# Combining Writing and Content Tutor Training: Developing Best Practices

## Workshop for 2017 IWCA Collaborative

Nancy Squair, Cecil Klassen (Douglas College),

Heather Urschel (Tacoma Community College)

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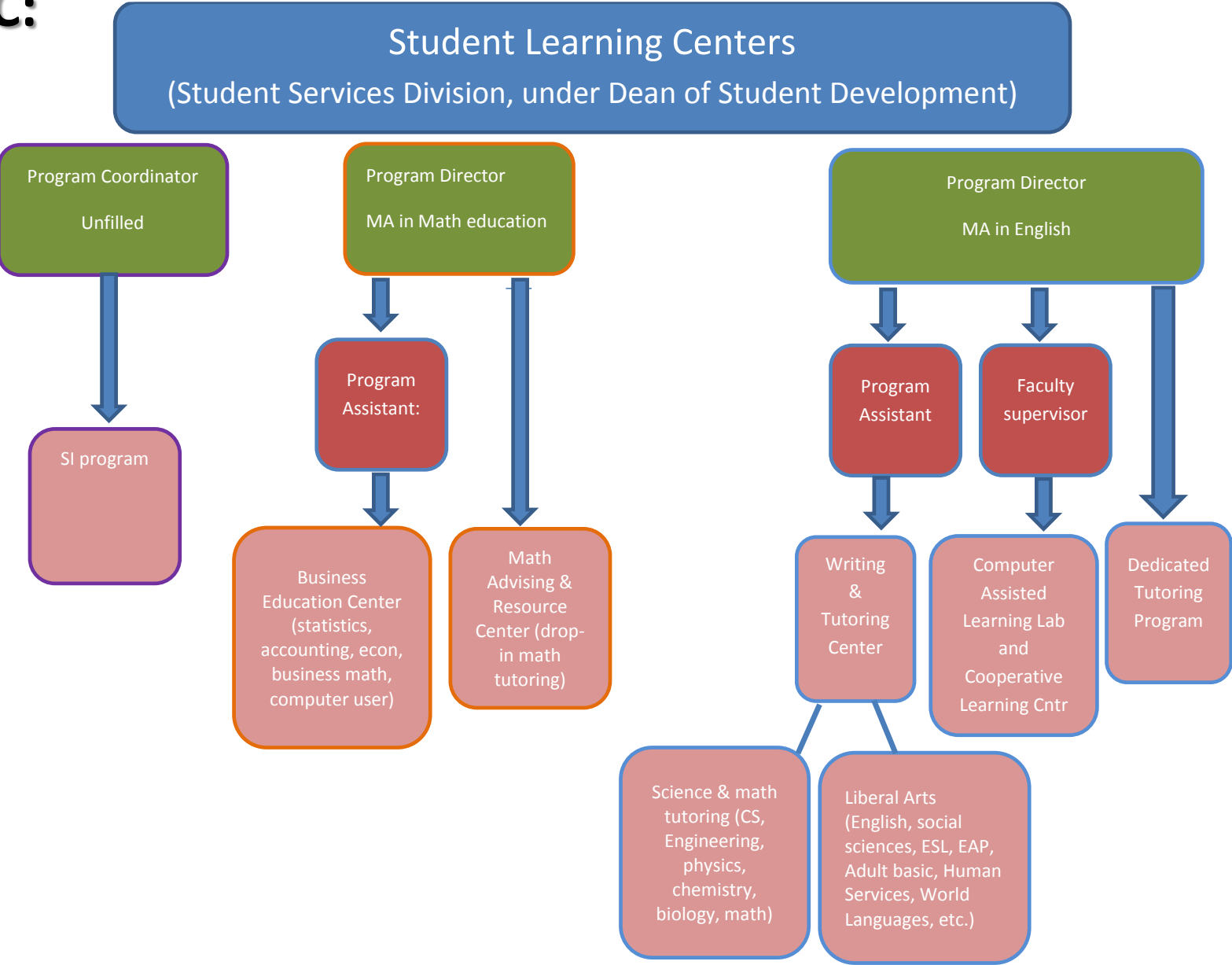# Position Statements on Writing Centers and Director Qualifications

- [IWCA Position Statement on Two-Year College Writing Centers (2007)](#)

- [Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing: Statement on Writing Centres and Staffing](#) (2016)

- Praxis: A Writing Center Journal: ["On Retaining Highly Qualified Directors in College and University Writing Centers"](#) (2016)

- Petition: ["We Need to Retain Highly Qualified Directors in College and University Writing Centers"](#) (2016)

# Some Key Points from these statements:

- **IWCA**: "Writing Center administrators should be tenure-stream or continuing contract salaried employees. . . It is preferable that they have faculty status with a minimum of 50% release from their teaching responsibilities per semester to oversee the writing center."

