

The Administration-Tutorial Connection

Fostering Writing Center Environments
With(in) Our Communities

“new ways of understanding and supporting learning and development as intertwined, inseparable elements of the student experience. [They advocate] for transformative education – a holistic process of learning that places the student at the center of the learning experience.”

“ Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus On The Student Experience” The National Association Of Student Personnel Administrators and The American College Personnel Association, January 2004

“ a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity ...[that] recognizes the essential integration of personal development with learning; it reflects the diverse ways through which students may engage, as whole people with multiple dimensions and unique personal histories, with the tasks and content of learning.”

We establish and continue to grow writing centers at the nexus of academic cultures that make up the institutional complex : besides students, we work with teachers, staff, and administrators --each group itself an intersection of multiple cultures.

We may think we are working for the same end--student access and success--but what we may not realize is that we often speak what only *appears* to be a common language and with what only appears to be common assumptions about learning.

We are careful to give students and tutors time to think and express and find their way, careful not to be too directive

I would like to think about how when we speak to faculty and administrators, we are often using a similar sounding language, but one learned in another culture—our own. We are, therefore, speaking with an accent.

- Why is it so hard to listen to one another?
- Why is it so hard to resist a guilt/blame logic when we do listen?
- Why is it so hard to identify with each other when we feel excluded?
- Why is it so hard to focus simultaneously on commonalities and differences among ourselves?
- And how do the power differentials of our particular standpoints influence our ability to listen?

“ men listen by challenging speakers to a verbal duel to determine who knows more and who is quicker [to respond]; women often listen by smiling, nodding, asking questions and providing encouraging verbal cues (*yes, uhuh, is that right? hmmm*)

“ In other words, men are socialized to play the listening game via questions ‘Have I won?’ and ‘Do you respect me?’ while women are socialized to play the listening game via the questions ‘Have I been helpful?’ ‘Do you like me?’ Thus gendered listening subordinates not only women to men, but listening to speaking.”

“ ...an ethical responsibility to argue for what we deem fair and just while simultaneously questioning that which we deem fair and just. Such listening... may help us invent, interpret and ultimately judge differently in that perhaps we can hear things we cannot see.”

“Perhaps through listening we can avail ourselves with more possibilities for presenting arguments that bring differences together, for hearing differences as harmony or discordant notes...[or] we can listen to the harmony or discordant notes, knowing more than meets the eye lies before us.”

“...rhetorical negotiation is ‘always already existing’” and rhetorical listening “is one means of that negotiation”

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Writing Center Space that is central to campus

Space that is visible, easy to find

Computers for our tutorials

Comfortable and flexible-use furniture for our student-writers

Money for more tutors

Need an assistant director

Travel funds for conferences

Writing Center	Supervisor	Teachers
Space central to campus	Central space is seen by everyone; I need a showpiece	More offices, labs and classrooms
Space that is visible, easy to find	Don't want to show people students need tutoring	We need more offices, labs and classrooms
Computers for tutorials	Computers and software for science and engineering labs and classrooms	Updated office computers, more mediated classrooms
Comfortable and flexible use furniture	Make an impression with administrator's furniture; guest housing for scholars, new stadium	Better desks, chairs, for classrooms and offices
Money for tutors	Pay for faculty; hire more administrators to run university	More pay and money for research
Assistant director	Assistant rector, more counselors, grants administrator, faculty	More faculty, clerical support for departments
Travel funds for conferences	Travel for faculty, administrators to recruit students	Travel for research and conferences

“If we meet this ‘desire to be heard’ with counter desires—pretending the desire to be heard does not exist, hoping it will disappear, or waiting for someone else to handle it—we stymie potential dialogue.”

And we might as well admit that confrontation might be “inevitable”, but *recognizing* this might also “effect more productive discourses about and across, differences and commonalities”

“...we will judge not simply the person’s intent but the historically situated discourses that are (un)consciously swirling around and throughout the person and...evaluate politically and ethically how these discourses function and how we want to act on them. ”

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“...we may still disagree with the claims...we may better understand the personal and cultural assumptions (dare I say values and beliefs) that guide other people’s logics. And if we also recognize how claims and cultural logics are rhetorically constructed, we may better appreciate the reasoning powers of others even when we disagree with them .”

“learning occurs not only when we listen to the claims in other people’s stories but also when we listen to their cultural logics, or rather the competing cultural logics that such stories expose.”

learning is “a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity ...[that] recognizes the essential integration of personal development with learning; it reflects the diverse ways through which [we as administrators] may engage, as whole people with multiple dimensions and unique personal histories, with the tasks and content of learning”