

MULTIMODAL COMPOSING, MULTILITERACY CENTERS,
AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

by

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Chapter I: Introduction, Literature Review, and Research Design

Introduction

When asked about my dissertation research, I usually explain my project through the lens of my work as a writing instructor and writing center specialist. In most of my writing classes I teach a remixing assignment, where students take a paper that they have written earlier in the semester and translate it to a different communicative mode (or modes). In other words, students take a text composed with written words, and they make it multimodal through combining images, spoken words, and sounds. As a writing teacher who also works in the writing center, I want my students to be able to bring this assignment to the writing center because this assignment is still communicating a purpose to a specific audience—it's still rhetorical—and the writing center can help students achieve this purpose just as well as they help students with more traditional essays.

Much like this example assignment from my writing classroom, writing centers have had to grapple with the increased attention to multimodal composing in composition studies. As reviewed later in this chapter, John Trimbur (2000) first forecast the development of the writing center I describe, and he called these centers multiliteracy centers—a reference to the New London Group's (1996) call to expand education beyond word-based definitions of literacy. This dissertation contributes to the conversation about multiliteracy centers in writing center scholarship that has been active since Trimbur's publication, and especially since the publication of the edited collection *Multiliteracy Centers: Writing Center Work, New Media, and Multimodal Rhetoric* (2010). Primarily, my project examines the role a multiliteracy center can play in supporting and promoting multimodal composing through

collaboration with multiple institutional partners, such as through outreach efforts with composition programs or with other disciplines, and even through involvement with community partners away from campus.

The review that follows briefly traces the origins of the “multimodal turn” in composition studies alongside the often-fraught relationship between writing centers and writing programs, the historically tenuous institutional status of writing centers, and the writing center’s uneasy history with new technologies before leading to a fuller review of multiliteracy centers in writing center scholarship. This summary of previously-published scholarship demonstrates the response of writing centers to multimodal composing to this point and presents an opening for my research project: a qualitative investigation of the current state of multiliteracy centers.

Multiliteracies and the New London Group

In 1994, a group of scholars from the fields of semiotics, education, and linguistics (among others) met to discuss the future of literacy pedagogy in New London, New Hampshire (New London Group 62). As a result of that meeting, the group published “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures” (1996), where they introduced the concept of “multiliteracies.” The New London Group were responsible for broadening “literacy and literacy teaching and learning to include negotiating a multiplicity of discourses” (61). In other words, the New London Group advocated for valuing meaning-making activities beyond writing and speaking words; in fact, the group lists six “design¹ elements in the meaning-making process”: “Linguistic Meaning, Visual meaning, Audio

¹ “Design,” in this case, refers to “any semiotic activity” (75). They explain: “Reading, seeing and listening are all instances of Designing.”

meaning, Gestural Meaning, Spatial Meaning, and the Multimodal patterns of meaning that relate the first five modes of meaning to each other” (61; 65). Limiting the definition of literacy to words on a page, “fails to capture our ability to understand and communicate in other modes” (Lutkewitte 6). With this list of multiliteracies, the New London Group demand that scholars and educators “think of literacy in broader terms than traditional perspectives allow”—moving beyond word-based meaning to also include the combination of communicative modes to make meaning (Lutkewitte 6).²

“A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” expanded the definition of literacy, but according to Glynda A. Hull and Mark Evan Nelson (2005), “The full import of this sea change in semiotic systems has. . . just begun to be felt” (457). Among the authors that made up the New London Group, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis have become long-time collaborators on the subject, editing a collection of essays about multiliteracies (2000) that included a reprinting of The New London Group article and publishing a textbook called *Literacies* (2012) to help introduce the concept of multiliteracies to students. In 2009, Cope and Kalantzis reviewed over a decade of scholarship produced since the original publication of “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” in 1996, including several publications by the prodigious Gunther Kress (2003), whom they credit for separating “written and oral language as fundamentally different modes” (178).³ This separation is important because “writing is not a transliteration of speech. . . It is a different mode with significantly different grammar,” as confirmed by

² An additional purpose of the article was to bring attention to “increasing cultural and linguistic diversity,” which they define as another motive for developing a multiliteracies pedagogy. For the New London Group, the ultimate benefit of teaching students the value of multiple literacies is that they will be better prepared for civic and work life.

³ These modes were lumped together in the New London Group publication, and Cope and Kalantzis are glad Kress made the distinction.

composition teachers or writing center consultants helping students with oral presentations. Cope and Kalantzis conclude, “An enormous body of work has emerged around the notion of Multiliteracies,” but while scholarship has grown in scope, it remains intrinsically connected to the understanding of multiliteracies originally offered by the New London Group (191).

One important addition to the discussion of multiliteracies has been Stuart Selber’s emphasis on the role of the computer. According to Daniel Anderson (2008), “Selber brought the technological aspects of literacy back into focus by delineating multiliteracies into three categories, one of which is a functional literacy concerned with the operation of computers and software” (360-61). Selber emphasizes the importance of computer literacy, and while he is not reliant on the New London Group’s definition of multiliteracies, he advocates for multiple categories of literacy. For example, a student demonstrating rhetorical literacy (one of his categories), brings four components to “human-computer interaction”⁴: “persuasion, deliberation, reflection, and social action” (136-37). The student understands that a computer-mediated text can be persuasive and promote a social action in the outside world away from the computer. He or she also understands the importance of deliberation (comparable to invention) and reflection to solve difficult composing problems on the computer. Still, a student must have a level of functional, technical literacy in order to reach this level of rhetorical literacy. In other words, composers should be able to use their functional and rhetorical literacies together in order to solve complex composing problems. Although multimodal composing does not need to rely on a computer (as discussed below), students will most likely be using the computer to compose multimodal projects. Selber

⁴ Selber also uses “interface design” to refer to this concept: “the contact point where software links the human user to computer processors” (Heim qtd. in Selber 133).

writes, “Students must learn to take advantage of computer technologies,” and developing students’ computer literacy (alongside rhetorical literacy) will continue to play an important role in writing instruction (136).

A conversation related to Selber’s argument regards multiliteracy pedagogy and how educators can teach students both about multiliteracies and how to use them. Dennis A. Lynch and Anne Frances Wysocki (2003), then at Michigan Technological University, developed one of the first multimodal composition courses. While praising The New London Group, and the idea of multiliteracies, they write, “If there is a problem with the call issued by the New London Group to teachers of communication. . .it may be its failure to address the disciplinary dynamics many instructors will face trying to enact the principles of ‘multiliteracy’ in any meaningful or comprehensive way” (151). Although the New London Group intended its article to change literacy pedagogy, they do not talk about the specifics of bringing multiliteracies to the classroom. Lynch and Wysocki spend the rest of their article describing a curriculum they developed to harness students’ multiliteracies, including course objectives to develop students’ use of oral, written, and visual modes. Although the New London Group “began to generate” a new approach to literacy pedagogy, Lynch and Wysocki understand that is up to composition instructors to “build upon, extend, and adjust to our local circumstances, our history, and our experiences with teaching multimodal communication” (167). Their course used multiliteracies as the basis for a multimodal composing course, but even a definition of multimodal that doesn’t rely on the New London Group can produce a composition pedagogy that values a definition of literacy beyond written words on a page.

Another example of using multiliteracies in the classroom comes from Patricia A. Dunn (2001). Dunn, while not citing the New London Group or “multiliteracies,” uses a variety of other phrases and concepts to define “multiple literacies”: “multiple intelligences,” “ways of knowing,” “diverse intellectual pathways,” and Paulo Freire’s “multiple channels of communication” (3). Her usage of “multiple literacies” relies heavily on “educational contexts,” and she uses the composition classroom to encourage students to rely on their strengths in the classroom. For example, if students consider themselves to be more visually or verbally literate, Dunn uses “sketching” or “talking” activities in her class that can help students think through writing problems.

Whether referring to multiple literacies or multiliteracies, Lynch, Wysocki, and Dunn advocate for a pedagogy of multimodal composing. The conversation about multimodal rhetoric and how multimodal assignments should be taught has partially emerged from the conversation about multiliteracies. In the past decade, a “multimodal turn” in composition studies has produced a group of scholars and practitioners committed to the value of meaning “made not only in words” (Yancey, 2004), but in the combination of additional communicative modes, including visual, aural, and kinesthetic.

