna E. Cooper 44:00
OK.
Participant #9 44:01
I feel like we may have, but I don't want to confuse it with, you know, my other writing center, because we definitely would do stuff like that.
Anna E. Cooper 44:10
Yeah, yeah, yeah.
Participant #9 44:16
But I can't remember if we did or not. I don't recall that one.
Anna E. Cooper 44:24
OK. But y'all did help people who need to, like, navigate the computers, is what you were saying.
Participant #9 44:33
Yes. So, you know, a student might be working on a paper, and they might have a question about formatting, or, you know, we did have students in there who never saved, and we would have power surges every once in a while.
Anna E. Cooper 44:56
Oh no.
Participant #9 44:56
And yeah, yeah. People learned the very, very, very, very hard way that you need to save and save often. But this was just an interruption, sometimes of writing center tutoring, because there might not be someone else available to help troubleshoot.
Anna E. Cooper 45:24
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 45:25
You know that would be the only impact or conflict with the role.
Anna E. Cooper 45:29
Yeah.
Participant #9 45:32
And I didn't always feel comfortable troubleshooting. I learned a lot, but I always felt not as comfortable troubleshooting.
Anna E. Cooper 45:33

Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #9 45:39
And there was another person. One of the grad assistants was more technologically savvy. So, if he was in there, I would always make him help.
Anna E. Cooper 45:47
Yeah, that makes sense. OK. So for #9, during your employment, can you please explain the peer-staff support system writing tutors had, and how did tutors and staff members collaborate with one another?
Participant #9 46:05
The director's office was literally right outside The Writing Center.
Anna E. Cooper 46:12
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 46:13
And so we knew that we could go to her if we had questions or issues.
The staff was, I feel like we were tight-knit, and actually two of the people who worked in The Writing Center, one was a tutor, you know, an undergraduate tutor like me, and one of them was a graduate assistant.
Anna E. Cooper 46:32
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 46:39
They started dating, and they ended up still married. Yeah, it's crazy.
Anna E. Cooper 46:46
Wow.
Participant #9 46:46
I mean, it's like every time I see them post on Facebook, I'm like, "Oh my God."
But we would support each other if we had questions. We could ask each other.
There wasn't anything formal, so to speak, you know.
Anna E. Cooper 47:08
OK. Yeah.
Participant #9 47:11
There wasn't any kind of formal support system. We all just got along really well, and we all worked really well together no matter who was scheduled on shift.
Anna E. Cooper 47:21
OK. OK.
Participant #9 47:24
I feel I want to say there may have been a time when we provided the director with some material for a conference presentation for either WICA or SWICKA.
Anna E. Cooper 47:40
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 47:43
Or even possibly a book, because I think she and another colleague were working on some stuff, but I don't want to say definitively because I don't remember a hundred percent.
Anna E. Cooper 47:57
Yeah. OK. Well, thank you for #9. So, to conclude the direct questions for number 10, how did your academic major, English, impact or influence how you tutored writing?
Participant #9 48:14

I think my experience through my courses of having to write a bunch of papers.
Anna E. Cooper 48:29
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 48:30
Every term, you know, every quarter or every semester, you're writing papers, and so the process was something I was intimately familiar with, but I also feel like in the classes where you're talking about themes and symbols and, you know, kind of deconstructing —
Anna E. Cooper 49:04
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 49:04
The literature that you're reading allowed me to identify kind of big-picture things.
Anna E. Cooper 49:19
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 49:19
And see how ideas kind of fit together, and then aside from the writing, we had to take a writing tutor course.
Anna E. Cooper 49:34
OK.
Participant #9 49:35
One of our required courses, I want to say, and how I remember these things. I have no idea, like English 306 or something like that, but it was like—
Anna E. Cooper 49:44
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 49:46
An introduction to how to be an English major.
Anna E. Cooper 49:48
Uh-huh.
Participant #9 49:49
And the professor we had was phenomenal.
Anna E. Cooper 49:54
MMM.
Participant #9 49:55
And he said the focus of that course was how to read poetry? He said if you read poetry, you can read anything.
Anna E. Cooper 50:11
Mm-hmm. That's so interesting.
Participant #9 50:18
And so we focused on, you know, Dickinson and stuff like that where you would read, or I can't think of some of them, but, you know, you have some of these poets who, you know, red wheelbarrow. And you know, there are like 4 lines, and it's like this profound message that's in there, you know.
Anna E. Cooper 50:34
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 50:48
Learning about the impact of words and how you can say a lot or a little with words. I feel like it helped me home in on my skills when working with students. Taking those two things into

consideration, you know, taking those kinds of concepts and being able to apply them.
Anna E. Cooper 51:12
Yeah. Yeah, I could see how that would be helpful. OK. So, that concludes the direct questions. We're just going to have two open-ended questions with some follow-up ones. So, in your opinion for number 11, how did writing tutoring methods change during your time tutoring, and did you see the writing tutoring environment change?
Participant #9 51:31
OK. The methods—I don't recall really any change.
Anna E. Cooper 51:53
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 51:54
As far as you know, the methods that we used were times when, if there was an article that came out in, like, this week's newsletter or something like that, then the director might share an article with us that might be useful.
Anna E. Cooper 52:18
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 52:19
Here's an approach, or here's, you know, this kind of new concept that people are talking about.
Anna E. Cooper 52:26
Yeah.
Participant #9 52:28
That kind of goes back to a much earlier question about, like, training and kind of continued training. But the time that I was in there, there wasn't a change in the approach or the environment. And the environment kind of was what it was, and space didn't exist really.
Anna E. Cooper 52:58
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 52:59
I don't think it's meant to be a more kind of cozy, even private, conversation-type space.
Anna E. Cooper 53:11
Yeah. It's a good point.
Participant #9 53:15
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 53:15
So, thinking about the changes or your suggestions for tutoring. So, based on your experiences, what could the writing center and future writing tutors do to make tutoring services more effective? And how could the writing center's environment improve to support tutors and students?
Participant #9 53:41
I may be cheating because I did.
Anna E. Cooper 53:43
It's OK.
Participant #9 53:46
I did see. I don't know. It was probably 10 or 15 years ago, even maybe, which is terrifying to think about.
Anna E. Cooper 53:51
Mm-hmm.

Participant #9 53:54
The academic resource or the peer tutoring center, whatever it is, was kind of over in Georgia Hall.
Anna E. Cooper 54:01
Oh, the Student Success Center.
Participant #9 54:02
No, like I got—well, yeah, Student Success Center, whatever that space was, you know, I did see. I did see that and where it looked like more of a collaborative space.
I feel like. And this is based on what I saw and what I think, whether or not it exists.
Anna E. Cooper 54:35
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 54:40
Early intervention?
Anna E. Cooper 54:40
Yeah.
Participant #9 54:41
Early intervention seems to be a great way to get people thinking about the end goal. You know, and partnering with courses, and I know pedagogically, there is more of a focus on having, you know, supplemental instruction or the people who they're assigned to that course, you know, they're hired specifically for a specific course, and they're familiar with it. And they, you know, have the knowledge or whatever.
Anna E. Cooper 55:17
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 55:35
I think getting in and establishing relationships, whether it's partnering with a department or partnering with a handful of faculty whose specific course gets students thinking about their writing.
Anna E. Cooper 55:55
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 55:55
And a more global way. It takes that focus away from being the fix-it shop. And it is a phenomenon that I know still exists with writing centers. Just because of my experience and being very close still professionally with people who work in the writing center where I am now.
Anna E. Cooper 56:19
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #9 56:28
And I think exploring innovative ways, whether it's through technology—and technology is, you know, the name of the game these days. Embracing the applications that exist and the technology that exists, rather than shying away from it, to encourage students to express themselves because it is such a critical skill. I know you're not going to have to write a five-paragraph essay when you grow up, but you are going to have to communicate effectively.
Anna E. Cooper 57:26
That's very true.
Participant #9 57:27
And you are and how you communicate —and I think maybe even taking that kind of approach to say, "Hey. I know that this is not the kind of writing you have to do.

These are hoops you have to jump through to get that degree, and I get it. And you might think it's stupid, and that's OK."
Anna E. Cooper 57:44
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 57:48
It's just part of the requirements. However, the concepts are translatable and transferable.
Anna E. Cooper 57:56
Yeah.
Participant #9 57:57
To all of your communication, whether you're having to communicate with an employee or a supervisor, whether you're communicating with a customer, whether you're communicating with a business, or whether you're communicating with a teacher or parent, you know, whatever the case may be, you do want to be able to be taken seriously as a professional regardless of what your role is.
Anna E. Cooper 58:07
Mm-hmm.
Yeah.
Participant #9 58:23
And being able to kind of instill the focus on how transferable the skills are.
Anna E. Cooper 58:46
Yeah.
Participant #9 58:47
Might get a lot more student buy-in, and embracing that technology might get a lot more student buy-in. And it's always hard for somebody to come in and wipe their ego off the ground and say, "I need help." You know, people are proud and don't like to be told what their faults are, you know.
Anna E. Cooper 59:04
Yeah.
Participant #9 59:12
So I think being able to, you know, have an environment that welcomes the messy and all different types of learning styles and approaches.
Anna E. Cooper 59:12
Yeah.
Participant #9 59:18
You know I think that you know there are big whiteboards in there.
Anna E. Cooper 59:33
Yeah.
Participant #9 59:39
Are there bulletin boards and spaces? Yes, you got your whiteboards, but also you know the big, clear, like, white—you know, those kinds of things.
Anna E. Cooper 59:54
Yes.
Participant #9 59:59
Even where they can project and manipulate writing.
Anna E. Cooper 1:00:07
Mm-hmm.

Participant #9 1:00:08
Where they can see it on a bigger screen as opposed to a laptop screen.
Anna E. Cooper 1:00:17
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:00:19
But even you know, are there sticky notes and stuff where people can use that whiteboard to use colored sticky notes to organize?
Anna E. Cooper 1:00:25
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 1:00:29
Are there, you know, something?
Anna E. Cooper 1:00:30
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:00:32
Because one thing that I have learned professionally, particularly within the institution I work in now, is that not everybody approaches things the same way.
Anna E. Cooper 1:00:41
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 1:00:57
And knowing that there are a variety of ways to communicate and express yourself is something that having a space that provides the means for those different writing approaches and learning styles to come together would probably not only increase traffic —especially if it's a requirement to come in, students are very reluctant —but it might encourage people who would have never thought about it to come in because it's not that traditional.
Anna E. Cooper 1:01:43
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:01:48
I'm the authoritative figure, you know, even though you're not, as you're a peer.
Anna E. Cooper 1:01:52
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:01:54
I'm the authority, like making it a collaborative environment. A true collaborative space reduces the anxiety and reluctance for students, but it also levels the hierarchy.
Anna E. Cooper 1:02:16
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 1:02:17
And it reduces it some thinking about the space that definitely was not conducive to that. And I have seen, as I worked more in and at this institution, it was more like that, but not necessarily.
Anna E. Cooper 1:02:35
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:02:37
You know, and I haven't been over there in years. I haven't been over in that space in literally probably six or seven years. So, I don't know what it has, what it could have morphed into, but you know, thinking about the focus on technology and collaboration.
Anna E. Cooper 1:02:53
Mm-hmm.

Participant #9 1:03:06
And how those are such necessary skills and soft skills.
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:09
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 1:03:10
You know, to have that, I think that an environment that supports that would benefit all parties, I think.
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:21
Yeah, so you are kind of pointing to the fact that at The Writing Center there wasn't a lot of space for you to kind of do things one-on-one without getting interrupted, which is what you were mentioning.
Participant #9 1:03:35
Yep. Yep, and definitely, definitely a private space.
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:36
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:03:40
But then also definitely spaces that are open for, you know—Do you have? Is there space for a group project? You know, for people to collaborate, but then also to invite a tutor in.
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:53
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:04:01
To say, "Hey, this is what we want to say, but—
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:01
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 1:04:04
Are we saying it the right way so that it's more of a collaboration than anything else?
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:12
Yeah. That's a really good point. OK. So, that concludes the open-ended questions. But before concluding the interview, I just wanted to provide you with the chance to mention any additional insights or comments about your time at the writing center. So, I think you mentioned a story about resilience that you wanted to share earlier. You can share that now if you would like.
Participant #9 1:04:39
That was that was that was our friend [student's name], or whatever her name was, who graduated high school.
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:44
Yes, OK.
Participant #9 1:04:46
Yes, that was that story.
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:47
Yes. That was a good story.
Participant #9 1:04:52
You know, otherwise I can't think of anything.
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:01
And that is totally fine too.
Participant #9 1:05:03
Yeah, I mean I will say that in my experience working in The Writing Center professionally, it's

been a critical point of development for me.
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:25
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:05:27
And it has been a skill that I still use. You know, the concepts I still use to this day.
And yet some of it worked because I worked in the writing center here; that was my first real grown-up job. It was the craziest thing ever that, I mean, you're going to pay me to do this. I did this as a student assistant in college, and this is a whole real-person job.
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:54
Yeah. So, what's your role there?
Participant #9 1:05:59
Well, I started out here as a writing center consultant. I was a full-time staff member.
Anna E. Cooper 1:06:10
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 1:06:11
And I worked in it. We were only populated at that time; our writing center was only run by full-time staff, full-time professional staff. And I worked in the writing center from 2002 to 2011.
Anna E. Cooper 1:06:35
Hmm.
Participant #9 1:06:35
And then I moved into, like, a faculty development-type role. That worked, but one of the things that I was doing was managing a process that faculty use.
Anna E. Cooper 1:06:41
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 1:06:49
Our concept of sabbatical here is very, very different.
Anna E. Cooper 1:07:00
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 1:07:01
But it's more like grant money or seed money-type things that they use.
Anna E. Cooper 1:07:04
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 1:07:05
I had to complete applications and such, and so I would work with them on their applications—I— I mean, drafts, drafts and drafts.
Anna E. Cooper 1:07:19
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 1:07:19
Perhaps I read that one professor's application was insane.
Anna E. Cooper 1:07:23
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:07:24
But you know, so I was applying those writing center [skills] in there like, "Oh well, you used to work in the writing center, and you're this English major. And so, you know, you can also help them because while most of our faculty are experts in their field, they come from the industry, and so they're not your typical researcher writers.

And so you know, even now I work in the registrar's office, and I'm on the technical side of all of it, ironically.
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:07
OK.
Participant #9 1:08:13
But the thing is, I have this weird knack for identifying inconsistencies, like, "Oh, you capitalized this here and you didn't capitalize it here," which is fabulous for building programs of study and degree works.
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:34
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:08:36
Because you want to make sure that you are formatting things the same way so that it's uniform and consistent across all the majors.
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:43
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:08:50
No matter, you know, so it's a consistent experience.
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:54
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:08:55
And then, of course, having to communicate with all kinds of people. A lot of times, whenever I'm communicating with them, it's more often than not a faculty member or a staff member who asks questions and is able to communicate and articulate things very clearly.
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:14
Mm-hmm.
Participant #9 1:09:15
You know, being able to spell out what I need from them or whatever, it's stuff like that day in and day out.
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:27
Yeah, that's really cool.
Participant #9 1:09:28
I provide the skills, so. Yeah, it really is. I never thought I would get a real job. As you know, working in a writing center. But once I made it and I knew higher ed was where I wanted to be—
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:39
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:09:48
This is my absolute dream job. I love what I do. I absolutely love what I do.
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:54
Yeah, well, that's inspiring for me, because. I'm kind of in that transition. I'm graduating in May, so it's just nice to hear that you can kind of take writing tutoring and make it into another job.
Participant #9 1:10:08
The critical thinking skills, you know. Think about it.
Anna E. Cooper 1:10:12
Yes.
Participant #9 1:10:12

Think about all the critical thinking and communication skills that can be applied.
Anna E. Cooper 1:10:17
Yeah, that's very true.
Participant #9 1:10:19
The communication skills that you have are because you know how to think about things and look at everything with a critical eye. I just never conceived that was what you could do as an English major.
Anna E. Cooper 1:10:47
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:10:49
And even before my time, The English department did have, like, a shirt for the English department. Oh, you know, [it said] Valdosta State University, English department, or something like that. And on the back, like it said —
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:00
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:11:03
So, what are you going to do, teach?
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:07
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:11:07
And I mean, that's what people are like. "Oh well, you're an English major, so you're going to teach."
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:11
Yeah, that's very true.
Participant #9 1:11:13
Now you don't have to. You don't.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:15
Yeah. Yeah.
Participant #9 1:11:17
And so there are so many [jobs] because the skills are so transferable.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:25
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:11:26
It may not seem like the position aligns with what your "training is.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:40
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:11:41
Who's in English? You know, as an English major, whether it's traditional or Rhet. Comp. or whatever, the knowledge and skills that you have can be applied to even the most out-of-the-box positions, you know, and viewed as an asset.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:58
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #9 1:12:03
To managers, because you've got skills that can't—
Anna E. Cooper 1:12:05
I do.