- "Those hired as writing center administrators should have a background in writing center work and/or supporting student writers outside the traditional classroom."

- **CASDW**: "Writing centres are fundamentally teaching units."

- "Writing professionals use and apply research from writing studies."

- **Praxis**: "If Writing Centers are to continue to help students develop as writers, rather than simply helping students produce better products one paper at a time, those centers must be founded on solid writing center/rhetoric-composition theory and engage in legitimate disciplinary practices." (Kathleen Shine Cain in Praxis)

- **Petition**: "Providing students with anything but the most highly qualified writing center director will only harm students' and tutors' success."

# Some Learning Center administrative models: Tacoma CC:



**Student Learning Centers**
(Student Services Division, under Dean of Student Development)

Program Coordinator

Unfilled

Program Director

MA in Math education

Program Director

MA in English

SI program

Program Assistant:

Program Assistant

Faculty supervisor

Business Education Center (statistics, accounting, econ, business math, computer user)

Math Advising & Resource Center (drop-in math tutoring)

Writing & Tutoring Center

Computer Assisted Learning Lab and Cooperative Learning Cntr

Dedicated Tutoring Program

Science & math tutoring (CS, Engineering, physics, chemistry, biology, math)

Liberal Arts (English, social sciences, ESL, EAP, Adult basic, Human Services, World Languages, etc.)

# Douglas College Learning Centre

Douglas College Learning Resources
(Library and Learning Centre, under
Director of Learning Resources)

Learning Centre Faculty Coordinator
MA English

-Learning Centre Faculty
(MA Composition and
Rhetoric)
-Learning Centre Faculty
(MA Adult Ed., TESL)

4 support staff to
supervise 40 tutors at
2 campuses and
online

Writing Tutors

Online Writing
Tutors

Content Tutors
business
science
nursing
humanities
Etc.

Computer Skills Tutors

## Underlying Principles for Tutor Training: Douglas Learning Centre Approach--helping students adapt to the "culture" of the courses they're in

Tutoring sessions, in addition to the specific content or writing assignment under discussion, focus on:

- time management

- reading skills

- understanding/following assignment instructions and course syllabi

- strategically mapping out the work (time and work steps) required to complete large assignments

- managing anxiety/panic/stress

- developing motivation/commitment/intention

- using resources/tools effectively

- problem solving

## Douglas Learning Centre Training Focus: Improving Tutoring Skills (Writing and Content)

Tutors learn to:

- assess/address gaps in student knowledge/skills/attitudes

- negotiate tutoring session goals/agendas

- encourage student agency, responsibility, independence

- develop active listening, question-asking techniques

- identify instructor expectations, assignment requirements

- develop student awareness of (and skills with) using resources and course tools

- develop student critical and strategic reading skills (textbook, research skills, course packs and study manuals, online course materials, syllabi, test questions, info literacy)

- observe ethical standards and maintaining professional boundaries

- work with counter-productive student attitudes/motivation

- deal with diversity

# Sample Training Curricula: Writing & Tutoring Center Tutor Discussion Group topics (Tacoma CC)

| FALL | WINTER | SPRING |
|---|---|---|
| Week 0 – Requirement explanation | Week 0 – Requirement explanation | Week 0 – Requirement explanation |
| Basic Tutoring Guidelines and Dos and Don'ts | Use of probing Questions | Role of Tutoring in community college |
| Techniques for beginning and ending a Tutoring Session (tutoring cycle) | Discipline specific | Equity: what is it? |
| Referral Skills for TCC | Ethics at TCC | Assertiveness |
| Study Skills | Academic Anxiety | Tutoring in specific subject areas |
| Model Problem Solving | Sexual harassment, personal boundaries, Safety | Specific or Target Populations |
| Communication | Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Communication | Self-Regulated Learning |
| Active Listening | Assessing and Changing Study Behaviors | Learning Disabilities |
| Role Modeling | Identifying and Using resources and Tools | Stress Management |
| Challenging Sessions | Tutoring in Specific Subject Area | Building Rapport |
| Goal Setting | Specific Populations | Emergency Policies |
| Tutoring in specific subject areas | Cheating/Plagiarism | Critical Thinking/Logic |
| Learning styles | Body language | Memory |
| Specific populations at TCC | Cross-discipline presentations | Structuring the learning experience |