Composition Studies and the Multimodal Turn

According to the New London Group (1996), “If it were possible to define generally the mission of education, one could say that its fundamental purpose is to ensure that all students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community, and economic life” (60). A growing number of composition instructors have agreed with the New London Group’s mission, and these scholars and teachers have decided that one way to prepare students for “public, community, and economic life” is to have them

compose multimodal texts. According to Claire Lauer (2012), The New London Group used the word “multimodal” to respond to “the inability of the existing term multimedia to address the semiotic resources used in the production of a text.” A multimodal text is a product whose composer intentionally considers more than one mode in both composing and presenting the text, and one whose composer makes meaning through the act of combining modes such as images, sounds, words, and movements. David Sheridan has used the phrase “multimodal turn” to describe a trend towards multimodal composing in composition studies. Much like the “social turn” of the 1980s, the multimodal turn has altered expectations of the writing students can produce inside and outside of the composition classroom.

Early proponents of multimodal composing were writing and speaking to an audience suspicious about their subject, and thus focused on arguments that multimodal composing was “useful and necessary” (Lutewitte 11). In “Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key,” initially delivered as the key note address at the 2004 Conference on College Composition and Communication, Kathleen Blake Yancey prepares her audience for the “tectonic change” occurring in composition studies; however, she also relates this necessary and unavoidable change to older concepts familiar to the audience, such as the canons of rhetoric and circulation—the idea that purpose can be transferred between modes. She explains, “The new, then, repeats what came before, while at the same time remaking that which it models” (314). This strategy could help convince a skeptical audience that the multimodal turn fits between the past of composition studies and its future.

More recently, Jason Palmeri (2012) similarly argues that multimodality has a much longer history in composition than previously thought. He recovers multimodality as a vibrant part of composition studies dating back into the 1960s; in fact, one of his earliest

examples is Edward P. J. Corbett (1967) reclaiming the orality of classical rhetoric “for the electronic student” (91). Palmeri presents evidence that multimodal composing is not new, but it has recently become an increasingly popular, theorized practice. Palmeri also argues that traditional texts written in the composition classroom are already multimodal, something The New London Group claim when they state that “all meaning-making is multimodal” (81). In an interview with Claire Lauer (2012), Palmeri says about his work:

Multimodality was a way to re-see our field’s heritage and it was really powerful because it allowed me to kind of connect alphabetic writing as an inherently multimodal thought process and a multimodal process of invention in that you invent through talking, you invent through listening, you invent and revise through literally re-seeing, often by, say, drawing out your ideas of seeing an image, or finding an image, etc.

Palmeri’s claim that even the production of alphabetic text is multimodal hints at a rather broad definition for multimodal composing, one shared by other composition scholars.

According to Jody Shipka (2011), a commonly accepted definition of multimodal composition places an “emphasis. . . on ‘new’ (meaning digital) technologies,” and this emphasis “has led to a tendency to equate terms like multimodal, intertextual, multimedia, or still more broadly speaking, composition with the production and consumption of computer-based, digitized, screen-mediated texts” (8). To counter this bias, scholars such as Shipka, Dunn (2001), and Wysocki (2004) have argued for increased attention to the meaning teachers and students create through bodily movement, voice, or drawing.⁵ Some examples of Dunn’s “kinesthetic, spatial, and social approaches” include drawing or sculpting an

⁵ Wysocki prefers to use “new media,” but she claims that new media texts “do not have to be digital” (15).

argument, or leaving an oral journal entry on the instructor's voicemail (85; Dunn and Dunn De Mers). For the purposes of this dissertation, the definition of multimodal will be broad and include texts not composed on the computer; still, the common role of the computer in composing these texts cannot be ignored. Both Lauer (2012) and Collin Gifford Brooke (2014) review the importance of the word "digital" in the discussion of what constitutes multimodal texts. The fact that digital and non-digital parameters for multimodal texts are accepted by these composition scholars demonstrates the breadth of the field's understanding of multimodal composing. As Claire Lutkewitte (2014) describes, this understanding can envelop a range of teaching practices. As the editor of a sourcebook of reprinted articles on multimodal composition, Lutkewitte writes in the introduction that while her selections "represent several theories and pedagogies that compliment, contrast, and are in dialogue with one another," she has placed all of them under the banner of multimodal composition (8). Understanding this range is important because writing centers are used to seeing a wide range of writing brought to the center. The writing center can work with composition courses and writing programs to support students composing in multiple modes, but first the center must escape institutional assumptions about the importance of writing center work and value of writing center scholarship.

The Institutional Status of Writing Centers and Possible Partners for Collaboration

Unsuccessful attempts at collaboration between writing centers and composition is often due to an unspoken hierarchy between the disciplines of composition and writing center studies. Many writing center professionals feel that their work is undervalued, especially by their colleagues in composition. Elizabeth H. Boquet (1999) describes writing center scholars as "continually called on to articulate. . .the relevance of writing center work to the

field as a whole, as though it were not an area as self-evident as, say, basic writing or computer technology” (476). In an essay reviewing the history of writing center scholarship, Lauren Fitzgerald (2012) agrees: “Writing center scholars have long felt—and have the evidence to show—that composition studies has not valued their research” (86). In fact, she calls the relationship between composition and writing centers “the most vexing conflict in writing center studies.” Mark L. Waldo (1990) writes that composition as a discipline continues to assume that the writing center is the “fix-it shop” for grammatical errors decried by Stephen M. North (1984) in “The Idea of a Writing Center” (North 436). With this assumption, according to Waldo, composition studies is enacting a hierarchy they themselves have experienced: forcing the writing center into the role of correcting sentence-level errors “trivializes the center’s relationship with the writing program in much the same way that writing programs were (and are) trivialized by literature programs within English departments” (76). Anne Ellen Geller and Harry Denny (2013), writing in *Writing Center Journal* about the institutional status of writing center administrators, also point out the irony that “compositionists often enact the very marginalization they themselves often face in relation to wider literary-tilted English studies,” explaining that “A theme running through this literature is that compositionists believe that their colleagues don’t value the epistemological, pedagogical, and praxis orientation of their scholarship or the everyday intellectual labor of writing program administration” (98). Not only English Departments, but institutions as a whole have a history of undervaluing the administrative work of writing programs and writing centers.

Writing Program Administration, Writing Centers, and Labor Issues

The problems facing writing programs and writing centers are not new. In 1977, James H. Sledd wrote a despairing article about the lack of respect for writing instruction within institutions and among faculty. Of English faculty, he writes, “For years they have stubbornly refused their basic duty—to teach the mass of the college population to read and write no more ineffectively than the custom of the country dictates” (1). Sledd acknowledges that English faculty are only following larger institutional trends, and that teaching lower-division courses “doesn’t earn raises or promotions” (1). Here, Sledd forecasts what has become one of the most controversial issues in higher education: the lack of promotion, or even job security, for the faculty teaching (and often administrating) writing.

Marc Bousquet, Tony Scott, and Leo Parascondola (2004) edited a collection of essays on the topic of adjunct labor and writing instruction. As summarized by Bousquet in the introduction:

At present time, tenure-stream faculty perform as little as 25 percent of all campus teaching, with the rest performed by a vast corps of flex-time and nontenurable teachers, most of them under direct administrative control, generally without the pay support, research, commitments, classroom autonomy, and academic freedoms enjoyed by traditional faculty. (1-2)

Writing program administrators play an important role in staffing writing courses with adjunct instructors. Bousquet writes, “Rhetoric and composition appears to exemplify the sad ideal of labor relations in the managed university. As little as 7 percent of the teaching is done by tenure-stream faculty. In rhet-comp, traditional faculty working conditions are enjoyed primarily by managers, not by teachers” (4). Ironically, an often overlooked and

undervalued position such as writing program administration is one of the few positions with the security (or possibility) of tenure in this scenario. Rhetoric and composition scholars willing to be managers must continue to support the “myth” of academic employment: that adjuncting for little pay and no job security is a temporary position until an offer for a tenure-track position is received. Eisenstein and Petri (1998) call this the “twin myths of meritocracy and apprenticeship,” and “together these myths work to maintain the profession but also function to legitimate its exploitative logics” (48-49).