Participant #9 1:12:09
Can't be learned in a book.
Anna E. Cooper 1:12:12
Yeah, that's very true.
Participant #9 1:12:13
That are necessary too, you know, and you need them to be successful.
Anna E. Cooper 1:12:17
Exactly.
Participant #9 1:12:17
So, it's great.
Anna E. Cooper 1:12:19
Yeah. Thank you so much for sharing, and also, that's the last question or statement I had, but thank you so much for your time and those thorough responses. I know it was a long time ago, but it really helps my thesis to have this information.
Participant #9 1:12:40
I am so glad. I am so glad. I hope that it is useful information to you and that it hopefully aligns with your prior interview since that was who I worked under.
Anna E. Cooper 1:12:52
Oh, definitely.
Participant #9 1:12:57
And you know that I didn't misremember things, but certainly, if you have questions as you're reviewing transcripts or if there's something that maybe wasn't clear or you've got a follow-up question, please feel free to reach out.
Anna E. Cooper 1:13:17
Yeah.
Participant #9 1:13:21
I'm happy to expand.
Anna E. Cooper 1:13:23
Well, thank you so much. It's very appreciated because I've had success with finding people from the other two most recent, as I call them, "generations" of the tutoring center at VSU, but The Writing Center has been so difficult to find information on, and you cleared up a bunch of holes that I had been wondering about. So, it was very nice to talk to you.
Participant #9 1:13:47
I'm excited. Yay.
Anna E. Cooper 1:13:54
Just thank you so much for your participation.
Participant #9 1:13:56
Not a problem at all. And like I said, if there are any other questions that I can clarify or provide more information on or whatever, let me know. I'm happy to do so if you get into the analysis and writing of it and you go, "I don't know if that, I might want to double-check and make sure that I understood that right or whatever." I'm happy to do so.
Anna E. Cooper 1:14:22
Yeah. Well, thank you so much. And you just have a great rest of your day, and you have a great weekend.
Participant #9 1:14:30
You too. Good luck with all of it.

Anna E. Cooper 1:14:33
Thank you.

Anna E Cooper stopped transcription.

Participant #10 Transcript

February 12, 2025, 2:06PM

Anna E. Cooper 0:05
OK, this is interview #10, and I'm going to begin the interview by reading the IRB research statement to the participant. OK. You're being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled "VSU Writing Centers: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies," which is being conducted by Anna Cooper, a graduate student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to show how three of Valdosta State University's writing centers, The Writing Center, Student Success Center, and Academic Support Center, have changed over the years. This research will analyze what has changed and what has stayed the same through each iteration of tutoring writing at VSU. You'll receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about possible paths forward for tutoring writing as VSU adjusts to rapidly advancing technologies and changes in the larger environment. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately 55 minutes and at most 85 minutes, or one hour and 25 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded to capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the interview recording has been transcribed, the recording will be immediately deleted from recording devices. Your name will be deleted from the interview transcripts, and pseudonyms will be used to anonymize your data, which will be included in the research study's references chapter. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding, or to skip questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to leave the study, audio-recorded conversations and any written information linking you to the research study will be destroyed. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in the study. Your participation in the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Anna Cooper at aecooper@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review under federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by federal law, protects the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB administrator at 2292532947 or IRB@valdosta.edu. OK. So, that concludes the reading of the IRB research statement. Does the participant accept the research statement?
Participant #10 3:15
You went out for a second.
Anna E. Cooper 3:19
Oh, sorry, do you accept?
Participant #10 3:20
Sorry, it was my Wi-Fi. That's totally fine.
Anna E. Cooper 3:23
I don't know. You're good.
Participant #10 3:23
I just didn't hear that last part.
Anna E. Cooper 3:25

No, you're good. So, do you choose to accept the IRB research statement?
Participant #10 3:31
Yes.
Anna E. Cooper 3:32
OK, perfect. OK. So, we're going to begin with questionnaire number one for tutors.
So, we're going to start with the opening questions, and you can take as long as you need to respond to these, because the transcription won't show any pauses like a recording would. And if you need me to repeat any questions, feel free to ask me, and I will definitely repeat anything.
So, the first opening question is, what was the name of your writing center or tutoring center?
Participant #10 4:07
It was the Student Success Center when I was there.
Anna E. Cooper 4:12
OK, how many years or semesters do you remember tutoring writing?
Participant #10 4:19
6 semesters.
Anna E. Cooper 4:22
OK. As a writing tutor, did you have any additional roles or duties in the writing center or tutoring center?
Participant #10 4:34
Not that I recall.
Anna E. Cooper 4:37
I think. #4. What made you want to become a writing tutor, and how were you hired?
Participant #10 4:47
Sure, I transferred into Valdosta State University from another institution.
Anna E. Cooper 4:56
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 4:58
I did not have a great first semester of college.
Anna E. Cooper 5:03
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 5:04
I had some academic struggles. I just had some social struggles, and so, you know, when I transferred and started to settle in at VSU, I felt very grateful for that feeling of being settled, for that kind of confidence that I regained just being there, and I wanted to find a way to support other students.
Anna E. Cooper 5:21
Yes.
Participant #10 5:28
Who may be struggling in the way that I had in the year before.
Anna E. Cooper 5:32
Yeah.
Participant #10 5:34
So, actually, I found my way to the SSC and knocked on [the SSC director's] door and said, "Hi, this is kind of my motivation for wanting to work here. Do you have a spot for me?" She very graciously made a spot for me, so she got me into [the training course]. At the time, there was a semester-long course that writing consultants took to be qualified to tutor writing.

Anna E. Cooper 6:02
OK.
Participant #10 6:05
You know there was like a one- or two-credit-hour course, I think. And so, she convinced the instructor to let me in late, and I was able to jump on board there. And I started tutoring writing later that semester and stayed until I graduated.
Anna E. Cooper 6:24
Oh wow, that's a really cool story. OK. So, for #5, what was your major when you were tutoring?
Participant #10 6:36
I was an English major.
Anna E. Cooper 6:38
OK, perfect. What courses did you support?
Participant #10 6:45
So, I supported any classes. I mean, just students could walk in the door with anything from, like, a rhetoric and writing paper to a history paper to a lab report.
Anna E. Cooper 6:58
Yes.
Participant #10 6:59
And so that was, you know, interesting tutoring across genres of writing.
Anna E. Cooper 7:05
Yeah. OK. So, number 7, you mentioned the specific classes, but which students did you tutor in writing—a specific class or a variety of students?
Participant #10 7:18
It was definitely a variety.
Anna E. Cooper 7:22
What was it like? Whenever you say a variety, do you mean like different stages in their college career?
Participant #10 7:31
Oh, absolutely. I mean. Yeah, at the time, students booked appointments, and I didn't even know in advance what they were bringing in.
Anna E. Cooper 7:43
Oh well.
Participant #10 7:46
So, they would, like, walk in with a print copy of their paper, typically, and sit down, and we would get to work.
Anna E. Cooper 7:52
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 7:54
So yeah, it could be anything—any year or any class.
Anna E. Cooper 7:59
OK.
Participant #10 7:59
I mean, I think I, I mean, I supported graduate students occasionally who just, you know, wanted a second set of eyes on what they were doing.
Anna E. Cooper 8:06

Yeah, yeah. OK, so #8, how did these students learn about writing tutoring services?
Participant #10 8:18
You know what? I don't know. I don't remember doing class presentations. I don't remember putting up posters.
Anna E. Cooper 8:28
OK.
Participant #10 8:30
I don't remember. I don't know. That's a great question. I don't know.
Anna E. Cooper 8:37
Now you're good. OK, #9.
What makes writing tutoring beneficial or important to you?
Participant #10 8:48
Like, in my opinion, what makes it beneficial for others?
Anna E. Cooper 8:50
Yes. Yes.
Participant #10 8:53
OK. I think that many people construe writing as a solitary endeavor.
Anna E. Cooper 9:07
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 9:09
In writing as, like, an end unto itself, right, I have a paper. I have to write some stuff down, but to me, writing is thinking.
Anna E. Cooper 9:22
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 9:23
And they're often better anchors, right when we have a thought partner.
Anna E. Cooper 9:28
Yeah.
Participant #10 9:30
So, I think that's part of it, right? Having a partner to think through and process.
Anna E. Cooper 9:35
Yeah.
Participant #10 9:36
Those higher-order concerns, right? What is my thesis? What am I trying to say?
Am I making the points that I think I'm making that are critically important?
Anna E. Cooper 9:40
Yes.
Participant #10 9:44
That's something that, you know, even though in my PhD program, in my work as a dean, I come to people all the time and say, "Can you just put a second set of eyes on this? Like, does this make sense to you? Am I striking the tone I want, right?"
Anna E. Cooper 9:58
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 10:00
So, I think that never stops being important. You know, and then on the, yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 10:05

That's very true.
Participant #10 10:07
And then I think on the other side of that, right, like especially now, students are coming out of high school not having done a ton of writing, right? A significant amount of writing.
Anna E. Cooper 10:19
Yeah.
Participant #10 10:20
And so, I think to have a near-peer in particular be able to walk them through some of the process, walk them through some of the more technical pieces of writing, you know, like just because those are something we call lower-order concerns, that doesn't make them unimportant.
Anna E. Cooper 10:35
Yeah.
Participant #10 10:36
It can be really intimidating to ask a faculty member how to cite something right, like that doesn't often feel like a great reason to walk in to those valuable office hours.
Anna E. Cooper 10:48
Yeah.
Participant #10 10:49
So, having those near peers as that resource, having those near peers as a low-stakes place to go to ask some of these questions that students could feel like they should know already, right? Because I think, like, often in higher ed we expect a certain level of writing proficiency of students coming in.
Anna E. Cooper 10:56
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 11:08
And our K-12 system just isn't typically preparing them for that, right?
Anna E. Cooper 11:14
Yeah.
Participant #10 11:15
So, sometimes, students can feel—and often it's our most at-risk students already— right? Students who maybe went to school districts—
Anna E. Cooper 11:20
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 11:22
Who were, you know, underserved, underfunded, or students who are first-generation. Or who don't speak English at home? Right. Like, these are all students who are already at some risk for leaving the institution.
Anna E. Cooper 11:34
Yeah.
Participant #10 11:39
Like, if, particularly, if those students don't have a place to go to ask good questions in an environment that feels comfortable or low stakes, that's not healthy for them. That's not good for them. And so, I think providing that service is critical, and on top of that, it's the right thing to do to support the students you bring to your institution, so.
Anna E. Cooper 11:58
Mm-hmm. Those are all really great points. OK. Thank you so much for those answers to the

opening questions. We're going to move on to the direct questions section. So, starting off with #1, there will be follow-up questions as well. So, what writing tutoring training did you receive before becoming a writing tutor? So, as a writing tutor, did you complete further training through meetings, classes, or training sessions?

Participant #10 12:35
So, we had that semester alone, of course, or it might have been half a term. I don't know, but it was a credit-bearing course that we had to complete or at least mostly complete.

Anna E. Cooper 12:38
Mm-hmm.

Participant #10 12:46
And then, I think there was kind of an apprenticeship, right? I think I did some sessions and got some feedback or reflected on them. And then I was sort of like, you know, I got, like, my badge, right? Like I got my—and when I started, there wasn't really a certification, I don't think, but.

Anna E. Cooper 13:04
Yeah.

Participant #10 13:05
I got my sort of license to provide writing sessions, and we did have regular meetings, and I chose to present undergraduate research on work as a peer writing consultant.

Anna E. Cooper 13:18
Hmm.

Participant #10 13:19
So, I think I pursued some of that, but I don't think it was required, but the opportunity was there. The invitation was there. So, I think those of us who were interested, those of us who did care about that practice, you know [the SSC director], who was the director at the time, were very supportive, and I remember really appreciating that, but I don't think it was required.

Anna E. Cooper 13:43
Yeah, so getting back to this course that you're referring to. How did this course help you assess and adjust your writing tutoring effectiveness?

Participant #10 13:57
Well, I think. You know, there are some sort of tenets of writing consulting, right, of writing support that, as a field, are sort of like seminal, right? Like this idea that, like, the locus of control and responsibility for the paper really has to remain with the tutee, like—

Anna E. Cooper 14:14
Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Participant #10 14:24
[What] absolutely cannot happen is you take the pen, take the paper, and mark it up, right?

Anna E. Cooper 14:28
Yes.

Participant #10 14:30
And so, I think, like, there was that sort of seminal piece of how this field works, how this practice works, and how this pedagogy works that was really clear. You know other things like just the paramedic method, right?

Anna E. Cooper 14:52
Yes.