# Tacoma CC: Sample Training Materials:
## Redirecting questions . . .

- What do we do next?
- What do you mean by…?
- Tell me more.
- Are their words in the directions that you do not understand?
- What do we need to know in order to solve the problem?
- If that is true, then what would happen if…?
- What are we trying to find out?
- How is your answer different from _____?
- How would you say that in a different way?
- Let's take a look at your assignment sheet.
- Let's look that up in the book.
- Do you have a similar problem in your notes?
- Did your instructor go over that in class?
- What do you think we do first?
- How would you start the problem?
- What are we trying to find out?
- How did you do that?

- What part of the assignment is really clear to you?
- Tell me more about what you meant in this passage.
- Can you see anywhere else where you wrote something similar?
- How did you do the previous problem?
- Anything else you can do?
- Is that your final answer? (Why or Why not?)
- Can you be more specific?
- What are you assuming?
- Why would that be so?
- How would you do that?
- Give me an example of that.
- What happened then?
- How is that related to…?
- Can you summarize the steps?
- If that is true, then what would happen if…?
- Let's see if we can figure out how to answer it together.
- How is your answer different from _____?
- What do we need to know in order to solve the problem?
- What does _____ mean?  Let's look it up.

# Tacoma CC: Sample Training Materials:

Assessment: Comparison of guided-answer prompts to measure use of open-ended questions and alternate explanations:

**Liberal Arts/Humanities**

- The same student now understands that the assignment requires them to choose and compare two literary works they have covered in class, but they still don't have a topic. What questions would you ask?

- The tutor verbally explains how a three-point thesis corresponds to the organization of the body paragraphs. The student still doesn't quite understand. What are some alternate ways to explain the same concept?

**Quantitative Skills**

- A student comes in and says they don't understand a particular problem on their homework. What questions would you ask?

- You verbally explain to a student how to convert fractions to percentages since it is necessary for understanding their homework assignment. The student still doesn't quite understand. What are some alternate ways to explain the same concept?

# According to our "renaissance" tutors . . . (Tacoma)

The most important "share out" from writing tutor training to content tutors:

➢ Setting a collaborative agenda for the tutoring session

➢ Flexibility in approaches, based on student's learning styles

➢ Meta-cognition: HOW do you learn?

➢ Empowering students to find the "path" themselves:

"We don't always have the answers and even when we do, what good does it do the student if we simply function like an answer vending machine?"