The labor situation is perhaps even worse for writing centers. Unlike writing program administrators who must supervise adjunct writing instructors, many writing center directors do not have tenure. Geller and Denny (2013) analyze writing center positions and find that while writing center professionals (WCPs) can have a variety of roles and a variety of status designations, most WCPs are not on the tenure track. The majority of these positions, “do not always have clear-cut standing as either administrators or faculty. Often they are both/and. These important nuances signal realities that are bittersweet for the profession: while the range of employment possibilities is wide open, the production pressures (and outlets) for intellectual labor are just as variable” (99). Tenure-track WCPs often do not know “how their tenure and promotion committees would make their decisions” (100-01). Even an administrative position marked clearly as a staff position has a large range of variables. Geller and Denny write that most people in these positions:

have twelve-month contracts and are required to work a full-time week. Some are classified at levels similar to administrative or secretarial positions while others may be at the level of a vice provost or dean. Research-intensive universities are more likely to have staff WCPs, whereas other institution

types suggest no clear trend toward administrative or tenure-stream WCP appointments. (100)

These full-time staff directors are not usually considered “adjuncts,” but William Vaughn (2004), a contributor to Bousquet, Scott, and Parascondola’s collection, has an interesting theory about administrators who do not hold tenure. Calling himself a former “adjunct administrator” of a writing program, Vaughn writes, “While adjuncted administration is only the latest instance of academic capitalist irresponsibility, it offers a tempting prospect: To learn and practice ‘responsibility’ in ways that can teach us to recapture the administration of the university” (165-66). The institutional status of each writing center is different, though Geller and Denny have found recurring characteristics in writing center positions, and they have developed a conclusion (like Vaughn’s) that “Our tolerance for rising to the occasion—like meeting writers where they are, instead of where we’d ideally find them—is our greatest asset and our greatest threat” (124). Institutional assumptions about writing centers, such as assumptions about labor in the writing center or the types of students who come to the center, can be stigmatizing, but Geller and Denny hint that the writing center can use these assumptions to their advantage.

Institutional position plays a large role in any study of writing centers. In a review essay about writing centers, written for *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators*, Neil Lerner (2013) provides ten “definitions” of a writing center. These include a few that emphasize the writing center as a “cite for research” and “a window into literacy learning,” but also include outdated ones that define the writing center as a “place where poor writers are sent to get their problems diagnosed and texts fixed” (223). In other words, according to Lerner, “Tensions between the [writing center as] clinic”—a “punishment for language

transgressors”—or “the possibility for literacy education has come to define the history of writing centers” (225). Some institutions, administrators, and faculty across disciplines continue to see the writing center as a clinic limited to assisting remedial students, while the writing center sees itself as a resource for “writers and teachers across the curriculum” and one of the few places on campus where students can take advantage of “individualized pedagogy” (North 436; Lerner “What Is” 225). Considering this history, and although Lerner claims that all ten definitions he gives for the writing center are correct, one especially encapsulates both the writing center’s true value and the value many institutions ascribe to the writing center: a writing center is “an under-resourced and often-overlooked-but-vital system of student support.” Other scholars have agreed that the writing center often holds an uncertain position in the context of the larger university or institution. In *Good Intentions* (1999), Nancy Grimm compares the institutional status of writing centers to an unhealthy pattern of behavior in a “dysfunctional” family; the family cannot rebuild its relationship because of “repressed issues of the past,” much like “change in writing center positioning is similarly blocked by the sticky history of remediation that haunts writing center work” (84). Institutional assumptions about the purpose of the writing center can make it difficult for writing centers to make changes, such as the seemingly large change of assisting students with multimodal projects. Many writing centers do not have the institutional clout, perhaps due to their job status, to revise the services they offer substantially. As reviewed to this point, one potential partner in doing this work is writing programs. Composition studies has an interest in multimodal composition, although there may be a variety of factors that discourage a collaborative relationship between writing centers and writing programs (such as lack of respect for writing center work). Collaboration with writing programs is just one

example of a potential collaborative relationship that writing centers can pursue. While writing centers must operate under institutional constraints, writing centers also have unique assets that they can also take advantage of and which could lead to a new view of writing center work and of multimodal composing.

The Unique Institutional Position of Writing Centers

The position of the writing center within the university or institution is unique, which opens a space for the writing center to build collaborative relationships with a variety of institutional partners. In Stephen North's "Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center,'" (1994) he attempts to limit the scope of his original "Idea," (1984) where he called the ideal writing center "a kind of physical locus" for "commitment to writing" across the entire university (65). Yet, while North attempts to replace his earlier idealistic writing center with a more realistic model, it is important to note that most writing center scholars continue to respond to (or even revere) North's original "Idea," whereas North's "Revisiting" is relatively ignored (Gaskins 13). One reason for this preference is that many writing center scholars believe that the writing center is a space to enact change within the university (Ede, 1989; Grimm, 1999; Barron and Grimm, 2002), often by building awareness for how students' needs change as writers over time. Even when many writing centers are saddled with too-many responsibilities and too-few resources, many of them are also untethered to specific disciplines or departments (despite their theoretical ties to composition), giving their directors a certain amount of freedom not enjoyed by department heads (and usually one less level of institutional bureaucracy to negotiate). Additionally, almost all writing centers have a permanent physical space where students can congregate to receive assistance on their

writing projects, unlike the transitory space of a classroom⁶. One result of these advantages is that the writing center interacts with many disciplines across the university, providing them with a broader understanding of writing and how it is valued across campus. Writing center scholarship has long described a close relationship between writing-across-the-curriculum programs (WAC) and writing centers (Wallace, 1988; Mullin, 2001). These collaborations often result in increased visibility for the writing center across campus, with tutors often serving as “ambassadors” for WAC initiatives, and vice versa (Johnston & Speck, 1999; Severino and Knight, 2007).

In terms of multimodal composing, writing centers again can learn from their work with disciplines outside of English that have a history of supporting oral and visual arguments. Dennis A. Lynch and Anne Frances Wysocki, writing about the development of their multimodal writing course at Michigan Technological University, report seeing “similar efforts emerging on campuses across the nation,” often tied to WAC programs or even communication-across-the-curriculum (CAC) programs. They specifically mention the “merging” of WAC and CAC programs, which is a task that could be undertaken by writing centers (166). Writing centers can work with these writing or communication programs, and they themselves need to adapt in some way as the “definition of composition seems clear.” Carrie Leverenz (2012) has also written about “supporting multimodal writing across the curriculum” by developing a grant-funded New Media Writing Studio at Texas Christian University (52). Leverenz describes the challenges of gaining funding for the studio and losing funding at the end of the four-year grant. She writes that the Studio still operates, but

⁶ The physical space of the center will be treated again (briefly) in the Research Design section of this chapter, and in more detail in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

“remains on the fringes, left to plan programming with 4% of our original budget” (61). One lesson Leverenz and the staff of the Studio learned is to “align our interests with the interests of those in power,” or, in other words, administrators. With the possibility of supporting a shared multimodal initiative across disciplines, writing centers are actually in a prime position to take the lead and proactively encourage and promote writing throughout their institutions, but they must be willing to challenge their common institutional role and demonstrate their worth to students, tutors, faculty across disciplines, and perhaps most especially to administrators.

Computers in the Writing Center

In addition to the writing center’s uneasy institutional status, the writing center has also had a troubled history in determining the role of computers and other new technologies in the writing center. As discussed above, multimodal composition does not need to occur on a computer; yet, computers play an important role in the production of many multimodal texts. Writing center scholars have started to question how an expanded definition of writing will affect the writing center, or how the writing center can respond to new types of compositions (often on the computer screen) while retaining an environment where tutor and student can collaborate one-on-one. In the introduction to the edited collection *Multiliteracy Centers: Writing Center Work, New Media, and Multimodal Rhetoric*, David M. Sheridan (2010) establishes the defining characteristics of multiliteracy centers: they should be “spaces equal to the diversity of semiotic options composers have in the 21st century,” and they should “facilitate the competent and critically reflective use of technologies and other material, institutional, and cultural resources” (“Introduction” 6-7). These characteristics imply that the multiliteracy center would be especially experienced in reviewing digital texts.

But while technology seems a particular focus of the multiliteracy center, this emphasis reopens two decades of debate in writing center scholarship—namely, that while computers allow writing centers to reach a larger student population through online tutorials, they also reduce the interaction of tutor and student, which is essential to writing center pedagogy.

Judith Summerfield's 1988 essay "Writing Centers: A Long View" is an example of the suspicions many writing center practitioners used to hold about computers. She claims that computers "threaten the community of the center" by encouraging writers to "confront his situation alone" (8). In other words, computers are a step backward for writing centers because they discourage the collaborative nature of knowledge production. Summerfield ends her essay with a warning: "Watch out for computer terminals. Watch out for all evidence of attempts to break down the gathering of minds" (9).