Participant #10 14:53
The things that, as writing consultants, are really the tools in our toolbox—I mean, writing

consulting is incredibly difficult work. I did it as a professional writing consultant for a year full-time after I graduated from VSU.
Anna E. Cooper 15:09
Yes.
Participant #10 15:12
And I don't think I've ever come home from work like where I'm at now—and I do like high-stakes things all day, and I still don't come home as tired now as I did doing writing consulting 40 hours a week.
Anna E. Cooper 15:17
Yeah.
Participant #10 15:20
Because it's emotionally exhausting.
Anna E. Cooper 15:23
Yeah.
Participant #10 15:26
It's intellectually exhausting, right?
Anna E. Cooper 15:29
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 15:29
You're in the midst of those sessions, you're thinking about how to help somebody make their paper better, but you're also thinking about how to be a force for good in just their overall development as a writer, how to keep them engaged with this process, and not feel shut down by the feedback that you're given, right?
Anna E. Cooper 15:41
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #10 15:49
Like, because it is, I think it's so deeply draining, like in the best and most beautiful ways, right? Like, I love this work.
Anna E. Cooper 15:58
Yeah.
Participant #10 16:00
Like, you do really, really count on some of those seminal concepts in the field to guide your practice because you can't in the midst of all those other things you're thinking about and processing in the moment. You have to have, like, a solid. Foundation to work from. And so, I think those things like the paramedic method that made my writing better also made my consulting better, right?
Anna E. Cooper 16:18
That's very true.
Participant #10 16:26
Like those things like, "OK. No, the pen has got to stay with the tutee at all times."
Anna E. Cooper 16:30
Yes.
Participant #10 16:33
And you know, we've kind of revised that a little as a field at this point, but like overall that concept stays true.
Anna E. Cooper 16:37

Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 16:39
You know this concept of writing is thinking, and the really crummy first draft.
Anna E. Cooper 16:44
Yeah.
Participant #10 16:45
Like, those were such a gift as, like, a foundation to work from?
Anna E. Cooper 16:51
All those that you mentioned, [the SSC director] told us as well. So, this is very familiar to me.
Participant #10 16:58
I love it. I love that there's sort of like generations of consultants pulling from the same great stuff.
Anna E. Cooper 17:02
Yes. Yeah, exactly. Well, thank you.
Participant #10 17:07
Well, if you see her the next time you see her, tell her that I still teach my tutees these things.
Anna E. Cooper 17:11
That, yes.
Participant #10 17:13
So, like, her instruction is, like, alive at Berry College.
Anna E. Cooper 17:14
That is so cool.
Participant #10 17:19
As I continue this work.
Anna E. Cooper 17:23
I will tell her that, yeah, I meet with her every other week, so I will definitely tell her that. OK, so that is it for #1. So, for number 2, thinking about the Student Success Center where you worked, can you discuss, like, the main goals of that tutoring center?
Participant #10 17:49
Just from—obviously you're asking from my perspective as a tutor or what I remember the stated goals were, or?
Anna E. Cooper 17:57
Anything that you remember, because I know it's from a while back.
Participant #10 18:01
Way longer than I care to admit. So, you know, I think I'll answer this question just sort of thinking back on the culture of the place.
Anna E. Cooper 18:12
Yes.
Participant #10 18:13
Because I think that's what stands out in my memory the most, you know, and I think the goals were really to create, like, a really helpful intellectual space that was not the classroom.
Anna E. Cooper 18:41
Yes.
Participant #10 18:42
Not the common space of your dorm.
Anna E. Cooper 18:49

Yes.
Participant #10 18:50
What I would call it now and back in the current place in my career, what I'll call, like, a third space, right?
Anna E. Cooper 18:58
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 18:59
This sort of—it's not a socio-academic space, right? The social part of it, the cultural part of it, and the support the students feel when they come in. It's just as important as the actual answers to their actual questions. And so, I very much remember having this highly intellectual but also really supportive and caring culture. So, I think those were the goals, right, to care for and support students, but also to really be sure they were walking back out of that door with some good skills and some good knowledge, and there was lots of cross-pollination because there was subject—
Anna E. Cooper 19:34
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 19:41
matter of tutoring, like political science and chemistry, happening, you know, at the next table over from my writing consultation.
Anna E. Cooper 19:43
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 19:46
And so, if somebody walked in with a lab report and I was like, "Well, I can help you organize your thoughts; I can help you with, like, your sentence structure. But I don't know this genre all that—." At the next table over from my writing consultation, there was this sort of great, like, culture of just, like, "Hey, like, Emma, can you come over and, like, give us a second opinion on this since you are a chemistry major? Like, you're tutoring chemistry here; can you come over and take a look at this?"
Anna E. Cooper 20:10
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #10 20:16
And so I think, you know, I hope that one of the goals—and even if it wasn't a stated goal, it was certainly an outcome.
Anna E. Cooper 20:28
Yeah.
Participant #10 20:29
It's like having this sort of vibrant everything mixed together, a learning center. It also allowed tutors to model for tutees productive help-seeking behavior.
Anna E. Cooper 20:44
Yes.
Participant #10 20:45
Like they saw me ask for help in that writing consultation, and I hope that that normalized help-seeking for them, right?
Anna E. Cooper 20:48
Yes, same.
Participant #10 20:53

Like, if they had some baggage walking into the writing center, they were uncomfortable asking for help. I think part of it was like seeing that, no, this is what students do.
Anna E. Cooper 20:54
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 21:03
We work together. We ask each other, and learning is collaborative. Writing is collaborative. It's OK to lean into that.
Anna E. Cooper 21:13
Yes. Thank you for those goal breakdowns. OK, so moving on to your personal goals, at the time, what were your professional goals, and how did these goals influence your writing tutoring practices?
Participant #10 21:33
I think I remember, and I'll be interested if [the SSC director] remembers this. I remember walking into her office sometime in my first semester. It may have even been the first time I met her; I don't know. But telling her, like, "I want your job, like this is what I want to do." And that's what I did. And I knew that, like, really early on, and I had a really deep sense of calling to this field.
Anna E. Cooper 22:03
Yeah.
Participant #10 22:05
Which was like such a gift, right? Like, not everybody feels that sense of calling, and I did, and it was super clear. And I sort of went off and made that my career. And, you know, in graduate school, I pursued my master's in English, but I worked in the Student Success Center of that college, right.
Anna E. Cooper 22:13
That is really neat.
Participant #10 22:27
I didn't pursue a TA role; I pursued a student success and support role.
Anna E. Cooper 22:31
Yeah.
Participant #10 22:33
And I actually transitioned, and I did that as a graduate student at first, but then I did it as a full-time staff member for most of my master's and all of my PhD. I worked like full-time.
Anna E. Cooper 22:42
OK.
Participant #10 22:42
I was in the field and then pursued my academic interests kind of in parallel, and then I came to Berry and largely did the same work. And you know, my role now as senior student success—I mean, the learning center still reports up through me, and I wouldn't have it any other way. Honestly, whenever I'm having a bad day, like I did this week, I go to the learning center.
Anna E. Cooper 23:05
Yeah.
Participant #10 23:08
I had a rough day.
Anna E. Cooper 23:10
Yeah.

Participant #10 23:11
Right now, I just stop there and watch students work together. I thought, "OK, this is what I needed." I needed to plug back into why we do this work.
Anna E. Cooper 23:20
Yes.
Participant #10 23:22
I don't get to see that work every day anymore, which is generally fine, but it is still the work that fills me up and the work that gets me energized every morning.
Anna E. Cooper 23:29
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 23:34
And so I did. I always knew I wanted to do this, and I love doing it.
Anna E. Cooper 23:35
Yeah, yeah.
Participant #10 23:40
I think knowing that in my time as a writing consultant, I thought of the stakes.
It did drive me, and I'm sure I drove [the SSC director] crazy with all of my questions.
I feel sure I did. And, like, you know, [I'm] just so deeply appreciative of those opportunities to develop my pedagogy to present at a conference as an undergraduate about writing center pedagogy. Those thoughts, like, "This felt like such huge gifts for me."
Anna E. Cooper 24:08
Yeah.
Participant #10 24:12
You know, to build my resume, whatever, that's fine, but really, just intellectually, my own development was such a huge gift. And so, I think I was energized and excited to pursue that and asked way too many questions, probably, and just took my work really seriously because it was my calling, and it always has been.
Anna E. Cooper 24:33
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 24:35
And so, I think that's probably how it impacted my time there.
Anna E. Cooper 24:41
Yeah, that makes so much sense, because whenever I was asking about people to interview from your tutoring center, she gave me your name, and she was like, "Definitely you should interview her." And it makes sense now, so I was so glad whenever you were able to do this interview. So, thank you again.
Participant #10 25:00
Well, it's fine. Walking down memory lane.
Anna E. Cooper 25:05
OK, so that is the end of #2. So, moving on to #3. Thinking about the tutoring session itself, can you explain your approaches for tutoring a student in writing? So, just run me through how a typical writing tutoring session with you would go.
Participant #10 25:26
Yeah. Oh, gosh. Give me just a second to really think back. I want to parse out a bit.
Anna E. Cooper 25:30
No, you're good.

Participant #10 25:30
Because my process evolved a bit, when I left Valdosta State, I started working at SCAD, and I did change some things about my approach significantly.
Anna E. Cooper 25:40
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 25:46
So, I want to really think back to that undergraduate moment.
Anna E. Cooper 25:49
Yeah.
Participant #10 25:56
And what I'm grappling with is when in my practice I changed from reading the paper out loud with the student to reading it myself and then processing it with the student with the tutees.
Anna E. Cooper 26:14
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 26:18
And I think, for most of my time at Valdosta State, we did work through it in the moment together, and that did evolve over time, and it might have been as my time wound down at VSU. I think I had built some confidence, and because I learned that approach as a way to keep that locus of control and locus of responsibility with the tutee, like, you read it together, you process it together. It's like highly collaborative, and I think there's a lot of goodness there, but I think I did end up shifting, right? A student would come in, and we would sit down together, and I would ask them for just a few minutes just to sit with their paper. And I had worked like that. I felt that I was, like, breaking my training. And I was, but the reason I did that was because I think what I came to understand as I got more experience was although it is a little awkward for them to sit for a minute and watch me sit with their paper, right, and I would try to talk to them about that and say, "I'm just going to do this for a minute, like, you know. Take your time if you want."
Anna E. Cooper 27:40
Yeah.
Participant #10 27:40
Like I couldn't tell them, "Get out your phone, because people didn't have phones like they do [now]." You know, I think I would tell them something like, "It's OK to work on something else. Just give me 5 minutes." I think I ended up shifting to that because it felt overwhelming to process all of the paper in the moment with the student.
Anna E. Cooper 28:01
Yes.
Participant #10 28:02
Without having a sense of, like, the whole sense of where I wanted to take the writing consultation. So, I do think that for about half of my time, if a student came in, we would just dig in together right from that first sentence and work through, and then about maybe halfway through my time, I switched and said, "Just give me 5 minutes," and that allowed me to kind of get a sense of, like, where we [were] going with this. Are we staying at higher-order concerns, and we've got big things we need to address, like, you know, your thesis promises one thing, and your paper delivers another. And let's walk through that, and let me talk you through that, and let's figure out if your thesis needs to change or if the rest of the paper needs to.
Anna E. Cooper 28:30

Yeah.
Participant #10 28:45
Like what? Like, let's think through the prompt together, like, or—
Anna E. Cooper 28:52
Yes.
Participant #10 28:53
Direction we're going, or is this really sort of a locked-in paper? Maybe you've worked with other writing consultants even before you got to me, and what we're really doing is we're digging in and we're working on your APA style, right? Like so, having just even that 30,000-foot view—
Anna E. Cooper 29:08
Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 29:12
It was really important, and I think it allowed me to curate those writing sessions in a way that ended up being more beneficial to that student, even though I know it was a little weird or nerve-wracking to sit there and watch me read their paper for a minute, right. And I tried to mitigate that, you know, "Go get a drink of water. Feel free to, you know, whatever. Give me 5 minutes."
Anna E. Cooper 29:35
Yeah.
Participant #10 29:38
And I continued that practice. You know, when I became a full-time writing consultant, we would kind of move through the paper together with me focusing on the things that I felt that we needed to focus on in that session, and then at the end, I would always close by saying, like, "OK, like here are three takeaways, like one, you know. We talked about this, like your kind of homework is to think about XYZ."
Anna E. Cooper 30:11
Yeah.
Participant #10 30:12
Like, "Hey, we didn't get to lower-order concerns in this paper in the session today," so I need you to hear me say, like, "I feel really great about the progress we made on some of these higher-order concerns, but you really need to, like, think through XYZ."
Anna E. Cooper 30:21
Yes.
Participant #10 30:33
Think through your citations, come back, or really try to send them away with, like, some homework or some takeaways because a writing consultation can be overwhelming for the tutor and a lot for the tutee, so try to send them away with, like, kind of one or two or three things to do or to think about or to practice.
Anna E. Cooper 30:41
Thank you. Yeah.
Participant #10 30:52
That was how I tried to close most sessions because I think for me that was important because it helped me emphasize, like, I am not an editor.
Anna E. Cooper 31:09
Yes.
Participant #10 31:09

Like, my expectation is that leaving this session, you've learned something; you've gotten better at this. Like, you're going to work on this, and I'm a collaborator, and I'm a cheerleader, but don't expect me to, like, do this for you every time.
Anna E. Cooper 31:24
Yeah, exactly. OK, so.
Participant #10 31:28
Was that? Did that answer the [question] kind of? OK.
Anna E. Cooper 31:30
Yeah, that was, that was perfect. Because #3 was just about your tutoring approaches, and that was really interesting to hear. You talk about sitting with it for a second, because I've seen myself whenever I'm looking at a paper; you start with those first sentences, and you kind of wish you would have read the whole thing first.
Participant #10 31:54
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 31:55
So that's a really good practice. OK. So, moving on to #4: How did you explain the writing process to students, and how did you encourage students to work with you on their writing?
Participant #10 32:19
You know, I think one of the things I learned, and I'm actually looking at my bookshelf to see if the book we used is still out there, and I think I may have handed it off to one of my staff, my current staff members. I'll have to hunt that back down, because I still have that book that they taught in that class. I don't see it. OK, but I'm pretty sure it was in that class we learned, like, there are different ways. There are different writing processes, right? There's no one right way to write a paper. Like, you can be super structured and write an outline.
Anna E. Cooper 32:50
Yeah.
Participant #10 32:54
You can mind map. You can free write like there's not one path to a good paper. And so, I think I would typically try to ask people some questions about their process. Like how they experienced their process. You know, because if they were told, right, how you write a good paper, you make an outline first, and then you move on to your intro sentences, and once you've got those nailed down, you write your—you know, like some people are taught that way, but as a person, they're way more apt to like free writing. You know, like that feels more productive to them.
Anna E. Cooper 33:38
Yeah.
Participant #10 33:40
So, I just try to be curious about their experience of their own process and what that looks like. And then, you know, I would kind of make some recommendations like, "Well, hey, you know, it sounds like, you know, staring at that blank word processor and expecting yourself to, like, cough up the structure of your entire paper is not —" That's like a thought.
Anna E. Cooper 34:03
Yeah.
Participant #10 34:03
"You're not enjoying that, right. Like, so why don't you free write and start with pen and paper if that's what you want to do, right?"

Anna E. Cooper 34:11
Yeah.
Participant #10 34:12
Like whatever brings down the level of intimidation, whatever brings down the level of stress, you know, people have.
Anna E. Cooper 34:17
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 34:20
It's just like with, I think we talk about it in education, more with math, but people with writing anxiety, like people who feel like, I'm a good writer or I'm a bad writer, and they sort of wear that as a label. So, I think often whatever I could do to help them find their way to something that just works for them felt really important. Yeah, I think—sorry—was there a second part to that question that I did not answer?
Anna E. Cooper 34:49
So also, how did you encourage students to work with you on their writing instead of just you looking at the paper yourself? Like, how did you make it kind of collaborative?
Participant #10 35:02
Yeah. Well, I mean, part of that was just that, hey, you have the laptop or you have the pen and paper, like, in front of you, and I'm going to talk about it, and I'm going to, like, point to things, but I want you to write on your own paper.
Anna E. Cooper 35:09
Yes. Exactly.
Participant #10 35:21
And there are times when I would flip it over and diagram something out, right, like, okay, comma with a coordinating conjunction.
Anna E. Cooper 35:25
Yeah.
Participant #10 35:25
Let's think it through, for instance, like.
Anna E. Cooper 35:29
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 35:31
Here are some examples of when you use the comma and some examples of when you don't, and we're going to—almost just like showing somebody a map problem, you know, like, so I was not, I wasn't like—
Anna E. Cooper 35:37
Yes.
Participant #10 35:45
Super, like locked into never touching a pen, and I know for some people that was really important, but that was not my style.
Anna E. Cooper 35:50
Yeah.
Participant #10 35:53
But I was not going to make an edit on their paper. I was not going to write a version of the thesis I thought was better.
Anna E. Cooper 35:57

Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 36:00
I was never going to, so I think that was part of it, and I asked a lot of questions.
So, instead of just telling them, like, "Hey, your thesis does not match your paper," I would say, like, "Hey, when in your process did you write your thesis?" [The student said], "Well, I wrote it first." "OK, well, that's great, and that's wonderful. As you were writing the paper, did you think strategically about how each body paragraph supported specifically the claim you made in your thesis?"
Anna E. Cooper 36:34
Yeah.
Participant #10 36:35
"Well, not exactly. I just sort of like wrote." And I'm like, "OK, alright."
Anna E. Cooper 36:43
Yeah.
Participant #10 36:43
Tell me, do you think? Tell me how you think this third paragraph supports your thesis, right? So, instead of just telling them, like paragraph three does not have anything to do with your thesis, I would much rather you come to that on your own. So, I'm sure again that was probably an infuriating way for students, right? Like there were probably a large number of students I worked with who really just wished I would tell them the answer, but that's not, and still not, how I roll as an educator.
Anna E. Cooper 37:08
Yes.
Participant #10 37:10
Like I'm not going to Socratic Method you, but rather just say, "Hey, here's the deal."
Anna E. Cooper 37:14
Yeah. Exactly.
Participant #10 37:18
So, I think that was a helpful way to make sure students were in it. Honestly, it weeded out people who were really, really frustrated by that style. A lot of times they just didn't come back to me.
Anna E. Cooper 37:34
Exactly.
Participant #10 37:37
And that wasn't intentional at the time, but looking back, I recognize that was probably true.
Anna E. Cooper 37:43
Yeah, that's so funny to hear you say that, because I had very similar things happen with my tutoring, and I actually explained one of my tutoring methods is based off the Socratic questioning. And so yes, they would get frustrated because they would want you to just give them all the answers instead of giving them that time—
Participant #10 37:59
I love that.
Anna E. Cooper 38:03
To really think about it.
Participant #10 38:10
Yeah, and to feel that sense of ownership and to feel that, like, agency over their own paper,

right? Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 38:19
Yeah. Well, following up on that question, what have you learned from the students that you've tutored in the past?
Participant #10 38:34
Yeah, I think. I've learned, like, so much about different ways to approach things, right? Like, I think because I have tended and still tend to ask a lot of questions, like, that gives me a really neat window into how other people process or do things, and I've totally, like, stolen, like, that's a great strategy.
Anna E. Cooper 38:45
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 39:04
That's a great part of the process. I love that I'm going to steal that. I'm going to tell other people to do that.
Anna E. Cooper 39:09
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 39:09
That's been really fun to just incorporate into my own practice. You know, I think I've learned it's just different ways of having conversations, different ways of engaging, and like I think one of the things we don't talk about all that much in like the learning center or writing center like pedagogy is like—Gosh, whereas tutors like you kind of have to be like a chameleon, right? Like, conversationally, you've got to be willing and ready to, like, meet someone where they are.
Anna E. Cooper 39:45
Yeah.
Participant #10 39:52
Like, not just developmentally, like in their writing, but just in how they like to have a conversation, right? Like if somebody walks through the door and they're an internal processor, they're not a verbal processor, like charging through that session and not giving that person time to think and process.
Anna E. Cooper 40:11
Yeah.
Participant #10 40:13
That's not going to be a good session.
Anna E. Cooper 40:22
Yeah, that's true.
Participant #10 40:23
Yeah, getting comfortable with, like, "OK, I'm reading. I'm reading your conversation style like you're comfortable with a nice long pause, right? I'm going to get comfortable with a nice long pause, like I can't force my conversation preferences onto this tutoring session, because this is for you. So, I think just like learning different styles of communicating and learning to read and be willing to adapt, that has been like a really cool growth process for me too.
Anna E. Cooper 41:03
Yeah.
Participant #10 41:06
You know, and then of course, learning to write across genres is so interesting.
Anna E. Cooper 41:11

Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 41:13
You know, like a lab report is completely—but even like something not that extreme, right? Like, my husband is an economist, and, like, they are to the point.
Anna E. Cooper 41:19
Yeah.
Participant #10 41:25
And you might predict that, right?
Anna E. Cooper 41:29
Yeah.
Participant #10 41:29
Like their introductory sentence is things like, In this section I will address XY, and like, gosh, this is brutal.
Anna E. Cooper 41:35
Yeah.
Participant #10 41:36
Oh, it's so terrible to read, right? It's back up. It's not my cup of tea, and so many genres are not, but like, to the people who find themselves in those fields, that's how they process the world, right?
Anna E. Cooper 41:48
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 41:50
My husband is a super to-the-point kind of person, like that is probably reflective of how his brain works.
Anna E. Cooper 41:52
That's so interesting.
Participant #10 41:57
Like, there's no need to flower it up, man.
Anna E. Cooper 41:57
Yeah.
Participant #10 42:00
This is what I'm interested in, so I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do. Then, I'm going to do it, and then the paper over. Right, like?
Anna E. Cooper 42:06
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 42:06
But that's not at all a gratifying way for me to write or even think, but just learning and seeing different genres and how that reflects different ways of thinking and seeing the world has been really a gift to you.
Anna E. Cooper 42:23
Yeah. OK. So, that's the end of #4. So, moving on to #5, during your time tutoring, how would you describe the tutoring environment? So, this could be like describing for me the physical aspects, plus what the overall feeling of the Student Success Center is, and did you find this tutoring environment efficient?
Participant #10 42:52

Man. It was great. It was. And I'm like, this is probably partly because I really love the work I did, but for me it was like my home on campus.

Anna E. Cooper 43:08
Mm-hmm.

Participant #10 43:08
Like whether I was working or not, I was probably there or in the vicinity. Like my coworkers were some of my best friends on campus. We hung out together. We argued with each other. I remember having, like, an epic argument about how to punctuate or structure a sentence. And like, I remember [the SSC director] coming over and being like, we're all wrong because this is just not how you would write this sentence. It's like, oh, do some work, right? So, I don't know if efficient is how I would describe it, but like beneficial, yes.

Anna E. Cooper 43:46
Mm-hmm.

Participant #10 43:50
Again, [the tutoring space was] very much a third space that was highly academic and intellectual. But also, you know, like I said before, fine and supportive and vibrant. You know, I wouldn't change anything about it, looking back. I mean, I really, really loved my time [there]. It was very open. So, like, there weren't like little rooms you would go into or whatever. You could hear what other people were doing, which was awesome because I could hear that—

Anna E. Cooper 44:14
Really.

Participant #10 44:16
I tutored with a guy named [tutor's name], and he had a very different style from me, but I would listen to his sessions, and I would pick things up, and, you know, I was like, "OK. That's a good way to explain that, and our brains work very differently."

Anna E. Cooper 44:24
Mm-hmm.

Participant #10 44:32
I would not have landed on that without hearing you do it or say it.

Anna E. Cooper 44:41
Yeah.

Participant #10 44:42
You know, and it made it very easy to call someone over. Like, hey, you know, I think he was a political science major, and I would, you know, say, hey, like, can you come over? Like, I don't know that I am tracking with this line of thought. This is a political science paper, but I'm not a political science major. Like, does this—what do you think? And so [it] just made it very easy to do that. So, it was a very just, open, and collaborative setting, which I think really shaped it in some important and positive ways.

Anna E. Cooper 45:18
OK, so number six. Consider how sociocultural factors such as a tutee's background or identity impact your tutoring sessions, such as like freshman students, graduate students, international students, and students with disabilities. How did you adjust your writing tutoring approaches to support various students?

Participant #10 45:46
Yeah. So, you know, I think, like, these questions of how to adapt our style and adapt our practice to meet the needs of people who like writing center pedagogy. Like, if we're just really

honest, writing center pedagogy was really created at a time when most people going to college were not first-gen students.
Anna E. Cooper 46:10
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #10 46:19
Right, most people going to college spoke English at home.
Anna E. Cooper 46:22
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 46:23
Most people going to college did not have a disability. Like, this pedagogy was created in, like, the 60s, 70s, and 80s, at just a different, less equitable moment in higher ed. And so, I think the evolution that we've seen in writing centers and writing tutoring practice to say, OK, sure, locus of responsibility with the student, but that does not mean flippantly refusing to help an international student diagram the sentence. It can't mean feeling or seeming distant and uninvested in the process for a first-gen student or student with a disability who may already be experiencing that session against a backdrop of something like impostor syndrome.
Anna E. Cooper 47:21
Yeah.
Participant #10 47:22
Right. Like, "Well, I knew I shouldn't have come here. I knew nobody was going to help." Like in sort of holding fast to some of these pedagogies that came from a good place but were developed in a different moment, I think we can alienate people in our writing centers, and I think we have to be really careful about understanding the value of those pedagogies but also understanding their flaws.
Anna E. Cooper 47:43
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 47:44
I mean, like, right, this is something we learn as English majors, and it is so fundamental too. I was a creative writing and contemporary literature major, and I had a professor who'd say you have to learn the rules before you get to break them.
Anna E. Cooper 48:05
Yeah.
Participant #10 48:07
You know, read all the best stuff and write and write, sort of not imitating that, but in a right way imitating that. And then if you want to break the rules later when you're more experienced, OK, fine. But you have to know the rules and understand them and why they're there before you can break them. And I think it's the same with writing pedagogy, right? Like yes, generally it is really good for that locus of control and responsibility to stay with the student, but if you are sitting across from a student who doesn't speak English at home and they are hyper-aware that their grammar in their paper is going to be a barrier for them, and you are not willing to be right there in that session with them, they have a pen and you have a pen. That can be ultimately really damaging, right?
Anna E. Cooper 48:59
Yeah.
Participant #10 49:00
Like, I think it is important to know when to break those rules or at least bend them, but also how

to still hold fast to where you know those practices kind of were emanating from, right. And I think, you know, people just get better at that. The more they do it, the more confidence they build. But yeah, I definitely adapted, broke, and bent some of those best practices along the way, and moments that I felt like this student has a need that in this moment requires something, something different, and I [help in a way] not to usurp their paper or to take over their process.
Anna E. Cooper 49:26
OK.

Participant #10 49:39
Or to impede their sense of agency, but to just meet them exactly where they are, and that can be just in a different place for students who are bringing in different identities and different lived experiences.
Anna E. Cooper 49:55
So, are you basically referring to just giving more support in those instances?
Participant #10 50:01
Well, it could be. It could be more support; it could also just be like ways of engaging, right?
Anna E. Cooper 50:09
Yeah.
Participant #10 50:14
Like, for example, I'm thinking back to, like, working with an international student. They might be really concerned about their sentence structure, but in many ways their grammar, like the way they've learned the grammar of the English language, is better than many native speakers, right?
Anna E. Cooper 50:38
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 50:39
So, it doesn't always actually mean more support, right? The things that people come in really concerned about might actually not be a weakness for them, right? But it doesn't change the way they're feeling about it, right? So, sometimes it just means, like, highlighting all the times they got it right.
Anna E. Cooper 50:55
Yeah.
Participant #10 50:56
And like building that confidence, right? So no, it's not even always about more support. Sometimes it is, but sometimes it's just about like ways of engaging and ways of building confidence and framing things for people.
Anna E. Cooper 51:11
OK. Well, thank you for #6. So, moving on to #7, what writing needs did you see most often, and did students' writing needs stay the same or change over time based off of what you noticed?
Participant #10 51:29
Yeah. So, I think probably the most pronounced need that I saw then, and it's still the need I see now, and it's still true, even as people increasingly engage with AI to write papers, is like —
Anna E. Cooper 51:44
Yes.
Participant #10 51:46
I'm a student, and I get a prompt, and I have a first thought about it. Most students move forward from their writing, writing a paper not thinking about writing to think right.

Anna E. Cooper 52:04
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 52:05
Like, I'm using writing to think through this, and when I feel done, that does not even mean I have a draft of the final paper. I've written through my thoughts. Like, but the way most students operate is, well, I've written my thoughts, and therefore this is a draft, and I will just keep trying to polish it up.
Anna E. Cooper 52:17
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 52:29
But really it's a reflection and not a first draft of the paper.
Anna E. Cooper 52:34
Yeah.
Participant #10 52:34
And you can polish and polish and polish and work on that, and it's still not ever going to be what the prompt actually asked you to do?
Anna E. Cooper 52:44
Yeah.
Participant #10 52:45
Or it is never going to bring you to an analysis that meets the expectations of the rubric. It's your ****** first draft.
Anna E. Cooper 52:57
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 52:57
And it is not meant to be the basis of your final paper. It is meant to be your opportunity to write the thing, and so really adjusting students' expectations around that has always been critical.
Anna E. Cooper 53:15
Yeah.
Participant #10 53:16
And part of that is to say, like, don't wait until you think you're done with a paper to come to the writing center.
Anna E. Cooper 53:27
Exactly.
Participant #10 53:29
Or to go to office hours or whatever, right? Like, bring that really crummy first draft, and, like, let's talk about it and think about it together.
Anna E. Cooper 53:33
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 53:40
There may just be that one paragraph of what you wrote. That initial write-to-think phase is actually the basis for an amazing paper.
Anna E. Cooper 53:50
That's very true.
Participant #10 53:52
But if you're spending all of your time trying to polish up this first kind of reflection, like that's not what's going to get you like to the end zone, right? Like, that's not what's going to get you

there. So, I think just adjusting that expectation, adjusting that sense of process, like again, I learned at VSU from a professor there, this is like Kill Your Darlings.
Anna E. Cooper 54:23
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 54:23
Like you have to always be ready to Kill Your Darlings. That 5 pages that you wrote—it may truly, genuinely be that one paragraph is what you keep from that, and you have to be willing to kill your darlings to get rid of all those other 4 1/2 pages of stuff that you wrote.
Anna E. Cooper 54:34
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #10 54:41
And many students just aren't primed for that to be the process, and it really does take a paradigm shift, and I think that is still the root of so many like papers gone wrong, right?
Anna E. Cooper 54:46
Lovely. Yeah.
Participant #10 54:57
You've got a great idea buried in here, and if you just had a conversation with someone and processed it and landed on that and then gone out and written a paper emanating from that, like that would have been your paper.
Anna E. Cooper 55:10
Yeah.
Participant #10 55:11
You know, so I think that's probably —you know, and like ChatGPT can only do what you tell it to do if you're telling it.
Anna E. Cooper 55:12
Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Participant #10 55:21
And like, even if you're getting it to write a paper that has like perfect grammar and like whatever like that, if it doesn't make sense and if it doesn't represent an original thought, and if it's not an analysis that lands like, OK, that's—you know what, 30% of the rubric is grammar.
Anna E. Cooper 55:34
Yeah.
Participant #10 55:41
So, like, OK, it's not getting graded on either, so, you know, I think that is sort of a time-worn fundamental issue.
Anna E. Cooper 55:42
Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So, for #8, thinking back to working at the Student Success Center, what institutional policies or administrative tasks were you responsible for following and completing as a tutor, and how did these duties impact your writing tutor role?
Participant #10 56:14
So I do think that we were—I think that we got like CRLA certified while I was there.
Anna E. Cooper 56:23
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 56:23
And I think I did become like a Level 5 tutor, and I think part of that was providing training for other tutors.

Anna E. Cooper 56:34
Yeah.
Participant #10 56:35
So, I think I did do that, and I think that's where the undergraduate research that I presented came from.
Anna E. Cooper 56:43
OK.
Participant #10 56:45
And so I do think I have had that responsibility. the more I've kind of thought and had this conversation with you, I do think. That was true, and I think that, like, we got that certification while I was there. So, that wasn't original to my time there, but I think that was part of it. So yeah, I think I did level up, and then as you did that, part of your responsibility was providing training, which was really cool. I think [training] kept me looking engaged and excited about my work.
Anna E. Cooper 57:11
OK. So, did y'all have to complete any session reflection forms?
Participant #10 57:27
[I'm] thinking. I think we did, but I don't remember that being a focus.
Anna E. Cooper 57:38
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 57:39
I don't remember that being —I think I probably approached that in a really rote way.
Anna E. Cooper 57:46
Yeah. That makes sense. OK. So, you mentioned that you helped train other tutors.
Did you feel like that impacted your writing tutor role?
Participant #10 58:06
Yeah, definitely. You know, it gave me an opportunity to reflect on my own practice and to think about what I wish I would have known earlier in my writing consultant career.
Anna E. Cooper 58:20
Yeah.
Participant #10 58:22
I think it gave me opportunities to be intellectually engaged with the pedagogy of the field, which was really powerful. It was like it felt like an honor and a privilege to provide that to other people. So, I thought that responsibility, which I think helped me stay, like I said, kind of motivated and engaged. Like, even though I did the same job for six semesters, I never felt bored. I never felt like I'd outgrown it because I had new ways to contribute, which was really fun.
Anna E. Cooper 58:57
Yeah. OK. Thank you for that answer. So, #9, during your employment, can you please explain the peer-staff support system writing tutors had, and how did tutors and staff members collaborate with one another?
Participant #10 59:18
Yeah, I would describe it as, like, very egalitarian.
Anna E. Cooper 59:22
Mm-hmm.