# Douglas College Learning Centre Training Schedule

| Week | F2F Tutor Meetings | OLT Tutor Meetings | CRLA 1: Training Task | CRLA 2: Assignment Due | CRLA 3: Assignment Due |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | |
| 2 | Saturday Training Day (All Tutors) January 14 -- 10am-3pm | | Pre-Service Training | Start-Up Task | Start-Up Task |
| 3 | BB "Learning Styles" (All F2F and Online tutors) scheduled for 1 hour during week  Holly and Nancy | | | Submit Presentation Topic | Submit Presentation Topic |
| 4 | Preparing for Upcoming Appointments/ Starting Weekly Sessions (All F2F Tutors) 10:30-11:30am N3140/B2100 | | Faculty Send-off / Journal | Tutoring Cycle | Student Anxiety |
| 5 | SPLIT TOPIC Writing: Skimming, reading quickly, diagnostics; CONTENT Starting weekly follow-up Practice LPs H (All F2F and Online tutors) scheduled for 1 hour during week | | Journal | Being Assertive | Motivation |
| 6 | Reading Quickly / AFOSEE Discussion NC (F2F Writing Tutors only) 10:30-11:30am N3140/D1006 | "Cecil's Picks" (All Online Tutors) Online/Collaborate | Journal | | |
| | | s | | | |
| 7 | Dealing with Stress(All F2F Tutors) 10:30-11:30am N3140/D1006 | | Journal | Submit Presentation Outline | |
| 8 | Using counseling techniques in tutoring sessions (All F2F tutors) scheduled for 1 hour during week | "Cecil's Picks" (All Online Tutors) Online/Collaborate | Journal | Self-Regulated Learners | Culture |
| 9 | What to do when students don't bring enough work (All F2F Tutors) 10:30-11:30am N3140/D1006 | | Journal | | |
| 10 | | | Journal | Prepare and Post your Presentation | |
| 11 | View and Respond to Presentations on BB (All tutors) should be priority for any/all unscheduled time | | Journal | Finish Off Training | Finish Off Training |
| 12 | APOCALYPSE: Preparing for the end...of term (All F2F Tutors) 10:30-11:30am N3140/B2100 | | Journal | | |
| 13 | View and Respond to Presentations on BB (All tutors) should be priority for any/all unscheduled time | | *Training Summary | *Training Summary | *Training Summary |
| 14 | | | *Training Evaluation *Self Evaluation | *Training Evaluation *Self Evaluation | *Training Evaluation *Self Evaluation |
| Finals | Wrap Up Meeting (All Tutors), Tues April 18 3pm-5pm | | Wrap Up Meeting (All Tutors), Tues April 18 3pm-5pm | | |

# Workshop Directions:

- We have placed a series of questions around the room to direct your thoughts about:
  - Position Statements
  - Qualifications of multidisciplinary tutoring center directors
  - Tutor training activities
- Please choose a focus area that interests you and join the group. Choose a member to write down your ideas on the chart paper on the wall.

# Questions for Position Statement development

1. What is essential (in terms of pedagogy, academic integrity, operations) to run an effective tutoring center in a post-secondary environment?

2. If integrating writing and content tutors and tutor training, what would you want to add to the existing statements to take forward to your administrators?

3. When writing centers are integrated with other tutoring services, what minimum qualifications should a multidisciplinary tutor center director have?

# Tutor Training Activities Questions

1. What ideas from Writing Center pedagogy should we keep in multi-disciplinary tutor training?

2. Suggest some tutor training activities that focus on helping students develop the disciplinary skill sets they need "to participate effectively in the culture" of their courses?

3. How can tutors from different disciplines work together to develop training activities? Mentoring?

# Conclusion: Next Steps

- We will collate the ideas that you have written down on the pages today. You are also welcome to email us with further ideas for best practices or tutor training activities.

- We plan to publish the draft on the Writing Center listserve and the IWCA blog. Our long-term goal is to develop a statement that could be used for advocacy for writing center and learning center directors.

- You may also contact us to receive a copy of the collated document from this session:

- Nancy Johnson Squair: squairn@douglascollege.ca

- Cecil Klassen: klassenc@douglascollege.ca

- Heather Urschel: hurschelspeir@tacomacc.edu

# References: Position Statements

- Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing. (2016). *Statement on writing centres and staffing*. Retrieved from http://journals.sfu.ca/cjsdw/index.php/cjsdw/article/view/47/26

- Fels, D., Gardner, C., Herb, M., & Naydan, L. (2016, May 4). "On retaining highly qualified directors in college and university writing centers." *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.praxisuwc.com/praxis-blog/2016/5/4/on-retaining-highly-qualified-directors-in-college-and-university-writing-centers

- International Writing Centers Association. (2007*). IWCA position statement on two-year college writing centers*. Retrieved from http://writingcenters.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/twoyearpositionstatement1.pdf

- Naydan, L. (2016). *We need to retain highly qualified directors in college and university writing centers*. Retrieved from https://www.change.org/p/international-writing-centers-association-members-retaining-highly-qualified-directors-in-college-and-university-writing-centers?recruiter=1200298&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=autopublish&utm_term=mob-xs-share_petition-no_msg&fb_ref=Default.

# Other Tutor Training Resources

- CRLA Training Reference:

- Agee, K., & Hodges, R. (2012). *Handbook for training peer tutors and mentors*. Mason, OH: Cengage Learning.

- Content Tutoring:

- Toms, M. (2010). *Put the pencil down: Essentials of tutoring*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University.