A decade later, Eric Hobson (1998) takes a similarly cautious stance about the over-reliance on computers in the introduction to his edited collection *Wiring the Writing Center*. Whereas Summerfield is concerned about the lack of collaboration in a writing center with "cubicles" and "computer terminals," Hobson is concerned that computers will bring writing into an age of "techno-current traditional rhetoric" (xvii). In other words, because writing center administrators can put writing center resources online with ease, their centers are in danger of becoming a new version of the "skill and drill" remediation center reliant on grammar handouts. Peter Carino (1998), also in Hobson's volume, offers a history of computers in writing centers dating back to the 1970s, but he too cautions readers to "remain vigilant against the intoxication of our enthusiasm" (193).

Barnett and Blumner (2001) provide an even-handed summary of the discussion of computers in writing centers in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing Center Theory and*

Practice: “Advances in technology allow writing centers to assist students in new and interesting ways, yet administrators must take care to consider theoretical and pragmatic concerns when designing writing center services” (473). Most writing center administrators now accept technology to support traditional writing, but the appearance of the multiliteracy center has dredged up old debates. As part of his dissertation about multiliteracy centers, a case study of the Noel Studio at Eastern Kentucky University, Jeffrey S. J. Kirchoff (2012) concludes one section of his extensive literature review of the role of computers in writing centers by noting that “initial conversations about Writing Centers using technology...persist today,” but “they have taken a back-seat to other issues regarding Writing Centers and technology,” including the issue of whether writing centers should support students composing in multiple modes (29).

Multiliteracy Centers

Given their response to computers in the writing center, it is perhaps unsurprising that writing centers took a few years to respond to multimodal composing. John Trimbur first forecast the appearance of multiliteracy centers in 2000, but the conversation that followed took several years to develop. As reviewed in the pages to follow, work on multiliteracy centers has appeared with increased frequency since 2009 (Grutsch McKinney, 2009; Inman and Sheridan, 2010; Balester et al., 2012) and has continues to respond to the multimodal composing trend in composition studies (Lee and Carpenter 2013).

Early Multiliteracy Centers

In 2000, *The Writing Center Journal* published a special issue on the future of writing centers at the turn of the century. Well-respected writing center scholars such as Stephen M. North, Muriel Harris, and Lisa Ede wrote short reflective responses to questions that included

“Given changing educational demands, populations, budgets, and technology, how do you see writing centers continuing as viable parts of the academy?” and “Can you target any issues that writing centers need to open up or begin to address that have to do with our future place in the academy and the larger community?,” questions the editors of the issue hoped would “enable us to look again at not only where we have been but where we might want to dream of going in this new century” (DeCiccio and Mullin 5; 6). Of these short responses, John Trimbur’s “Multiliteracies, Social Futures, and Writing Centers” has provoked the largest response from writing center theorists and practitioners.⁷ In his piece, Trimbur identifies the trend among writing centers “to see literacy as a multimodal activity in which oral, written, and visual communication intertwine and interact,” which he attributes to “new means of communication associated with the information age” (29).⁸ Trimbur witnesses this expanded understanding of literacy not only in writing centers or composition classrooms but also in “how we read and write, do business, and participate in civic life.” Borrowing “multiliteracies” from the New London Group, Trimbur forecasts “that writing centers will more and more define themselves as multiliteracy centers” (30). Over ten years later, Trimbur’s prediction appears as insightful as it was in 2000: more and more writing centers have begun welcoming multimodal projects, yet the scholarship on multiliteracy centers is just beginning.

⁷ There was not much initial response to Trimbur’s essay, which both Harry Denny (2010) and David Sheridan (2010) have found troubling. Response has grown in recent years, and one reason may be that Trimbur was only one of two authors in the special issue (the other being Muriel Harris) to “predict a reality for writing centers that we will be working with technology and rhetorical media much more frequently in the 21st century” (Gardner).

⁸ In “English Only and U.S. College Composition” (2002) (with Bruce Horner), Trimbur would further expand the realm of composition beyond national borders to include writing in other languages.

The first example of what could be called a multiliteracy center is not a direct response to John Trimbur; yet, while James Inman (2001) does not use “multiliteracy center” or “multiple literacies” when describing the Furman University’s Center for Collaborative Learning and Communication, his article begins to define the parameters of multiliteracy center theory and practice.⁹ Published the year after John Trimbur’s piece in *Writing Center Journal*, James Inman describes the creation of a center based on “the non-directive, collaborative pedagogy most often located in writing centers,” applied “to peer consulting practices across the curriculum in support of other practices besides writing, too.” These “other practices” included multimedia composing projects in “soundproofed technology labs,” and this act of applying the essential characteristics of writing center pedagogy to texts composed with other modes remains a viable model for multiliteracy centers today. Inman emphasizes the importance of flexibility in designing a collaborative center “to empower consultants and clients alike to take on more responsibility for configuring their own learning.” He continues: “If engaged learning spaces are to be democratic and appropriate for diverse teaching and learning styles, then they must have such flexibility.” Thus, flexibility allows for individualized pedagogy geared to a student’s strengths, an important part of writing center philosophy as well as the basis behind the idea of multiple literacies.

Another early description of a multiliteracy center comes from Danielle DeVoss (2002) in “Computer Literacies and the Roles of the Writing Center.” Computer access, equipment, and training in technology are recurring themes in scholarship on both early and more recent multiliteracy centers, and DeVoss calls for writing centers to be “working

⁹ Although not a direct response to Trimbur, Inman’s article is often cited in more recent scholarship about multiliteracy centers, as well as by Inman himself (2010).

toward a more complex and critical use of computing technologies and computer-related literacies” (167). On the surface, DeVoss’ discussion of the development of the Internet Writing Consultancy (IWC) at Michigan State appears to relate to the discussion of Online Writing Labs (or OWLs), but in this case, internet writing does not refer to document files sent through the internet but to compositions using “visual literacies, hypertexts, nontextual compositions, and the like” on the computer (171). Additionally, the IWC values “the important interpersonal experience [of students] with our writing consultants,” achieved through key writing center traits such as collaboration and one-to-one consultation (172). In other words, IWCs help students in person with internet texts that require composing with multiple literacies. As with Inman, DeVoss does not use “multiliteracy center” anywhere in her article, but her definition of computer literacies could easily be the same as multiple literacies, which “chang[e] notions of what literacy is and what it does” at a time when skepticism about computers in the writing center was veering more towards acceptance (168). She writes, “No longer is a text always a paper document” and that new definitions of literacy “are shifting the way we approach the notion of text” (171). This “shift in literacy skills” that she describes could expand beyond the “computer literacies” of her title to include visual, oral, and kinesthetic modes of communication away from the computer—though this discussion in writing center scholarship is still several years away (169).

Part of the Sweetland Center for Writing at the University of Michigan, the Sweetland Multiliteracy Center opened in 2002, the same year as DeVoss’ publication. In 2004, Krista Homicz Millar published an interview with David Sheridan, the director of Sweetland’s multiliteracy center, about building a center named with the New London Group and Trimbur’s “Multiliteracies, Social Futures, and Writing Centers” in mind. Their wide-ranging

conversation covers topics that will appear again later in the conversation about multiliteracy centers, including Sheridan's defense of welcoming multimodal composing into writing centers. As with Inman and DeVoss' emphasis in retaining collaborative relationships in their high-tech centers, Sheridan also sees the Sweetland Multiliteracy Center as following a writing center model. His multiliteracy center operates within the larger Sweetland Center for Writing "through people who have been trained in some version of a writing center pedagogy program" and using "a so-called non-directive approach, where the peer becomes a facilitator, who really keeps the student composer very active in the composing process." One important difference between the multiliteracy center and a typical writing center is that "we see a lot more of collaborative tutoring, where you have more than one student composer and more than one consultant working. So you might have four people working together instead of one-on-one." While early multiliteracy centers are careful to direct attention to their adherence to important characteristics of writing center pedagogy (collaboration, peer consultants, and one-on-one consultations), they also begin to show the ways they provide additional services to students (soundproof recording booths at Furman, consulting about online texts at Michigan State, or group consultations at the University of Michigan).

As with DeVoss' emphasis on the important role of technology in assisting students composing with multiple literacies, Sheridan also understands that computers are changing the way students write. According to Sheridan, people have always been able to communicate and make meaning by combining modes, but technology has made the process of composing sophisticated multimodal texts significantly easier:

In the past creating a video of any kind would have been extremely resource-intensive. It would have been a collaboration of highly trained specialists who

had access to expensive, arcane equipment and who had lots of funding. You have your cameraman, your screenwriter, your designers, and depending on how extensive a production it is, you had your set designers, your art directors—all of these people. (Millar)

Students no longer need to be specialists in order to communicate effectively using multiple modes, and Sheridan believes that potential questions about the necessity of doing this work will disappear once multimodal projects are “considered relatively routine to happen within the academy or within the culture.” Michael Pemberton, writing a year prior to Millar’s interview with Sheridan, is not certain that these projects will become as common as Sheridan expects, and the concerns he raises in his article (reviewed in the next section) has created a lot of response from scholars writing about both computer-mediated and multimodal texts in the writing center.