Participant #10 59:23
So, if there were like student supervisors, I don't even remember that. Like, they might have been there, but there were veteran tutors who we really respected, and we would go to them with questions. And I vividly remember, like, not their names, but their faces.
Anna E. Cooper 59:49
Yeah.
Participant #10 59:51
Like, I remember leaning on one veteran tutor in particular until she graduated, and then I remember becoming a veteran tutor. Along with this other guy I tutored with. Gosh, I wish I could remember his last name. And people came to us with lots of questions, but that was more about things like length of time and experience than any sort of hierarchy that was imposed.
Anna E. Cooper 1:00:27
Yeah. That makes sense. OK, so #10: How did your academic major impact or influence how you tutored writing?
Participant #10 1:00:43
Yeah, so I was a creative writing contemporary, so I did — and I don't even know if these concentrations are still there at VSU, but I got an English degree, and I have fulfilled both concentrations, creative writing, and contemporary literature. And then, like, just a straight-up English degree that was very English department-oriented.
Anna E. Cooper 1:01:02
Thank you.
Participant #10 1:01:02
And I know that that shaped my writing consultations. And I want to say that it did in a positive way. I'm sure there are probably blind spots that I have. Like if you did a poll of science tutors. They probably would have — certainly things that they could have improved on. As a writer, jumping out of that positionality as a community person, and I'm sure I could have done that better. But what I remember is being really attentive to how to read, think, and write critically and have something to say.
Anna E. Cooper 1:01:57
Yes.
Participant #10 1:01:57
And I do think that my English degree prepared me really well for that approach. I know I could have done some things better, but I do think that was a helpful piece. And of course, anybody operating from a genre of writing like — it's a learning process to come to know others. And so, it took a lot of work to learn like APA and —
Anna E. Cooper 1:02:23
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:02:24
— Like Chicago style and all of that, because that's not what I was raised on as an English major. But learning it was interesting, and it served me really well. So yeah, I think it did. It totally shaped my blind spots, certainly, and I probably, in hindsight, don't have a good memory of what those blind spots were at the time. But just thinking about my later practice, it did take a lot of work to pull myself out of, like —I switched fields, right? So, I did my master's in English, but I did my PhD in human geography, and even just the style and the genre of writing. My PhD was really different. That's probably —

Anna E. Cooper 1:03:03
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:03:04
—What jarred me out of my genre bias, so I know I had it as a peer tutor, and it probably negatively impacted my sessions. I was aware of it at the time, but I don't think I had enough lived experience to address it.
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:19
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:03:19
You know, like within myself and within my practice, because I had to do that work later.
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:23
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 1:03:26
But there were definitely some advantages to just, like, you know, having taken classes. That really forced you to read critically, think critically, and then reflect that in your writing. I think that's definitely a gift of my English degree that, like, keeps on giving.
Anna E. Cooper 1:03:42
Yeah. Thank you for that response. So that closes out the direct questions, and now we're just going to have 2 open-ended questions. So, these are kind of just helping me see what the writing tutoring can do to improve. And also, since I'm reporting on major changes, the first questions are just going to be about any changes you noticed. So, #11: In your opinion, how did writing tutoring methods change during your time tutoring? Also, did you notice that the writing tutoring environment changed?
Participant #10 1:04:30
You know, I think I happened to join the SSC—I think it had just moved up to that new space. And like the merger of content-based tutoring and writing consulting, I think they had just merged.
Anna E. Cooper 1:04:49
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:04:51
And so I think that was sort of a seismic shift, and I remember there being. Like a skepticism about—and this was not from [SSC director]. This is from fellow people who had been there before, like in the previous model that I think was separate.
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:10
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:05:13
I remember there being skepticism. Like, "Can this work?" We're all thrown in here together. Like it was just different, right? A change of heart.
Anna E. Cooper 1:05:23
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:05:24
But I think I probably got really lucky, and I didn't know those previous systems, so I didn't have anything at the time to compare it to, but from my experience, it was like, "Gosh, it just really did create this amazing environment for a coalition of ideas and people coming together to think together and write together and collaborate." And I think being there, being among other students who nerded out like I did to what I was studying, into writing and reading, was such a

special environment to be a part of, and, you know, I think that did evolve. A bit like toward the end of my time there, there were some more concrete policies that were being put in place, and I don't even remember what they were. But I remember kind of chafing at them a bit.
Anna E. Cooper 1:06:24
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:06:27
You know, there was sort of like this "professionalization" of the culture.
Anna E. Cooper 1:06:34
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 1:06:35
That felt different. And again, change is hard, right? So, it's good. Like, that's actually one of the really cool things about working with peer tutors: you can make culture change over the course of a couple of years. So, people graduate and move on, right? Like you don't have people there for 30 years or tied to a way of doing something.
Anna E. Cooper 1:06:51
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:06:55
And so I graduated out, and I don't know what that trajectory looked like after that. But there was sort of this subtle shift from, like, we're hanging out, grappling with, like, big concepts and ideas, and people are coming in and we're helping them. And this is just, like, a cool culture and place to be a part of too, just a little more professionalized, like, "Hey, you're getting your time sheets wrong."
Anna E. Cooper 1:07:28
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:07:29
And like as a professional in this field—in hindsight, yeah, that stuff's important.
There were people with their feet being held to the fire for us to get our timesheets right, and we might have thought we were too busy, you know, thinking about—
Anna E. Cooper 1:07:37
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:07:44
—I don't know, important things? But that's not true. That was not a fair way to think about it at the time. But I do remember that being a shift at the end of my time there.
Anna E. Cooper 1:07:48
Mm-hmm. OK. Thank you. So, #12, this is kind of getting your opinion on how we could improve things. So based on your experiences, what could the writing center and future writing tutors do to make tutoring services more effective? How could the writing center's environment improve to support tutors and students?
Participant #10 1:08:21
It's a hard question because I think, like I said before, the writing center at my institution and the tutoring center at my institution report up through me, and one of the things we're grappling with right now is, how is AI changing the landscape for all?
Anna E. Cooper 1:08:32
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 1:08:39
Like students can get a lot from AI tools.

Anna E. Cooper 1:08:47
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 1:08:49
And we should, like, lean into how AI can make our writing processes better.
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:00
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:09:01
Right, like we owe it to our students to lean into that because their employers are going to expect them to engage with that to make their work better when they leave, right? Like, we can't just put our heads in the sand. And I've had to push back on this even just among my own staff of like, "OK, well, we can't villainize it because it's eating into our traffic."
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:28
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:09:29
You know, like, we're not seeing the same growth we used to. That's an us problem, not an AI problem.
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:39
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:09:40
Like AI may be shifting the landscape, but this is not the first time that's happened, right? Like, the Internet has become a thing within my lifetime.
Anna E. Cooper 1:09:51
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:09:51
Like, we can adapt to this moment; we will adapt to this moment. But it's OK to take a beat and think about what that means, what it looks like, and how. How writing centers can work alongside AI, how we can make recommendations for how students can engage with it, how we can help students understand when it's a good part of their process and when it's not, and then how we can help them understand the value of English with a peer. The value of engaging in person about your paper is different than what you get from AI, right?
Anna E. Cooper 1:10:27
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:10:31
Until we understand how AI is a good part of our process, we can't understand our value proposition for what we offer.
Anna E. Cooper 1:10:41
Yeah, exactly.
Participant #10 1:10:43
Now that's different, and how do we fit into this new AI process, right? So, I think we've got to do that as a field. And I know that my writing center here at my institution, we're not quite there yet.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:01
So additionally, do you have any suggestions for improving the environment, whether that be physical changes or how the environment feels?
Participant #10 1:11:18
Yeah. And to be honest, I just don't know what it's like there anymore.

Anna E. Cooper 1:11:22
Yeah. No, you're fine. Just based off of things that you've seen that work, like, did you feel like the Student Success Center's layout was good for tutoring?
Participant #10 1:11:36
There are advantages and disadvantages, right? Like so, having this learning center where we're all kind of dumped in a room together, it did get loud.
Anna E. Cooper 1:11:43
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 1:11:51
I'm looking back. I was not attentive to this at the time, but now I think about accessibility resources as part of my area, my current institution. So, I am more mindful of this. I'm sure there were students who had learning differences who experienced the chaos of that. Like what I experienced is beautiful chaos. They probably felt overwhelmed or overstimulated or distracted, or, like, fill in the blank, right? So, do I think there is a huge value to, like, an open, highly collaborative setting? Yes. Is that going to benefit everybody? No. So, you know we're getting ready to make some physical changes to our writing center and learning center and bring those together into the same space.
Anna E. Cooper 1:12:28
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 1:12:37
And so you know where I've landed, and I don't know if this is an improvement over what is already happening at VSU or not, is that we do have this big open room, and everybody experiences that positively. That's there, and they can feed on that and the energy of that environment, and a lot of students do in our current setup, but then to also have some more private or semi-private spaces together so that whether somebody is in a Spanish tutoring session or whether they're in a writing consultation, if they need a space to concentrate, if they need to take an emotional moment and experience, like, some tearful frustration, they have a place to go to do that.
Anna E. Cooper 1:13:21
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:13:24
And so I think as our ideas about how to support students are more nuanced—based on their identities and their lived experiences—being sure our spaces reflect that mindfulness of their experience.
Anna E. Cooper 1:13:37
Yeah. Well, we'll say that since the ASC was in the library, it's been really nice because we do have that open space, but we also have kind of these—this sounds weird, but glass—see-through study room areas.
Participant #10 1:13:55
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:13:55
So it's like everyone can still see each other, but if someone can't focus, there are these rooms that are kind of soundproof, which is really helpful as well.
Participant #10 1:14:06
Yeah, I can definitely see how that's a little bit of the best of both worlds, right?
So you're still, like, fully visible?

Anna E. Cooper 1:14:10
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:14:14
And again, like, right there are negatives to private spaces, like going into a small room with another person and shutting a door does not feel comfortable for everyone, right? And so, I think that sounds like a really amazing setup. It probably meets a lot of needs.
Anna E. Cooper 1:14:23
Yeah. Yes. So that concludes the open-ended questions. Before I conclude the interview. I just wanted to provide you with a chance to mention any additional insights or comments about your time at the Student Success Center, if I didn't already cover something that you would like to mention.
Participant #10 1:14:55
You know, in this Student Success Center, we did spend a lot of time thinking about the experiences of our students who are coming in and using our services, and that's good, and that's how it should be.
Anna E. Cooper 1:15:17
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 1:15:18
But like when I think back on my time there, I know I grew and learned. Just a bit more than the students walking through the door to ask questions, and so, I just—I look back on my time there as, like, really formative for me.
Anna E. Cooper 1:15:28
Yeah.
Participant #10 1:15:37
Really, you know, both humbling, like—nobody knows everything, right?
Anna E. Cooper 1:15:41
Mm-hmm.
Participant #10 1:15:43
All the answers—nobody gets it right every time. But also an opportunity to work in the field I love and to build skills and build confidence in what I can contribute.
So yeah, it was really, you know—as much as I love helping others, and it is what drives what I do, I'd be lying if I didn't say I gained so much from that too and grew and learned so much. And a little bit selfishly, I look back on that time. It's just such an important time of growth for me too. And so, I'm very thankful for that, and you know, pass that along to [SSC director] next time you see her.
Anna E. Cooper 1:16:25
Of course. Well, thank you so much for your time and your really thorough responses. You have no idea how much your responses mean to me with finishing up my thesis, and I just really appreciate you participating in this project.
Participant #10 1:16:47
Well, thanks for reaching out, and thanks for doing this super cool project. When you finish it and it's published online as well, will you send me a link? I would love to read it.
Anna E. Cooper 1:16:55
Yeah. Of course. Yes, it's going to be a lot of pages because I didn't realize at the time, but trying to cover all three writing centers is going to really be a lot of typing.
But it's going to be really good.

Participant #10 1:17:12
Yeah.
Anna E. Cooper 1:17:14
I'm excited for the finished product, and I'll share it with you whenever I'm done.
Participant #10 1:17:19
That's wonderful. Well, I'm really looking forward to that, Anna, and good luck as you go into your next phase of writing your thesis, and let me know if there's anything else I can do to support you.
Anna E. Cooper 1:17:24
Thank you. Thank you so much. And you have a great rest of your day. And this is pretty much probably what I'll need from you, but I'll let you know whenever I'm looking through the transcript if I have any questions.
Participant #10 1:17:42
OK. Well, wonderful. Have a great week. Bye-bye.
Anna E. Cooper 1:17:45
You too. Bye.

◉ **Anna E. Cooper** stopped transcription.

APPENDIX B

Participant Recruitment Letter

APPENDIX B

Participant Recruitment Letter

Hello, '*Participant Name*,'

I hope you are doing well. My name is Anna Cooper, and I am an English graduate student currently studying rhetoric and composition at Valdosta State University. For my thesis, I am conducting research entitled "VSU Writing Centers: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies." Basically, I am researching how VSU's writing center has changed over time and what VSU's writing tutoring program can learn from writing tutor and staff personal experiences. How have the tutoring space and tutoring practices changed over time, and which approaches are most successful?

Through interviewing influential members that belong to each writing center generation, such as yourself, I will have a full scope of how writing tutoring has progressed over time, answering my main research question: Across the three generations of VSU's writing center, how have peer collaboration and social interactions influenced how writing is taught to students? The interview will take an hour of your time and include a series of questions about your writing center role, methods, and tutoring environment.

Your acceptance would be greatly appreciated since you have been selected as an important part of VSU's writing tutor history, and your participation will help tell and shape VSU's writing tutoring story. However, even if you accept to be a participant in my study, you can still withdraw at any time. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Anna Cooper at aecooper@valdosta.edu. This study (IRB-04552-2024) has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Thank you,

Anna Cooper

APPENDIX C

Detailed Data Charts

APPENDIX C

Detailed Data Charts

The detailed data charts show participants' responses to the interview questions that supported the findings. These charts display qualitative data that include opinions and main ideas from the participant's transcript responses. These detailed data charts are listed in chronological order, beginning with the Writing Center, then the SSC, and the ASC. For each generation, the writing tutor responses are listed first, and the tutoring staff responses follow. There are three data charts for each tutor and staff pair that reflect the three main findings categories: The Writing Center's Environmental Impact in green, Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring in blue, and Overall Suggestions for Improving Writing Tutoring in red. Note: Since there was only one tutor participant for The Writing Center and one staff participant for the SSC, they have their own data charts. Also, blacked-out boxes indicate that a participant did not provide an answer for the question topic.

Each data chart's left column lists the question topics that support each chart's main highlighted findings category. The question number from the Interview Questionnaire, which can be found in the "Data Collection Methods" section of "Chapter 4: Methodology," is listed before each question's topic and after the associated question type. The question type abbreviations are as follows: "OQ" for opening questions, "DQ" for direct questions, and "OEQ" for open-ended questions. For example, for the first tutor data chart, "DQ.5" means Direct Question 5 from the tutor questionnaire. Additionally, for detailed data charts that feature two participants, each participant has their own column with responses underneath for each question topic listed under the first left column.