Raising Concerns about the Multiliteracy Center: Tutor Training, Specialization, and Multimodal Consulting

In “Planning for Hypertexts in the Writing Center. . .Or Not,” Michael Pemberton (2003) outlines valid concerns about the resources writing centers will need to support multimodal composing in terms of equipment, staffing, and training, but also in terms of the mental and emotional resources administrators will spend by adding one more responsibility to the already over-extended writing center. Although Pemberton focuses on hypertexts, his definition of these texts as “multimedia, hyper-linked, digital documents” could also describe multimodal texts. Many scholars after him have cited his reflection and concerns about the increased burden of new forms of composing on writing center administrators and peer

consultants as also applying to the multiliteracy center. Pemberton is not necessarily arguing against students bringing hypertexts to the center, but is instead asking writing centers to examine the potential repercussions of this shift.

Although Pemberton's 2003 article is more of an exploration of the potential effects of hypertexts in the writing center than a critique, it is still representative of the most common fears about multiliteracy centers, including the fear that writing centers will need to completely change what makes them writing centers. Early in his article, Pemberton asks, "Must writing centers make significant changes in what they already do quite well—work with students, one-to-one, on papers that already span a wide range of discourse types across multiple disciplines?" (15). Pemberton does not have an answer for this question. As established in the previous section, early multiliteracy centers valued the writing center model described here by Pemberton, yet administrators will need to decide how (or if) tutors will be trained differently to respond to multimodal texts—another concern that Pemberton addresses in his article. Pemberton asks whether writing centers will need to hire "specialist tutors" who understand the variety of computer software necessary to compose multimodal assignments, or whether administrators should provide "specialized training" to teach all tutors how to operate software (19-20). The former approach changes the tutor's role to something more akin to technological support, while the latter approach requires valuable time for training.

A related position regarding tutor training that avoids discussing specialist tutors is to train tutors to respond rhetorically to computer-based compositions. This approach counters the concern about providing technical support, which Sheridan gives an example of from the Sweetland Multiliteracy Center in his interview with Millar (2004):

Most technical support services, as their names imply, start with the technology. They say, "You want to use Dreamweaver for this if it's a web project, and here's what you do. You pull up Dreamweaver, and you start a new document, and you set the page properties, and here's what it means to compose in html, etc., etc." And, we don't start there. We might cover that at some point in the process. But we start with your rhetorical goals: What is the message that you hope to communicate? Who is your target audience? What is the purpose for communicating this message? We integrate the technology into the composing process that begins with those rhetorical questions.

Importantly, in these multiliteracy consultations that Sheridan mentions, consultants help students use computer equipment or software but in service to the meaning students wish to communicate, thus diffusing the critique that the multiliteracy center would be limited to providing technical support.

By comparison, Pemberton (2003) writes that a consultant's unease with technology "should be no more of a concern than their lack of familiarity with economic theory or principles of civil engineering;" however, this claim insinuates that students or consultants can separate the written text from the other modes the students are using for the purpose of review, when the modes actually work together to create meaning (17).¹⁰ Calling back to Selber's (2004) valuing of both functional and rhetorical literacy, David Sheridan writes in "Words, Images, Sounds: Writing Centers as Multiliteracy Centers" (2006), the next major publication about multiliteracy centers, that "separating technical and rhetorical dimensions

¹⁰ Writing much later (2012), Clint Gardner gives a similar response, "While one can, for example, give a writer of a web page feedback by only looking at the alphabetic text of that web page, it is not the same sort of response one would give in the context of the web page itself."

of multimodal communication artificially segments the composing process. It also ignores current realities about how students define their needs” (338). Although technology presents a problem in terms of tutor training, and writing centers do not want to become a place where students go for merely technical help, Sheridan worries that “if students need to go to separate sources to get technical and rhetorical help, then many of them, for pragmatic reason, will simply skip the rhetorical support altogether” (“Words” 338).

Sheridan’s response to the dilemma of technology and tutor training is to recruit “multiliteracy consultants” (also called “digital writing consultants”) alongside more general writing consultants. In his interview with Millar, he explains that the “specialist” and “non-specialist” consultants learn from each other, and that he tries to make sure that the schedules for both kinds of tutors overlap. Additionally, as Sheridan describes in “Words, Images, Sound,” multiliteracy consultants would be “able to provide effective support for peers because they have an abiding interest in both the practice and theory of multiliteracy composing” (341). Jackie Grutsch McKinney in “New Media Matters,” published in *Writing Center Journal* in 2009, goes a step further than Sheridan by arguing that all consultants should be trained to respond to multimodal compositions, and she also provides specific examples of “how to tutor new media,” including with technology (350). For example, she suggests tutors think about “talking” aloud about the “whole” of a text (rather than “reading” aloud the “words” of a text) as a way to better understand responding to multimodal texts.

One potential problem with training tutors to respond to both the technical and rhetorical aspects of a student’s text, identified by Michael Pemberton (2003), is that “no one can be an expert in everything; what’s important in a conference is that writers receive a thoughtful response from an authentic audience” (17). Of course, Pemberton is correct that

everyone has talents and specific skills—the very basis of allowing students to use multiple literacies when they write. Multiliteracy consultants (as described above) try to be thorough in helping students with both technical and rhetorical questions. James Inman, writing about his experiences at Furman (2001) praises his multitalented consultants as “tak[ing] on the responsibility of being able to help clients across writing, communication, and technology projects.” Indeed, from some descriptions, multiliteracy consultants need to be extremely talented to take on the challenge of helping students with all aspects of their often computer-based multimodal project. Sheridan provides a more exhaustive list of the skills a multiliteracy consultant needs:

We hope that the peer consultants who work in the Multiliteracy Center know an array of things. We hope that they are good writers and communicators.

We hope that they have excellent interpersonal skills. We hope that they have had formal training that is based on thinking about pedagogy and about best practices for tutoring, and we provide that through a series of courses that we teach. But we also want them to have thought a lot about visual and multimedia communication and graphic design. And we also want them to have the technical skills necessary to do digital composing. (Millar)

Even if a student filled all the items on that intimidating list:

[He or she], at least at the University of Michigan, is pretty marketable and they can work at other positions and often get paid more money as a web designer. You take somebody who is motivated, who is very bright, who is a great communicator, who gets along well with people and who can do web

design, and you have got someone who is potentially useful to a lot of units.

So it's been a real challenge to recruit these students.

In a later publication, Sheridan (2010) labels the employees who fit these parameters as “superconsultants” (83). Yet, based on his experience running a multiliteracy center both at Michigan State and then University of Michigan, he does not think these consultants are a rare commodity. Even more so, the skills these consultants develop in the multiliteracy center, as well as the skills students develop from consultations in the multiliteracy center, are increasingly valuable in the workplace. While composition has long claimed that composition courses should prepare students for life after the university, scholars such as Anne Beaufort (1999) and Douglas Hesse (2001) do not believe that the classroom is adequate preparation. Beaufort claims that classroom instruction cannot “take the place of immersion in the specific context for composing” (qtd. in Hesse 126). While Hesse agrees, he also asks if there are “more attainable goals for college courses” that could provide a benefit to students after graduation (127). The combination of classroom instruction, alongside the more immersive tutoring found in the multiliteracy center, could benefit students at a time when computer-mediated multimodal composing is increasing in visibility.

Resurgence in Scholarship about Multiliteracy Centers: Justifying Multiliteracy Center Work

At the very end of “Planning for Hypertexts in the Writing Center. . .Or Not,” Pemberton concludes, “Ultimately we have to ask ourselves whether it is really the writing center’s responsibility to be all things to all people” (21). Although he wants to keep an open mind and expects that writing centers will need to continually address computer-based multimodal assignments, Pemberton is also forecasting concerns that appear in more recent

scholarship about multiliteracy centers. In fact, this line is perhaps the most cited and repeated from Pemberton's article, and a line of reasoning used before to rebut many new trends in writing center research.

Pemberton's article clearly stuck a nerve, as scholars have been responding to the concerns he's raised for over a decade. As a general rule, those who disagree with Pemberton are concerned that limiting the scope of the writing center mission also limits its purpose and value. As Grutsch McKinney (2009) states, "I agree with Pemberton that we shouldn't take on work that we are not prepared for. But our agreement only goes so far, because I do think it is our job to work with all types of writing in the writing center—including new media" (346).¹¹ If a writing center is a place where writers get feedback on their writing—whether it communicates a purpose or appeals to an audience, then writing centers will have to help students with new media texts as well. These scholars worry that the writing center will become obsolete while the rest of the university changes and adapts to new ideas and technology, which is also a common justification for supporting multimodal composing in the writing center.

In my reading of multiliteracy center scholarship, I encountered a repeated argument for why writing centers should support multimodal composing: to remain a relevant service for students on increasingly multimodal college campuses. In other words, scholars cite the "need" to respond to the trend of multimodal composing, or face potential consequences. This justification appeals to a specific audience, such as the overworked administrators Pemberton mentions. Scholars use this argument to convince administrators that multiple

¹¹ Her definition of new media: new either through "their digital-ness; their conscious materiality of form; their multimodality; and/or their rhetorical means" (347).

literacies are essential to the survival of the writing center. Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2009) argues that tutoring multimodal projects is not “something we can or should opt out of,” and that if writing centers ignore digital multimodal texts, other departments will take over (348). This type of composing will be “lost to the technology,” as will any discussion of the “occasions, purposes, or audiences” of these texts (350).

With the publication of *Multiliteracy Centers: Writing Center Work, New Media, and Multimodal Rhetoric* (2010), edited by David M. Sheridan and James A. Inman, John Trimbur’s forecast of multiliteracy centers became more fully realized. The book is an example of increased scholarly attention to multiliteracy centers, and it demonstrates both the potential of multiliteracy centers as real, working centers, and the promise of future scholarship, while also contributing to the conversation justifying the growth of multiliteracy centers. For example, Grutsch McKinney reiterates her argument from “New Media Matters” (2009) in her chapter of Sheridan and Inman’s *Multiliteracy Centers* (2010): “One of the results of not being prepared to help students with their functional technological literacy in the creation of new media texts is that others will step into that role. Students need to know how to use programs, and the need becomes intensified when the new media text is a high-stakes assignment” (215). The implication of overworked administrators ignoring a need for multimodal consulting is that both the writing center and students will be negatively affected.

Richard Selfe, in his contribution to *Multiliteracy Centers* (2010), disagrees that writing centers “need” to anticipate a wave of multimodal projects in the writing center. He writes his essay for colleagues “who are intrigued by the implications of multiliteracies and multimodality in our teaching, learning, work, infrastructures, and training;” however, he

also believes that “those colleagues and centers that wish to remain committed to the alphabetic, from my perspective, can afford to do so (110). Selfe is:

convinced. . .that Writing Centers and the workers in them (who also focus almost exclusively on the alphabetic production modes) are likely to remain remarkably important to higher education institutions in the future. If anything, once reluctant disciplines and professionals around us are now more concerned about their students’ employees’ writing abilities than ever before. (109)

Responding two years later (2012), Clint Gardner believes that Selfe is trying to blunt criticism in “a calculated effort to not anger writing center colleagues who may feel that tutoring in rhetorical media is just another burden on an already over-burdened resource (a writing center).” If Gardner is correct, then Selfe does not believe that the practical justification for multiliteracy centers will convince a skeptical audience, but Gardner is concerned that Selfe’s tactic may result in “someone else” (not the writing center) “step[ping] in with inadequate response that focuses solely on the technological aspects of writing, rather than a fuller rhetorical response that writing centers are renowned for.”

In the introduction to *Multiliteracy Centers* (2010), David Sheridan compares the urgency Cynthia Selfe sees in “attending to multimodality within composition studies” to his own fears of the writing center getting left behind—namely that “we have to do so quickly or risk having composition studies become increasingly irrelevant” (4). This fear of irrelevancy has also been used in composition for a similar purpose: to convince overworked instructors to factor multimodality into their pedagogy. In the same essay that Sheridan cites, “Students who Teach Us,” Selfe also writes, “Why have increasing numbers of English composition

teachers turned their attention to new media texts in recent years?” (43). Her three reasons are: 1. because new media texts are common now; 2. because students have better access to the technology necessary to make digital new media texts; and 3. because students are interested in producing these texts and in fact already create them. All of these are valid reasons, but an additional value of composing multimodal texts (according to scholars writing on the subject) is the critical thinking skills students will learn through multimodal composing.

A second answer to the “why” of multiliteracy centers is because of the valuable meaning-making that occurs when student writers combine multiple modes. As Sheridan states in the introduction to *Multiliteracy Centers* (2010), “Communication is not the result of one element merely being added to another, but of the interaction among the different elements. . .resulting in a whole that is decidedly greater than the sum of its parts” (2). Once skeptical writing center administrators understand that multiliteracy centers are needed, not only for their relevancy on campus but for the valuable service these centers would provide for students, they need a theoretical basis for understanding multiple literacies and how to help students develop them. Sohui Lee and Russell Carpenter provide this resource in the *Routledge Reader on Writing Centers and New Media* (2013), a collection of previously-published essays that express a unified theory for why new literacies are important for writing instructors both in the classroom and in the writing center. Besides including familiar names like Trimbur (2000), Pemberton (2003), Grutch McKinney (2009), and Sheridan (“All Things” 2010), Lee and Carpenter also gather seminal essays from the New London Group (1996), Richard A. Lanham (1994), and Lev Manovich (2001). For Lee and Carpenter, the purpose of bringing together the collection was that “we both felt that writing center scholars

and practitioners needed a shared reference point of scholarship to help them improve their understanding of new media writing and launch new media tutoring initiatives at their centers” (xv). Lee and Carpenter’s resource is an example of the most recent additions to the scholarly conversation about multiliteracy centers—not only justifying the “why” of multiliteracy centers, but also beginning to answer “how” these centers will be established and how they will operate.

A Broad Array of Practices: Today’s Multiliteracy Center

What is the “idea of the multiliteracy center?” In a 2012 special issue of the journal *Praxis* on multiliteracy centers, Sheridan is one of six scholars who provides such an “idea.” Sheridan compares two models of multiliteracy centers, and he has experience with both. The first model (from the University of Michigan) usually begins from within an already-established writing center that adapts to respond to multiple literacies. The second is a multiliteracy center that began as a “media center or a digital studio or a digital humanities lab” (Balester et al.). This second model is what Sheridan prefers, primarily because the “digital studio” model of multiliteracy center avoids the “anxieties” regarding “forms of composing that don’t involve writing in the narrow sense of the term.” In other words, administrators at digital studios do not need to continually justify the value of multiple literacies, or argue that the act of combining images and sounds on a website or the act of typing and revising words in a word processor are both acts of writing. This line of thinking has proved convincing—besides the Language and Media Center Sheridan currently runs at Michigan State University, other high-profile examples of this model include Florida State University’s Digital Studio, and the Digital ACT studio at the University of North Carolina-

Greensboro.¹² According to Stephen McElroy, students have a variety of options as soon as they enter the Digital Studio:

[They can] use one of the workstations on their own or in groups and with or without dedicated tutor oversight. More often than not, though, students do take advantage of the tutors' varied expertise, posing questions not only about technical issues but also about rhetorical concerns—does what I have created so far really say what I think it says? Is this the best approach for my particular audience? (Davis, Brock, and McElroy)

This description could also fit as the description of the New Media Writing Studio (NMWS) at Texas Christian University (TCU).¹³ As described on its website, the New Media Writing Studio “is a space where teachers and writers from any department or discipline can gather to work on all kinds of digital writing: presentations, web design, video, and more” (“New Media”). The NMWS is focused on multiliteracy expressed through technology, though both Florida State’s Digital Studio and the NMWS underscore that their staff provides rhetorical as well as technical help—an emphasis calling back to Stuart Selber’s rhetorical and functional literacy, as well as Sheridan’s earlier publications about multiliteracy centers.

Sheridan offers a convincing argument for the “digital studio” model of multiliteracy centers; however, the purpose of the *Praxis* article as a whole is to provide six “ideas” of a multiliteracy center, and “not to try to cohere to a common, seamless argument” (Balester et al.). The other five voices, including the oft-cited Nancy Grimm and Jackie Grutsch

¹² Part of a trio of centers (including the Writing Center and the Speaking Center) that make up UNC-Greensboro’s Multiliteracy Centers (“The Multiliteracy Centers”).

¹³ TCU also has a writing center—The William L. Adams Center for Writing—where I worked from 2008-2014 as a graduate student consultant.