The Writing Center Data

The Writing Center Tutor Data

The Writing Center's Environmental Impact	The Writing Center Tutor (Participant #9)
DQ.5 **Tutoring Atmosphere and Environment Efficiency**	**<u>Tutoring Atmosphere:</u>** -A computer lab in West Hall with 18-20 computers "that was open for anybody at the institution to use" (Participant #9). -Whether there was a whole class working or no one, "the environment was not very cozy" (Participant #9). **<u>Environment Efficiency:</u>** -The lab had bright lights, "just like a classroom or any other space," with two large tables placed together in the middle that held reference books and other things (Participant #9). -"It wasn't the most efficient" (Participant #9). It could be distracting during tutoring when a student had computer issues and needed to get up to fix it.
OQ.8 **Advertising and Student Outreach**	-Faculty told students about tutoring. -Known central location: "The writing center was across the hallway from the English department" (Participant #9). -The Writing Center and library were "primarily the two locations that had computer labs available," causing students to come in and out often (Participant #9).
OEQ.11 **Tutoring Environmental Changes**	-The environment didn't change: "The environment kind of was what it was, and space didn't exist" (Participant #9).
DQ.8 **Institutional Policies and Admin. Duties**	-Writing tutors provided "de facto tech support for the computers" (Participant #9). -The tutor did not recall completing session reflection forms.
DQ.9 **Peer and Staff Collaboration**	-The director's office was "right outside the Writing Center," so the tutors could visit when they had questions or issues (Participant #9). -"Tight-knit" staff: No "formal support system," but the writing tutors "worked really well together no matter who was scheduled on shift" (Participant #9).

Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring	The Writing Center Tutor (Participant #9)
DQ.1 **Writing Tutoring Training and Development**	-Writing tutors "were required to take a tutor preparation course" that was a one-hour credit (Participant #9). -This course covered writing pedagogy, approaches, and readings that tutors met weekly to discuss. -Training emphasized for tutees to do their own work.
OQ.9 and DQ.2 **Tutoring Center Goals and Professional Goals**	**Organizational goals:** -"Helping students with their papers" (Participant #9). -Side goal: Teaching students how to use the computers to format their papers. **Tutoring's Contribution to Student Success:** -"Professionally, I'm a big advocate of always having another set of eyes" (Participant #9). -Tutoring "is always going to benefit, [making] sure that the goals that [tutees] set out to achieve [are] met because you [students] are… too close to [their writing] to be able to objectively determine that [themselves]" (Participant #9). **Professional goals:** -Book editor: this goal "aligned perfectly" with writing tutoring, making it an "ideal job" (Participant #9). -"I was all about looking at people's writing, giving them feedback" (Participant #9).
DQ.3 **Writing Tutoring Approaches and Session Structure**	-Writing tutoring did not occur "on any type of appointment basis," and students would walk in for help (Participant #9). -First, ask what the student is working on and what help they need. -Most tutoring occurred later in the writing process: students needed help with MLA format. **-Main strategies:** While reading the tutee's paper, the tutor made minimal markings like a "checkmark, dot, or star" in the margins near problems to discuss them later (Participant #9). -Read the tutee's paper out loud, talked through errors, and provided mini lessons on reoccurring mistakes.
DQ.4 **Learning Strategies and Tutee Engagement**	**Learning Strategies:** -Talked about "thesis statements, introductions, and conclusions" (Participant #9). -Focused on "outlining ideas" and the "basic components of an essay" (Participant #9).

	-Asked students to read out loud and explain what their ideas meant. **<u>Tutee Engagement:</u>** -"[Students] were more reluctant to drive;" They wanted to "sit in the passenger seat" and "be a passive participant" (Participant #9). -Created boundaries: When a student wanted edits, the tutor handed the paper back and said, "You're going to need a lot of whiteout. I'm sorry I can't help you" (Participant #9).
DQ.6. **Adapting to Students' Diverse Needs**	-Recalled that a non-traditional student taught herself to read, and writing tutors taught her how to articulate her ideas more effectively.
DQ.7. **Common Writing Challenges and Changes**	**<u>Common Challenges:</u>** -Students wanted writing tutors to check their grammar rather than consider their writing's content. -"Sometimes [students] don't care. They're just wanting somebody to fix everything before they turn it in" (Participant #9). **<u>Changes:</u>** -Prioritizing grammar and MLA formatting was a consistent need "the entire time I was there" (Participant #9).

Overall Suggestions for Improving Writing Tutoring	**The Writing Center Tutor (Participant #9)**
OEQ.11 **Evolution of Writing Tutoring Practices**	-Writing tutoring approaches did not change. -The Writing Center "director might share an article" with new methods or a "new concept people are talking about" (Participant #9).
OEQ.12 **Enhancing Tutoring Effectiveness**	-Writing centers need to take the "focus away from being the fix-it shop" (Participant #9). -The Writing Center could employ early intervention, "supplemental instruction," or people "hired specifically for a specific course they're familiar with" (Participant #9).

	-Establishing relationships by "partnering with a department or partnering with a handful of faculty" can get students thinking about their writing" (Participant #9). -"Embracing the applications that exist and the technology that exists, rather than shying away from it" (Participant #9).
OEQ.12 **Improving the Writing Center Environment**	-The physical environment needs to be a collaborative space like the later SSC. -Incorporating bulletin boards and even clear whiteboards can allow students to "project and manipulate" their writing during tutoring sessions (Participant #9). -"Making it a true collaborative space reduces the anxiety and reluctance for students but also levels the hierarchy" (Participant #9).

The Writing Center Staff Data

The Writing Center's Environmental Impact	The Writing Center Staff (Participant #7)	The Writing Center Staff (Participant #8)
DQ.3 **Tutoring Atmosphere and Environment Efficiency**	**<u>Tutoring Atmosphere:</u>** -A computer lab in West Hall with 25 computers lining walls. -An office next door for recordkeeping and providing tutoring. -A table in the center supported two tutorial sessions. **<u>Environment Efficiency:</u>** -Not the most efficient: "The setup probably wasn't optimal in West Hall because most students thought of that as a computer lab" (Participant #7).	**<u>Tutoring Atmosphere:</u>** -Began downstairs at Pound Hall on North Campus during West Hall renovation. -26 Apple 2E computers **<u>Environment Efficiency:</u>** -Efficient for the time: "And it sounds very rudimentary now, but [basic word processing] was almost revolutionary at the time" because it was new, making "editing easier" (Participant #8).
OQ.6 and 7 and DQ.4	**<u>Ads:</u>** -Tutors made classroom visits. -Tutors printed bookmarks with "writerly quotes" and tutoring	**<u>Ads:</u>** -When moved to West Hall, The Writing Center was in a central location near English

Advertising, Student Access, and Diverse Needs	info that were distributed in students' books (Participant #7). -"Word of mouth" advertising (Participant #7). **<u>Access:</u>** -Students received face-to-face tutorials. -One tutor created a synchronous tutorial system where students asked quick questions. **<u>Diverse Needs:</u>** -Mainly tutored freshman students (ENGL 1101 and1102). -International students: Used minimal marking techniques.	Department and students nearby. **<u>Access:</u>** -"In the early years, they spent a lot of time having students write their papers over 2 periods in the writing centers, while their teachers paced the room and answer questions" (Participant #8).
DQ.3 **Tutoring Environmental Changes**	-Tutoring shifted to provide on-demand synchronous tutorials. -Online, writing tutors could have "quick conversations about writing skills and tutees could ask "questions about writing" (Participant #7).	-Tutoring moved to West Hall across from English Department.
DQ.7 **Peer and Staff Collaboration**	-A very small group with a family-like support system. -Staff encouraged students to tutor for "free money" and completing "something relevant to their major" (Participant #7). -Staff took writing tutors to conferences for professional development opportunities.	-The VP of Academic Affairs was supportive of The Writing Center.

Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring	**The Writing Center Staff (Participant #7)**	**The Writing Center Staff (Participant #8)**
DQ.8 and OQ.4	**<u>Training:</u>**	**<u>Hiring:</u>**

Writing Tutoring Training and Hiring	-Tutors attended a training course. **Hiring:** -Writing tutors were not required to major in English. -Faculty members nominated students, or students provided a faculty reference letter.	-Graduate assistantships were created to staff The Writing Center.
OQ.8 and DQ.1 **Institutional and Tutoring Center Goals**	-The main goal is to "help students become better writers and thinkers to communicate more clearly" (Participant #7). -To help tutees "succeed in whatever assignments are in front of them, in whatever discipline is in front of them" (Participant #7). -Writing tutors also assisted students with using computers. -Had "orientations for almost every comp. class on how to use Word [and] how to set up papers" (Participant #7). **Tutoring's Contribution to Student Success:** "I can't quote the data, but I have been quoted the data before that shows that students who take advantage of …[writing tutoring]… retained at higher rates. They have higher grades. Often, real benefit accrues to the people who tutor. They learn the material better; they become better writers themselves. They become better teachers. So, it's a win-win if we can support it financially" (Participant #7).	-"[Computer Word processing] made editing easier. It made writing more of a process than a one-shot production" (Participant #8). -Writing tutors helped others learn how to format and edit their papers on the computers.
DQ.6 **Admin. Policies and Tutoring Support**	-Tutors completed tutor report forms that were sent to the tutee's instructor, given to the tutor, and filed in the tutoring center so tutors "could pull up	[redacted]

	and see what had been worked on" (Participant #7). -1-2 Grad. Assistants that monitored undergrad tutors and communicated with the director. -Open-door policy: director's office right across the hall from The Writing Center.	[redacted]

Overall Suggestions for Improving Writing Tutoring	The Writing Center Staff (Participant #7)	The Writing Center Staff (Participant #8)
DQ.8 and DQ.10 **Defining Effective Writing Tutoring**	-Start conversations: ask how the tutee is doing and about their assignment. -Sit on the same side as the tutee. -Keep paper in front of the tutee. -Read aloud: listening and responding, "rather than taking over and marking up the text" (Participant #7).	-Introduced students to basic Word processing. -Using spell-check, copying, and pasting sentences, and creating bibliography entries.
OEQ.11 **Tutoring Changes Over Time**	-Witnessed the tutoring center move from Langdale Hall to Odum Library. -"Tutoring across the university disciplines was exactly where [tutoring] needed to go" (Participant #7).	-"During that time is when writing moved from like 305 to 500 words written in class to longer essays that were at least drafted a little bit" (Participant #8). -Writing tutors helped students with formatting these papers on the computer.
OEQ.12 **Admin. Challenges and Institutional Support**	-Tutoring staff had to watch a tutor's mental health and fire one GA. -HR support, like "conflict management support," had helped target challenges (Participant #7).	[redacted]

Student Success Center

SSC Tutor Data

The Writing Center's Environmental Impact	SSC Tutor (Participant #3)	SSC Tutor (Participant #10)
DQ.5 **Tutoring Atmosphere and Environment Efficiency**	**<u>Tutoring Atmosphere:</u>** -Group mentality, friendly atmosphere. -Tutors grouped together: it was "a good way to share methods among tutors who were also tutoring in the same subject area" (Participant #3). **<u>Environment Efficiency:</u>** - SSC had two floors, and writing tutoring took place on the 1st floor. -Whiteboards were available if tutors needed to provide visual aids. -An efficient space. "I felt like I was able to work well with my own students that I was tutoring in this environment" (Participant #3).	**<u>Tutoring Atmosphere:</u>** -A safe and welcoming place: "It was my home on campus" (Participant #10). -"A collaborative setting" where tutors shared tutoring techniques and could ask one another for help (Participant #10). **<u>Environment Efficiency:</u>** -Very open. There were not any separate little rooms. You could hear everyone. -Describes the environment as beneficial, not necessarily efficient.
OQ.8 **Advertising and Student Outreach**	-Fellow student or faculty member informed others about tutoring.	-Does not recall. -Did not complete class visits or create flyers.
OEQ.11 **Tutoring Environmental Changes**	-After tutor graduated, SSC moved to the University Center and then the library. -SSC's name changed.	-When the tutor began tutoring, SSC had just merged together writing tutoring and other tutoring subject areas.
DQ.8 **Institutional Policies and Admin. Duties**	-Checking the tutoring schedule to know whether tutees would attend.	-Level 5 tutor: trained other tutors. -Completed tutoring session reflection forms.

DQ.9 **Peer and Staff Collaboration**	-Tutors collaborated regardless of subject area. -Front desk students and staff helped writing tutors keep up with schedules.	-Egalitarian support system. -Peer tutors collaborated regardless of subject area. -Main support: veteran tutors answered other writing tutors' questions. -Received SSC director's support.

Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring	**SSC Tutor (Participant #3)**	**SSC Tutor (Participant #10)**
DQ.1 **Writing Tutoring Training and Development**	-Unofficial training: took English courses to develop writing skills. -Attended meetings about how to interact with tutees. -Discussed different methods to get tutees to work on their own rather than writing tutors just proofreading work.	-Had to complete a "credit-bearing course" (Participant #10). -Apprenticeship period: "I [tutored] some sessions and got some feedback or reflected on them" (Participant #10). -Attended regular training meetings.
OQ.9 and DQ.2 **Tutoring Center Goals and Professional Goals**	**<u>Organizational goals:</u>** -"The main goals of the SSC were to improve student comprehension and ability to write at a university/college level" (Participant #3). **<u>Tutoring's Contribution to Student Success:</u>** -"I believe [writing tutoring] is important because if a student can't write, they are going to have issues not only in their English courses but [also in] other courses that require any sort of communication…And it also is	**<u>Organizational goals:</u>** -A third, socio-academic space: to "create a helpful and intellectual space that was not the classroom" (Participant #10). -Care and support students: make "sure they were walking back out of that door with some good skills" (Participant #10). **<u>Tutoring's Contribution to Student Success:</u>** -"Many people construe writing as a solitary endeavor… For me, writing is thinking…[Students are] often better anchors, right when [they] have a thought partner" (Participant #10).

	just going to prepare them for a future outside of academics as well" (Participant #3). **Professional goals:** -Become an ESL instructor or teach American students from different cultural/language backgrounds: "French, German, Japanese, and Korean" (Participant #3). -Tutoring helped participant acknowledge students' learning differences, giving them a background for ESL learning.	-"Now students are coming out of high school not having done a ton of writing… so I think to have a near peer in particular be able to walk them through some of the process...is critical" to support new students" (Participant #10). **Professional goals:** -Direct a writing center. -Tutoring experiences encouraged professional goal.
DQ.3 **Writing Tutoring Approaches and Session Structure**	-First, meet the tutee to "make sure they feel comfortable and welcome" (Participant #3). -Next, determine the assignment's formatting style and establish the tutee's main writing concerns. -Glance through the student's writing and read their paper alongside them. **-Main strategy:** Read paper aloud to find any errors and ask tutee questions about their work. Give the tutee a chance to locate the error.	-First, read the tutee's whole paper through and assess writing needs: identify the "higher order concerns" (Participant #10). "I changed from reading the paper out loud with the student to reading it myself and then processing it with the student" (Participant #10). -Then, determine the assignment's format. -At the end, gave the tutee "three takeaways" or homework to think about to move forward (Participant #10). **Main strategy:** Tutor takes a few minutes to read the tutee's paper alone first.
DQ.4 **Learning Strategies and Tutee Engagement**	**Learning Strategies:** -Frames the writing process as a way to "embrace individuality" and consider their "author voice." -Reminded tutees to consider "instructors' rules" for the assignment (Participant #3). -Leverage tutees' strengths and encourage them. **Tutee Engagement:**	**Learning Strategies:** -"There are different writing processes:" structured outlines, mind maps, and freewriting (Participant #10). -Ask the tutee to explain their writing process and recommend suggestions if they are stuck. **Tutee Engagement:**

	-Take sections of tutee's paper and discuss what needs to be done. -Collaborative rewriting exercise: Tutor and tutee each rewrite the section for "5 minutes" and "compare" their writing to help the tutee learn what to improve (Participant #3).	-Used pointing to ensure that tutees write on their own paper or use their laptop. -Did not provide edits but used questions to help the tutee determine the problem. -Made sure tutees had agency over their own paper.
DQ.6. **Adapting to Students' Diverse Needs**	-International student: Ask which language they are comfortable using and discuss their concerns. -Asking questions to understand and acknowledge tutees' differences. - It is important for the tutor to "be open to understanding that not all students are going to have the same learning style. And some students might catch on more quickly than others."	-International Students: Pointed out their current English strengths rather than focusing specifically on errors. -First-gen students: Welcomed them to prevent academic "imposter syndrome" (Participant #10). -Students with disabilities: Emphasized meeting students where they were and adjusting tutoring to meet their needs. -Adapted traditional practices to be more inclusive when necessary.
DQ.7. **Common Writing Challenges and Changes**	**<u>Common Challenges:</u>** -International students had different levels of English proficiency. -Freshman and seniors had different writing needs. -Adjusting to specific writing tasks: they "might be good with writing a biology paper versus a literature paper" (Participant #3). **<u>Changes:</u>** -AI was not a prominent issue, but "the increase in technology started plagiarism issues, though I didn't personally encounter any of that" (Participant #3).	**<u>Common Challenges:</u>** -Tutees view initial brainstorming as a first draft, not viewing the writing process as recursive. "I've written my thoughts, and therefore this is a draft, and I will just keep trying to polish [it] up" (Participant #10). -Tutees' writing does not align with the original prompt. -"Kill Your Darlings:" Tutees must be ready to delete writing that does not work. **<u>Changes:</u>** -ChatGPT and AI platforms: students' writing has perfect grammar that lacks a coherent "original thought" (Participant #10).