McKinney, demonstrate intense variation of individual practice in specific institutional contexts. For example, Nancy Grimm discusses her decision to change the name of her writing center to the Michigan Tech Multiliteracies Center—not only because of multimodal assignments brought to the center, but because “Multiliteracies” is also “about access, about difference, about learning how texts of all kinds function in systems of power that both enable and constrain our choices.” Another vision of multiliteracy center practice is offered by Jackie Grutsch McKinney. She describes the writing center at Ball State University, where she “trained tutors to address multimodality; equipped the center with hardware, peripherals, and software to facilitate multimodal work; and have advertised formally and informally our ability to work with students on multimodal work,” yet did not change the name of her center for fear of alienating students. As these examples indicate, the most recent conversation about multiliteracy centers reflects a vibrant array of characteristics, which is also something scholars writing about multiliteracy centers have borrowed from previous writing center scholarship.

In an essay considering the whole of writing center pedagogy, Eric H. Hobson admits the impossibility of his task: “To think about writing center pedagogy as a monolith ignores the cultural situatedness of particular centers, the extent to which each center is defined by local context,” yet, “any comprehensive audit of writing centers’ educational foundations reveals enough underlying theoretical and methodological unity to provide a desired community adhesive” (“Writing Center” 169). As a field, writing center scholarship shares best practices with a supportive community, and yet each center is a unique space that helps specific students at a specific school. Undoubtedly, David Sheridan’s Learning and Media

Center, TCU's NMWS, and Nancy Grimm's¹⁴ Multiliteracies Center are all examples of multiliteracy centers. Also undoubtedly, writing center theory needs to address the growing importance of multiple literacies on college campuses as the conversation about multiliteracy centers in all their variations carries forward.

Exigence for Project

The multiliteracy center is an important next step for writing centers that want to remain relevant in increasingly multimodal universities, and the collaborative knowledge produced through interactions in the writing center make it an essential resource for students attempting to communicate (whether through the written word or through multiple modes). I have taken advantage of the opportunity afforded by the increasingly important conversation about multiliteracy centers (and the related conversation about multimodal composing in composition studies) to conduct a qualitative study of current practice in multiliteracy centers. Scholarship on multiliteracy centers is growing in scope, and while the field is aware of a few specific centers openly soliciting students to bring multimodal texts, as a whole writing center scholars are unaware if writing centers (more generally) have encountered multimodal composing or how they have responded to increased multimodal composing on their campuses. In terms of currently operating multiliteracy centers or newly-established centers, current scholarship has not fully addressed common challenges multiliteracy centers face, such as the challenge of tutor training, and whether writing centers have taken steps to collaborate with composition programs in supporting and promoting multimodal composing among students and across campus. To address these underdeveloped areas of scholarship, I

¹⁴ As described in Chapter III, Grimm retired from Michigan Technological University in 2013. Karla Kitalong took over as director of the Multiliteracies Center.

designed a three-part study, utilizing an online survey, interviews, and site visits, to investigate the state of multimodal composing in writing centers on a national level, in established multiliteracy centers, and in two newly-established multiliteracy centers. The following research questions guided the design and implementation of the study:

1. How are writing centers addressing the challenge of multimodal composing?
2. What is the state of multimodal composing in the writing center, both on a national and local level?
3. How do writing center administrators train tutors to respond to multimodal texts?
4. What collaborative strategies can writing centers use to promote multiple literacies?

Research Design and Methodology

Data Collection

The data for my research study consisted of:

1. A nationwide online survey of writing center professionals
2. Interviews with six administrators of established multiliteracy centers
3. Site visits to two newly-established multiliteracy centers

I obtained approval for my study from the Institutional Review Board at Texas Christian University in July of 2013. Each form of data required a different subject population: 1) survey responses were voluntary and subjects consisted of writing center professionals contacted through the Wcenter, WPA, and Basic Writing listservs; 2) interviews were also voluntary, and subjects consisted of “expert” multiliteracy center administrators (defined as

those who have published about multiliteracy centers, have operated a writing center that helps students with multimodal texts, or both); 3) site visits were approved by the multiliteracy center administrator at each site, and consisted of centers that began operation within the last two years (2012-2014). The three forms of data I collected constitute the three body chapters of the dissertation.

Conducting the survey was the first step in my project in order to establish what administrators are thinking about multimodal projects in the writing center before the other sources of data demonstrated how they are addressing these challenges. Interviews helped me discover the range and variety of practice at multiliteracy centers through speaking with expert administrators, while the purpose of site visits to two multiliteracy centers was to paint a detailed picture of local context, in contrast with the broad results of the survey. As for the reliability of my subjects, the expert administrators from the interviews balanced out the respondents more skeptical of multiliteracy centers who participated in the survey, and also served as a counter to the less-experienced staff I encountered at two newly-established multiliteracy centers. This spectrum of respondents, from skeptical to enthusiastic, and from expert to beginner, presented a wide range of answers to the research questions and contributed to my argument for an increasing role for multiliteracy centers on college campuses and beyond to the larger community.

These methods allowed me to address themes of previously published research, from ambivalence about technology, to concerns about spreading the resources of the writing center too thin, to enthusiasm for embracing new trends. By studying multiliteracy centers in many different contexts, this project keeps the definition of the multiliteracy center broad, something Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2010) advocates in the conclusion to Sheridan and

Inman's *Multiliteracy Centers*. Ultimately, the increased number of multimodal assignments in university courses across the curriculum is a considerable and unavoidable challenge to the writing center, and one significant benefit of my study is that I have witnessed the process of this necessary shift.

Survey as Research Method

The survey data provides an understanding of the general challenges of operating a multiliteracy center, along with a better understanding of training or hiring practices and the types of multimodal projects most common in the writing center (even if respondents do not use the term “multimodal”), such as videos, websites, or blogs. Survey research is an effective research practice for understanding how trends in scholarship operate in the writing classroom or the writing center. Two of the most common analyses of composition research methodologies are Stephen M. North's *The Making of Knowledge Marking in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field* (1987) and Janice M. Lauer and J. William Asher's *Composition Research: Empirical Designs* (1988); yet North's judgment on the value of the survey as a method of collecting data is distinct from Lauer and Asher's. North condemns the survey in general as a method of gathering data because it is “merely. . . a tool” most often used by researchers for “political leverage,” rather than as a method to make new knowledge (140). In fact, he writes that because, “a very few of these studies demonstrate any particular sophistication with the method,” he does not have to give “full treatment” to survey methodology in his book. On the other hand, Lauer and Asher devote an entire chapter of their book to “Sampling and Surveys.” They write that survey research “provide[s] a valuable means of obtaining representative descriptive information” about larger populations, and that

this form of research “can transform unwieldy projects into manageable research and yield valuable, representative descriptive data for composition studies” (78). Since the publication of North’s and Lauer and Asher’s books, surveys are perhaps even more widely-accepted in writing center research.

By theorizing and researching writing centers, researchers can understand how centers operate in their institutional context, and surveys can be a particularly effective method of gathering the practices of highly-individualized writing centers. From this evidence, researchers can make tentative generalizations. Rebecca Day Babcock and Theresa Thonus, writing in *Researching the Writing Center: Towards an Evidence-Based Practice* (2012), call surveys “one of the major ways writing center scholars have attempted to look beyond the particular to the general” (60). When using surveys in writing center research, researchers can respect the institutional setting of centers while gauging broader writing center practices. Surveys in writing center research can gather both practical and empirical knowledge, and researchers can value both. Along with informative statistical data, smaller-scale surveys (such as the survey I conducted) also provide a view of the practical experiences of writing center professionals.

Interviews as Research Method

Unlike the glimpse at the larger writing center community afforded by the survey, interviews with multiliteracy center administrators allowed me to start examining the details and challenges of operating a multiliteracy center. I primarily identified interview subjects through their publications on multiliteracy centers, or if I had heard of their center through publications. Although the end of the survey window overlapped with the beginning of the

interviews, the interviews were an essential intermediate step between the broad focus of the survey and the detailed observations of the on-site visits. More than the survey or site visits, the interviews helped me understand how experts view the conversation about multiliteracy centers, how the operation of writing centers is trending, and how essential the scholarly conversation will be going forward. These interviews also were essential to understanding operational, budget, staffing, and institutional constraints associated with running a multiliteracy center, and helped me better understand these challenges and be prepared for them before I traveled to research sites.