Overall Suggestions for Improving Writing Tutoring	SSC Tutor (Participant #3)	SSC Tutor (Participant #10)
OEQ.11 **Evolution of Writing Tutoring Practices**	-"To be honest, I don't think [tutoring methods] changed much during my time tutoring" (Participant #3). -English graduate students became writing tutors later on.	-Tutors graduated over time and moved. -Professionalization of culture: students needed to complete time sheets correctly.
OEQ.12 **Enhancing Tutoring Effectiveness**	-Writing tutors need to remind tutees that they are there "first and foremost to help them improve their writing and not to just rewrite things for them" (Participant #3).	-It is important to remember that writing tutors benefit themselves from conducting writing tutoring and helping the tutee learn.
OEQ.12 **Improving the Writing Center Environment**	-"First and foremost, having a comfortable and safe environment is what really shapes the whole experience for both" tutors and tutees (Participant #3).	-The SSC environment, "where [tutors were] all kind of dumped in a room together, [got] loud" (Participant #10). -The SSC's highly collaborative setting might not benefit all learner types. -Having private or semi-private spaces for separation would be helpful for tutoring sessions and concentration.

SSC Staff Data

The Writing Center's Environmental Impact	SSC Staff (Participant #6)
DQ.3 **Tutoring Atmosphere and Environment Efficiency**	**<u>Tutoring Atmosphere:</u>** -Wide open spaces at SSC and ASC. -A casual atmosphere and tutoring occurred on one floor. **<u>Environment Efficiency:</u>** -The SSC was a wide-open space and got a lot of tutoring business, but students complained, "This is my living space. I don't want to study in my living space" (Participant #6).

OQ.6 and 7 and DQ.4 **Advertising, Student Access, and Diverse Needs**	**<u>Ads:</u>** -Word-of-mouth methods: faculty and students spread news about tutoring services. -Tutors made class visits. -Sent mass emails about tutoring to all faculty, staff, and students. -Staff made class visits and did study skill workshops. -Tutors created flyers, brochures, and giant posters. -Students connected with tutees for them to return to tutoring. **<u>Access:</u>** -Students emailed and called the SSC secretary to make appointments that were kept in a book. -Writing tutoring occurred in person and online through the Ask Online platform. -Later, SSC used various online scheduling programs for keeping track of tutoring appointments. **<u>Diverse Needs:</u>** -Did not mention tutees' learning needs but mentioned that the tutors hired have become more diverse. -In The Writing Center, tutors "were mostly English majors and mostly white" (Participant #6). -In SSC and ASC, "We inherited a lot of tutors from a lot of other disciplines. And that meant a wider variety of students, so we had all different ethnicities. We had international students as tutors, and it just became a much more rich [sic] and interesting place" (Participant #6).
DQ.3 **Tutoring Environmental Changes**	-Began in West Hall at The Writing Center computer lab, then moved to the old President's House, then SSC was in Langdale Hall, and then later ASC in the library. -The Writing Center had an efficient environment: "The little computer lab was a good space, and we got a lot of business" (Participant #6). -The old president's house was not efficient: "Not so great because [there are] lots of small rooms, and the football players would come in at night, cause we used to be open till 9' o'clock, and smoke" (Participant #6). -At SSC, tutoring occurred on one floor, and noise was cut down later when ASC had individual study spaces. -The later ASC was the most efficient near library resources and centrally located: "I think the best spot was in the library. But I also think that business dropped off when we moved to the library, and I'm not sure why" (Participant #6). However, one reason for the decrease in visits was the online tutoring program.

DQ.7 **Peer and Staff Collaboration**	-The writing tutors had the most support with weekly meetings. -Training at the beginning of the semester promoted team building between tutors and staff.

Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring	**SSC Staff (Participant #6)**
DQ.8 and OQ.4 **Writing Tutoring Training and Hiring**	**<u>Training:</u>** -At the beginning, SSC tutors paid for a tutoring training course. -Removed course requirement and kept writing tutoring curriculum in weekly meetings: viewed students' writing and practiced giving feedback. -Big training days at the beginning of each semester. **<u>Hiring:</u>** -Writing tutors were not required to major in English. -Does not necessarily take faculty's favorite students when hiring. -One or two letters of recommendation from faculty. -Provide a writing sample. -Later on, with ASC, provide a resume and complete an interview. -Students must make a B or better in the course they are tutoring.
OQ.8 and DQ.1 **Institutional and Tutoring Center Goals**	**<u>Institutional Goals:</u>** -The main goal is to "help students become better writers and thinkers to communicate more clearly" (Participant #6). -To help tutees "succeed in whatever assignments are in front of them, in whatever discipline is in front of them" (Participant #6). -Writing tutors also assisted students with using computers. -Had "orientations for almost every comp. class on how to use Word, how to set up papers" (Participant #6). **<u>Tutoring's Contribution to Student Success:</u>** - It's a writing myth that you write alone: tutors understand students' pressures and help them "navigat[e] the university," learning professors' preferences and how to talk to people (Participant #6). -The tutor points students to resources. -Tutoring should "create confidence so that students are unafraid to work with other people on their writing to get feedback and to offer feedback" (Participant #6).

DQ.6 **Admin. Policies and Tutoring Support**	-Tutors complete session reflection forms. Forms were handwritten with The Writing Center and transitioned online towards the latter half of SSC and throughout ASC. -Tutors complete semester reflective letters.

Overall Suggestions for Improving Writing Tutoring	**SSC Staff (Participant #6)**
DQ.8 and DQ.10 **Defining Effective Writing Tutoring**	-Top 5 Writing Tutoring Strategies: Sit on your hands to not do tutees' work for them, have tutees read work out loud to hear mistakes, prioritize fluency over correctness to find higher-order concerns before mechanics, being clear is kind—be direct and truthful with tutees without being rude, more curiosity less judgment, more wag less bark to focus on students' strengths.
OEQ.11 **Tutoring Changes Over Time**	-Staff used to tell the tutors the motto: "We're trying to put ourselves out of a job. We're trying to help students become independent writers, and over the decades I've recognized that that's not true" (Participant #6). -Instead, the most valuable way to improve writing is with "one-on-one conversation" (Participant #6). -"Conversations about writing that generate ideas and provide tips and just give real-time feedback from a human being" (Participant #6). -Currently, writing tutors need to be trained to use AI as a tool with students. Students need to learn how to use AI ethically as a tool and still do their own critical thinking.
OEQ.12 **Admin. Challenges and Institutional Support**	-Recently, since the COVID years, the ASC has struggled to hire tutors: faculty have trouble recommending students, and students don't want to tutor since $10 an hour is not enough for people. -Created new additional tutoring roles and titles so students could earn some more money, but HR said it wasn't allowed and tutors had to be fired.

	-During SSC and ASC, it was difficult to keep admin assistants because tutoring grew big, and it was hard for admin assistants to keep track of "scheduling and directing students to where they need to go" (Participant #6). -Every year the tutoring center had to decrease its budget, so the tutoring center had to hire fewer tutors. -"Even after yearly data clearly proving that we have a positive impact on retention, they decided to eliminate our [tutoring] program" and join tutoring with advising (Participant #6). -The ASC's office focus is now intervention: "Focus on the students with the problems and try to put resources in front of them, and then most of the tutoring is now with an online vendor (Knack)" (Participant #6). -Students have to wait longer for tutoring appointments with the Knack program.

Academic Support Center Data

ASC Tutor Data

The Writing Center's Environmental Impact	**ASC Tutor (Participant #1)**	**ASC Tutor (Participant #2)**
DQ.5 **Tutoring Atmosphere and Environment Efficiency**	**<u>Tutoring Atmosphere:</u>** -Informal, friendly, and family-like atmosphere. -Having the ASC in the library created a welcoming, fun, and casual environment. **<u>Environment Efficiency:</u>** -Bright, open, small areas with 3 or 4 seating areas, nearby public computers, and study	**<u>Tutoring Atmosphere:</u>** -Very individualized. -Only interacts with students around them and does not hang out with other tutors during tutoring. **<u>Environment Efficiency:</u>** -Big, open area with study rooms. Computers and empty tables to complete work.

	rooms designated for tutors and tutees. -No physical divider between ASC and the rest of the library. -Fairly efficient. The front desk directed tutees to tutors for appointments, and tutors interacted with one another if they had a question during appointments.	-Tables can be too big for tutoring. The tutee typically sits across from the tutor, so they feel far away. -Not efficient. There are too many big tables and not enough small ones for one-on-one interactions.
OQ.8 **Advertising and Student Outreach**	-Professors told students about tutoring services. -Writing tutors completed class visits at the beginning of the semester to discuss ASC. -Writing tutors created tutoring flyers to advertise around campus.	-Professors advertise the ASC. -Tutoring staff send out emails about tutoring to VSU students. -Writing tutors presented about the ASC and explained tutoring services to students.
OEQ.11 **Tutoring Environmental Changes**	-"During my time at the ASC, there was not a lot of change in the environment of the writing tutoring center" (Participant #1). -However, "there was a shift in the supervisory roles," meaning that the supervisor and the graduate assistant who would work with the ASC had to move offices" (Participant #1).	-The environment is definitely busier at the end of the semester compared to the beginning. -Cannot speak on long-term changes since they have only been with the ASC for one semester.
DQ.8 **Institutional Policies and Admin. Duties**	-Log tutoring hours and create a tutoring schedule. -Complete session reflection forms after each tutoring session. -Create PowerPoints for class visits and flyers to advertise tutoring services.	-Fill out tutoring session reflection forms.

	-As a grad assistant, data collection and one-on-one meetings with other writing tutors.	
DQ.9 **Peer and Staff Collaboration**	-Tutors collaborate with weekly meetings and semester staff check-ins. -Good communication between writing tutors, the tutor team lead, and ASC staff. -Open-door policy between supervisor, staff members, and tutors.	-Main support: Office manager who scheduled tutoring appointments. -Does not work directly with the ASC director.

Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring	**ASC Tutor (Participant #1)**	**ASC Tutor (Participant #2)**
DQ.1 **Writing Tutoring Training and Development**	-"A three-day training period before the semester started" (Participant #1). -"Trained in various aspects of tutoring, not just writing" (Participant #1). -Writing tutors met with the ASC director to discuss guidelines and expectations.	-Did not receive any formal training but had a brief conversation with a graduate writing tutor.
OQ.9 and DQ.2 **Tutoring Center Goals and Professional Goals**	**Organizational goals:** -Tutor students how to write without doing the work for them. -ASC slogan: "The three Cs: Creating the Conditions for Connection" (Participant #1). **Tutoring's Contribution to Student Success:** -"I think the writing tutoring aspect…was one of the most important aspects of the ASC at the time because it was so multifaceted and can be	**Organizational goals:** -"Help students understand what they're doing wrong and not to teach them what they're doing wrong" (Participant #2). -"Help them understand how they can improve their paper" (Participant #2). **Tutoring's Contribution to Student Success:** -The "first semester [students] are in college, tutoring is incredibly important to make

	utilized across all different courses" (Participant #1). **Professional goals:** -Obtain a PhD and become a full-time English professor. -Poetry, creative writing, literary journal editing. -Viewed tutoring through professional goals as an eye-opening experience to understand different approaches to writing.	sure that students are getting…on pace by the time they enter English level 2" (Participant #2). **Professional goals:** -Direct a remedial first-year writing course at a college or university. -Professional goals influenced tutoring experience: wanted to gain a deeper understanding of remedial students' writing struggles.
DQ.3 **Writing Tutoring Approaches and Session Structure**	-First, "introduce myself if I had not seen the student previously" and find a comfortable place to work (Participant #1). -"My personal approach was to gather as much information as possible at the beginning of each session" (Participant #1). -Next, "engage in some friendly banter" with the tutee before starting work to "position myself as a peer" (Participant #1). -Gather as much info as possible about the tutee, assignment sheet, and goals. -Check to see if the tutee started writing or not, then assess whether the tutee needed help generating ideas or simply needed a second pair of eyes. -Discuss what the tutee should work on next and possibly set up another tutoring appointment. **-Main strategy:** ask question prompts to have the tutee think about their writing rather than telling them the issue outright.	-First, asks student about their assignment and what "they're trying to accomplish" (Participant #2). -Next, read through the tutee's writing or begin asking questions if they have not started writing. -Provides "generalized feedback" and points out edits needed (Participant #2). -"Occasionally, I'll mark the grammar" if there is time (Participant #2). **-Main strategy:** "Probing the student with questions" to consider their mistakes and what they can improve (Participant #2).
DQ.4	**Learning Strategies:**	**Learning Strategies:**

Learning Strategies and Tutee Engagement	-Taught the importance of thesis statements as a "clear vision for your writing" (Participant #1). -Created outlines based on the main thesis statement: "Once they have that sort of framework, that skeleton of the paper, it's much easier for them to fill in supplemental information" (Participant #1). -Reminded students, "It's much better to have a poorly written draft than nothing at all" (Participant #1). **<u>Tutee Engagement:</u>** -Not doing the tutee's work: Not using a pen during the tutoring session and placing the laptop in front of the student. -Discuss ideas out loud with the tutee when they get stuck. -Created boundaries: "The ASC is strict about this. I will get in trouble if I do your work for you" (Participant #1).	-Taught students to view every paper as a 5-paragraph essay with more than 5 paragraphs. -"It is the same basic writing structure" with an introduction, idea 1, idea 2, idea 3, and conclusion (Participant #2). -Built students' confidence by reminding them to use prior writing skills: Reframed a senior's 25-page capstone paper as an extended 5-paragraph essay. **<u>Tutee Engagement:</u>** -Some tutees attended tutoring for basic accountability to complete work: "I'll sit here, do my work. You sit here and do your work. And if you need help, let me know" (Participant #2). -Rerouted away from writing for the tutee: asked the tutee questions to encourage brainstorming.
DQ.6. **Adapting to Students' Diverse Needs**	-Non-traditional students: "They were very unfamiliar with how to use laptop programs: Google Docs and BlazeView" (Participant #1). -Advanced writing students "were just looking for a second set of eyes" (Participant #1). -"If I was tutoring a freshman, I would try to stay away from some terms and concepts that they hadn't maybe been introduced to yet" (Participant #1). -"If a student was deaf, I would have to type out everything I was going to say to them" or ask an ASL or	-A "freshmen student needs reassurance that they're doing it correctly and improving" (Participant #2). -Senior students want an "extra set of eyes" and typically ask, "Can you look at this? Is it good?" (Participant #2).

	interpreting major tutor for help facilitating the session (Participant #1).	
DQ.7. **Common Writing Challenges and Changes**	**<u>Common Challenges:</u>** -Students most often "were simply struggling to come up with an approach to a writing topic" or "looking for guidance in getting started with an assignment" (Participant #1). -Students needed writing tutors to make work "more manageable" and "break down the requirements of the assignments in a way that they understood" (Participant #1). **<u>Changes:</u>** -After tutoring for 3 years, "I didn't see much of a change or a different trend in the needs of the students" (Participant #1).	**<u>Common Challenges:</u>** -"I mostly saw people looking for, like, content feedback, which I can't really do" (Participant #2). -"And I'm like, I mean, technically, I've *read Just Mercy*, but I'm not supposed to give content feedback. I can't make your opinion for you" (Participant #2). **<u>Changes:</u>** -"Even across the one semester, I felt like it changed" (Participant #2). -Freshman students at the beginning of the semester said, "I don't know what I'm doing," compared to the end when they needed help editing MLA format and grammar (Participant #2).

Overall Suggestions for Improving Writing Tutoring	**ASC Tutor (Participant #1)**	**ASC Tutor (Participant #2)**
OEQ.11 **Evolution of Writing Tutoring Practices**	-Did not see too many tutoring practice changes over time working at ASC. -"One thing that we did have to become more aware of was the prevalence of AI writing. So, we were instructed to steer	-"I am not sure that [tutoring] methods have changed" (Participant #2). -Feels more confident as an in-person writing tutor since they previously tutored entirely online with Tutor.com.

	students away from that if they brought it up" (Participant #1). -Writing tutors also helped tutees understand how to use AI ethically with Grammarly.	
OEQ.12 **Enhancing Tutoring Effectiveness**	-Professors could remind students about tutoring services: "In order to make writing tutoring services more effective, there needs to be an increased focus on awareness" (Participant #1). -The ASC needs "to hire undergraduate writing tutors directly again rather than through Knack.com" (Participant #1). -"Writing tutoring is something that is much more effective when it's done in person rather than virtually" (Participant #1). -"Tutors themselves are trained well, and they know what they're doing, but there just needs to be more of them, and the students need to know that the service is there in order to utilize it" (Participant #1).	-"There should definitely be better ways to sign up for tutoring. It's convoluted, and the Microsoft Teams scheduler doesn't really work" (Participant #2). -"Also, a lot of students don't know how to use the ASC, and I think verbalizing [tutoring] particularly to freshmen would help a lot" (Participant #2). -Professors should request more class visits, but there are also not enough writing tutors to present. -Writing tutors need proper training instead of informal conversations. "I was kinda just thrown in there like, oh, you've tutored before. Yeah, go ahead. Have at it" (Participant #2). -It would be helpful for "tutors to self-promote their hours because we can't really go up to students and go, 'Here's my business card!'" (Participant #2).
OEQ.12 **Improving the Writing Center Environment**	-"The physical location of the tutoring center environment is still good, but it would be improved by having simply [sic] more writing tutors working at any given time" (Participant #1). -When students "walked through" the ASC, they learned about tutoring and "noticed all [the tutors] congregating in the same place throughout the	-The ASC needs smaller tables. "Most of the tables are too big to really facilitate a relationship with the student" (Participant #2). -If the tutee is "several feet away from me, how are we supposed to make a connection?" (Participant #2).

	week. So, we need more tutors physically there in the library to kind of bolster that fun, welcoming environment" (Participant #1).	

The ASC Staff Data

The Writing Center's Environmental Impact	The ASC Staff (Participant #4)	The ASC Staff (Participant #5)
DQ.3 **Tutoring Atmosphere and Environment Efficiency**	**<u>Tutoring Atmosphere:</u>** -Various seating choices for students**:** "high tops," "couches," **and** "booth seating" (Participant #4). -Individual study rooms with "white noise machines" to reduce noise (Participant #4). -Easily accessible and visible front desk for appointments -Welcoming atmosphere in the center of campus.	**<u>Tutoring Atmosphere:</u>** -New, renovated "learning commons" space (Participant #5). -A more mobile space with cushioned chairs plus hard chairs, regular tables, benches, you know, study rooms, and additional technology. -ASC in the center of campus. -Great open space, but staff could have difficulty knowing who was tutoring since it was also a common studying space for VSU students. -The GA writing tutors have different schedules, so there is not as much collaboration and interaction.

	<u>Environment Efficiency:</u> -Efficient for tutoring: A great space with several seating choices for students. -Tutoring staff is nearby to supervise area, and tutors can always ask questions anytime.	**<u>Environment Efficiency:</u>** -Not as efficient as it used to be because fewer tutors interact and staff office changes, but better than the SSC's physical location. -Efficient physical location because of centrality: One of the things that's nice about the library is students could be getting tutored, or they could be having a study session, or they could be sitting by themselves. Nobody really knows because it's a more open space, and it's a space that's used by everybody. -ASC location better than SSC: "Some students are embarrassed or uncomfortable to attend tutoring, so when they came into our old center in Langdale Hall, it was pretty obvious … that [they were attending tutoring because that] … was the only reason anybody would go in there was to tutor" (Participant #5).

OQ.6 and 7 and DQ.4 **Advertising, Student Access, and Diverse Needs**	**<u>Ads:</u>** -A lot of word-of-mouth advertising because of ASC's location. -Flyers posted around campus about tutoring. -Occasional emails to "staff and student group" (Participant #4). -ASC occasionally posts to social media platforms: tutor and facilitator highlight stories. -Electronic advertising slides on TVs around campus. **<u>Access:</u>** -Students can schedule appointments in person or call on the phone. -Walk-in appointments are limited with the new Knack program. -Students can receive tutoring from online Knack professional tutors or VSU student tutors online due to long distance. **<u>Diverse Needs:</u>** -Deaf and hard-of-hearing students: ASC works closely with the Access Office to provide interpreters and notetakers. -International Students: Grad students provide tutoring at the Center for International Programs. -Student Athletes: Provide study hall opportunities and tutoring.	**<u>Ads:</u>** -Blast emails to the listservs to reach VSU students. -Information posted on the ASC website. -Have not done tutoring flyers in a while. -Partner with VSU faculty to advertise tutoring services. **<u>Access:</u>** -ASC provides tutoring for all the courses that have the highest demand for students. -With Knack, students have to request tutoring and then be matched up with a tutor. -For general writing help, VSU grad students provided writing tutoring since Knack did not have that option. -Students call the ASC office or email to make an appointment. **<u>Diverse Needs:</u>** -Mentioned how ASC has a group of diverse tutors.

	-Non-traditional students receive one-on-one help navigating BlazeView and online aspects.	
DQ.3 **Tutoring Environmental Changes**	-The previous SSC layout had noise complaints due to the open layout and tutoring taking place on one floor. -The previous SSC was cramped and less visible.	-Located in the President's house before the SSC location. -Previous location, SSC was "off the beaten path" in Langdale Residence Hall (Participant #5). -ASC moved to the library because of the new VP, and the tutoring space was renovated. -Staff member's office used to be near the director's office, but ASC's library location is better for accessibility. -When ASC hired writing tutors directly instead of through Knack, the tutoring environment was more collaborative: "It was great because it was large, and so the tutors could also kind of interact with each other if they had questions or [needed] assistance" (Participant #5).
DQ.7 **Peer and Staff Collaboration**	-Training events at the start of each semester. -Open-door policy: Staff are always available to speak to tutors when there is a concern or issue. Tutors can also call and email at any time.	-Training days before the semester began brought tutors and staff together with tutoring and team-building activities. -Previous writing tutor weekly meetings helped the director and tutors collaborate. -Recently, ASC staff have provided more structural support than writing

		tutoring skills support to writing tutors.

Influential Factors of Effective Writing Tutoring	**The ASC Staff (Participant #4)**	**The ASC Staff (Participant #5)**
DQ.8 and OQ.4 **Writing Tutoring Training and Hiring**	**<u>Training:</u>** -Team training days before each semester starts. -Before switching over to the Knack program, writing tutors had weekly training workshops to discuss writing tutoring strategies. This staff member misses this with the new configuration since it provided writing tutors with support and helped them strengthen their own writing abilities. -Tutors must complete an annual compliance and cybersecurity training each fall semester. -Writing tutors bring a piece of writing they are proud of to weekly meetings and discuss what made this writing successful with other tutors. **<u>Hiring:</u>** -Staff look at a potential tutor's GPA and class grade. -Instructor recommendations. -Must submit a writing sample.	**<u>Training:</u>** -Training at the beginning of the semester. -Weekly trainings that discussed writing tutoring strategies. **<u>Hiring:</u>** -Graduate assistantships were created to staff The Writing Center. -Must complete at least English 1101 and 1102. -Two letters of recommendation from faculty. -Submit a 3-5 pg. academic essay sample that proves higher-level thinking, mechanics, correct in-text citations, transitions, and good flow.
OQ.8 and DQ.1 **Institutional and Tutoring Center Goals**	**<u>Goals:</u>** -Supporting students' retention to stay in college and succeed. -Enabling students to "self-regulate" and gain skills for their "college classes and career" (Participant #4). -Good student conduct and avoiding plagiarism.	**<u>Goals:</u>** -Improve student success, improve academics, and provide a path to academic success. - Provide "paths and opportunities for students to become more academically confident" (Participant #5). -Improve students' grades in their classes, but that is not the main

	-"Support students where they are" and be accessible to students (Participant #4). **<u>Tutoring's Contribution to Student Success:</u>** -"[Writing tutoring] is probably one of the most core important functions…of towards student success. Because if… a student. is having issues with certain aspects of writing or speech. It's going to affect the rest of their academic career and their career beyond after they graduate. It gives the student a chance to be more…autonomous" (Participant #4).	goal: higher retention rates and understanding of academic material are what are important. -Provide skills and confidence to students so that they can be successful in graduate school or in the workforce after they graduate. **<u>Tutoring's Contribution to Student Success:</u>** -"Tutoring in general just strengthens everybody's confidence level" (Participant #5). -Tutoring "can help both the tutee primarily and, to a secondary degree, the tutor to strengthen" their knowledge (Participant #5). - "I think writing is really important because it is so integral to everything we do" (Participant #5). -"If [students] become comfortable in our writing skills and competent, we become better communicators [on] so many levels" (Participant #5).
DQ.6 **Admin. Policies and Tutoring Support**	-Grad tutors work for a set number of hours (14-19). -Complete training each fall and annual compliance. -Complete session reflection forms.	-Tutors need to talk to faculty and other students on campus about ASC. -The tutor needs to allow the "tutee to guide the session" and participate (Participant #5). -Tutors must sit next to the student rather than across like a teacher might. -Tutors create a comfortable learning environment for them. -Complete the tutoring reflection form after each session provides future tutors with the tutee's background and allows the tutor to note any issues during the appointment.

Overall Suggestions for Improving Writing Tutoring	The ASC Staff (Participant #4)	The ASC Staff (Participant #5)
DQ.8 and DQ.10 **Defining Effective Writing Tutoring**	-Set expectations for the appointment at the beginning and build rapport. -Set boundaries: The tutor explains to new tutees that they collaborate with them and not do their work for them. -The tutee reads their work out loud to find any "grammatical or sentence structure issues" (Participant #4). -Tutors provide writing suggestions and start the revision process if there is time. -An ongoing conversation between tutor and tutee to discuss progress and concerns. -Show empathy: The tutor reassures the tutee if they are overwhelmed and feel like a bad writer. -Target MLA, APA, and Chicago formatting.	-Effective writing tutoring builds students' confidence. -Writing tutoring is a "two-fold kind of thing:" mechanics and answering the prompt, giving higher-order thinking and elaborated ideas (Participant #5). -Good writing tutoring can be reflected outside the tutoring center in faculty comments on students' papers and the grades students receive. -Session reflection forms: show whether students' learning is growing and if their skills are progressing.
OEQ.11 **Tutoring Changes Over Time**	-Witnessed the tutoring center move from Langdale Hall to Odum Library. -New Knack program: "I would say the overall processes stay the same in the time that I've been here. The support that we've offered for our writing tutors [has] changed" (Participant #4). -The ASC had more responsibilities than staff with the new Knack structure. -With the Knack program, still makes an effort to provide students with on-demand support that day or the next day and shows how to receive online feedback.	-The tutoring center has "grown and shrunk several times" (Participant #5). -Several different Dean changes: reporting structure changed. -At SSC, there were 28 graduate students with advising services and less emphasis on tutoring. -After advising left, tutoring began to grow and supplemental instruction and facilitation program were added. -Tutoring content areas began with basics and later expanded: writing, math, Spanish, etc.

		-Rather than writing tutors reporting to the previous ASC director, graduate student tutors report to the English Department. -Appointment system changed. -Tutor interactions in ASC changed with tutors not having the same schedules. -Individual tutoring sessions have not changed much: tutees still need to do their own work.
OEQ.12 **Admin. Challenges and Institutional Support**	-Challenges with various scheduling programs over the years since tutors and staff have to get used to it. -Had a continuous good relationship with admin and financial support. -There are currently 6 English graduate student writing tutors, but the participant would love to see more on-demand tutoring support.	-Some budgetary changes and challenges: not significant, so had to hire fewer tutors at times. -Previously reported to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, which no longer exists (math, science, humanities, and social sciences were in one college). -Eventually reported to VP of Academic Affairs: felt like this was the most appropriate connection with the ASC. -From an admin perspective, it is unfortunate that ASC left "the Academic Affairs division… into what was then the division of Student Success" (Participant #5). -"I think we've lost something in terms of our identity and our connection to the, you know, faculty during this change" (Participant #5). -ASC staff do not have direct control over hiring and paying tutors; Knack does: "I definitely feel like I'd have more input in what's going on, and I'd have more ability to troubleshoot and help and support if [tutors] worked directly for me (hiring, training, managing, and paying)" (Participant #5).

		-Has a close relationship with writing tutors since they are grad. tutors who have worked at ASC for a long time. -Misses working with the previous ASC director: strong partnership and writing tutoring met and exceeded expectations. -Having peer tutors has always worked well instead of having professionals tutoring students.

APPENDIX D

IRB Approval Form

APPENDIX D

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants

Protocol Exemption Report

Protocol Number: 04552-2024 **Responsible Researcher(s):** Anna E. Cooper

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Chere Peguesse

Project Title: *VSU Writing Centers: Exploring the Evolution of Sociocultural Settings and Strategies.*

Institutional Review Board Determination:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations, **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult the IRB Administrator (tmwright@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research study.

Additional Information & Guidance:

- *According to exempt protocol guidelines, interviews may be recorded to create an accurate transcript. However, it's important to note that the guidelines* ***strictly prohibit*** *collecting, storing, and/or sharing recordings. Therefore, it is imperative that once the transcript is created, the recorded interview session is deleted immediately from all recording and storage devices used.* ***This measure is in order to uphold confidentiality and ensure that the sensitive information contained in the recording is adequately protected.***

- *To comply with consent guidelines, audio/video recordings must capture the researcher reading the consent statement aloud, ensuring the participant's understanding and willingness to participate.* ***Each transcript must document the researcher's reading of the consent statement and receipt of participant consent****. Participants must be offered a copy of the consent statement.*

- *Pseudonym lists must be kept in a separate, secure file from associated name, email lists, etc.*

- *Upon completion of the research study, collected data must be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a* ***minimum of 3 years****. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*

☒ ***The researcher must submit proposed modifications to the IRB Administrator at tmwright@valdosta.edu for review and approval.*** ***Modifications are not to be implemented before receiving approval by the IRB.***

Elizabeth Ann Olphie *01.28.2025*
Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Please direct questions to tmwright@valdosta.ed or 229-253-2947.

Revised: 12.2024