Interviews are a common method of gathering data in writing center research, according to Babcock and Thonus (2012). As with my project, most of the studies they review rely on interviews in conjunction with other data collection methods, including surveys and observations (described below). Lori Kendall's (2008) definition of "qualitative interviews" is an apt description of my approach to interviews. Of the two types of qualitative interviews Kendall describes, mine fit under the heading of "semi-structured interviews, which have a planned list of questions, but allow room for dialogue, follow-up questions, and other changes" (133). One focus of Kendall's article is the appropriate use of qualitative interviews to research "new literacies" and new media. I conducted five of my six interviews through Skype and one through Google Hangouts—two examples of online video conferencing services. Kendall writes that conducting online interviews "can decrease travel expenses and travel time," an obvious benefit, but Kendall's definition of online interviews includes only text-based interviews conducted through email or instant messaging (144). She writes, "The lack of nonverbal communication in online textual interviews thus affects how participants communicate and what the researcher can observe" (145). An online face-to-face

interview, therefore, provides the obvious benefit of convenience for both researcher and subject, as well as the benefit of using non-verbal communication.

Site Visits as Research Method

The third method of data collection for my project was through site visits to two multiliteracy centers, and these visits helped me provide in-depth answers to my research questions by focusing on a few sources of evidence: interviews (described above), observations, and archival documents (Yin 78). Although I intended to complete my interviews with expert administrators before I conducted my on-site research, the last interviews overlapped with my site visits. Yet by finishing most of the interviews before the on-site visits I was able to compare the interviews with experienced multiliteracy center administrators to what I observed at two new centers. I identified one of my site visits through meeting an administrator at the university at a writing center conference, and I found the other site from looking at the online Writing Center Directory on the St. Cloud State University website. Unlike the survey and the interviews, site visits allowed me to observe the physical space of the center. In his introduction to *Cases on Higher Education Spaces: Innovation, Collaboration, and Technology* (2012), Carpenter highlights the rhetorical power of an innovative learning space, which emphasizes “the importance of collaboration, creative thinking, hands-on learning, and the use of technology,” all essential aspects of understanding the challenges and successes of new multiliteracy centers (xxvii). In general, observations have long held an important role in fieldwork research (Adler and Adler, 1994), though Michael Angrosino and Judith Rosenberg believe that approaches to observation have changed and now function “in a context of collaborative research in which the researcher no

longer operates at a distance from those being observed” (467). For my site visits to newly-established centers, collaboration with administrators was essential—not only to gain access to research sites, but in conversations with administrators before, during, and after my visit to their centers.

Archival and internal documents were another form of data I collected during site visits. From materials such as training manuals, I was able to better understand tutor training and tutorial procedures, which I then compared to my interviews with administrators. These documents also allowed me to draw conclusions about client demographics, as well as changes in the organizational structure of an institution that led to the creation of these new centers.

In a 2011 *Writing Center Journal* article, Sarah Liggett, Kerri Jordan, and Steve Price construct a “taxonomy of methodologies” in writing center research (50). Their guiding research question is, “What methodologies does the writing center community employ to make knowledge about writing center, and learning to write?” (51). Their conclusion is that “writing center research. . .promotes methodological pluralism,” which means that writing center researchers “should not be limited to the traditional parameters of a single, discrete methodology” (73). As Liggett, Jordan, and Price recommend, I “blend and blur” the data I have gathered from a survey, interviews, and site visits to answer my guiding research questions. Brought together, my data provides evidence for the claim that multiliteracy centers support and may even lead a multimodal composing initiative on their respective campuses.

Project Overview

In Chapter II, I present the results of an online survey distributed to writing center professionals through the Wcenter and WPA listservs. The survey data provides a broad view of the state of multimodal composing in writing centers, and it also indicates that participants in the survey believe multimodal composing is important both for the future of writing centers and because of the educational value these projects provide to students. From these results I conclude that one way writing centers can promote multimodal composing is through collaboration with institutional partners. Survey participants are realizing the importance of collaboration and beginning to think about how to better enact collaboration, and the survey data implies that these relationships can start with initiatives from within the writing center. Although I specifically discuss opportunities for collaboration with writing programs, this partnership represents only one potential avenue of collaboration for writing centers. Results of the survey indicate that some centers are responding to a need on campus from other disciplines, and in the next two chapters I explore this potential reach via collaboration.

In Chapter III I analyze transcripts of interviews with multiliteracy center administrators (along with administrators' publications, publications about the centers, or the websites of the writing centers that are part of the study) in order to identify common successful practices and common challenges for established multiliteracy centers, arguing that multiliteracy centers can be a leader on campus on this issue through writing center resources and collaboration with institutional partners.

In Chapter IV, I use observations at two newly-established multiliteracy centers to expand the circle again. These sites demonstrate that multiliteracy centers can provide

support to student populations most writing centers already serve (ESL, Developmental Education, or Basic Writing students), but also to less familiar populations (students preparing posters and presentations in the hard sciences or engineering). Additionally, the multiliteracy center can help students with multimodal projects that benefit organizations outside of the university.

In the conclusion of this dissertation (Chapter V) I summarize the contributions of the project to the conversations about multiliteracy centers, multimodal composing, and collaboration with partners inside and outside the university. I then explore how an expanded definition of multiliteracy center work (including tutoring practices) could not only benefit recalcitrant writing centers, but also students and faculty across disciplines, and perhaps eventually even the larger community.

Chapter II: Survey Results

The trajectory of multiliteracy center scholarship, as reviewed in the introduction to this dissertation, has followed an uninspiring path in the first decade after John Trimbur (2000) introduced the term. Both David Sheridan (2010) and Harry Denny (2010) have written about the unrealized potential of Trimbur's forecast that writing centers would increasingly "see literacy as a multimodal activity in which oral, written, and visual communication intertwine and interact" (88). Although the future Trimbur predicted in 2000 was not imminent, ten years later Denny¹⁵ calls Trimbur's "agenda" both "powerful" and "as relevant as ever" (85). Denny argues that writing centers "have an obligation to continue to broadcast and champion [multimodal composing] whenever we have an opportunity." Since Denny's article, a reawakening in the scholarly conversation about multiliteracy centers has grown to include an edited collection (Sheridan and Inman 2010), special issues of journals (*Praxis* in 2012 and a 2016 issue of *Computers and Composition* edited by Sohui Lee and Russell Carpenter), and a collection of landmark scholarship on the relationship between writing centers and new media (Lee and Carpenter 2013). This qualitative study of current practice in multiliteracy centers is a continuation of the increasingly important conversation about multiliteracy centers. More than a decade after Trimbur's introduction of multiliteracy centers, my purpose is to call for a new understanding of multiliteracy center practice through identifying the state of multimodal composing on a national level and within the context of specific centers.

¹⁵ In 2010, Denny published an Introduction to a 10th-anniversary reprinting of Trimbur's essay in the *Writing Center Journal*.

While most of the data I have gathered for this study presents a detailed view of practice in both established and newly-operating multiliteracy centers, my data also provides a broad view of whether writing center professionals are encountering multimodal compositions in their centers, and (if applicable) how they are responding to the challenges of operating a multiliteracy center. In comparison to the interviews and observations from site visits gathered for later chapters, I used an online survey of writing center professionals to gain a more extensive outlook on the state of multimodal composing in writing centers. As discussed in the previous chapter, a survey is an important tool for understanding the connections between writing centers operating in varied institutional contexts (Babcock and Thonus, 2012). Although it is difficult to make generalizations about highly-individualized writing centers, demographics of survey participants show that respondents represented a knowledgeable portion of writing center professionals—many with advanced degrees and multiple years of experience in an administrative role. Even with this high level of expertise, the majority of respondents were not in tenure-eligible positions. As reviewed in the previous chapter, the employment status of writing center professionals is one indication of the precarious institutional position of writing centers (Geller and Denny, 2013).

The most significant of my findings imply that more writing centers are encountering multimodal compositions in the center (though not at a high number compared with traditional written assignments), and that these changes are occurring even where respondents are not familiar with multiliteracy center scholarship. From these results I conclude that writing centers need to be responding to multimodal composing and even actively promoting it on campus, and one way to accomplish this goal is through finding partners for collaboration. While survey questions asked about the potential of writing

centers collaborating with writing programs to promote multimodal composing, survey recipients hinted at a much larger group of institutional partners for multiliteracy centers by looking across disciplines. By establishing the current status of multiliteracy centers through my survey data, I am demonstrating that writing centers have the institutional space they need to take a leading role in promoting multimodal composing from within the writing center to other parts of campus—a claim I develop in later chapters.

Developing the Survey

The data from the survey offers a broad view of the challenges of operating a multiliteracy center, with questions focused specifically on the challenge of training tutors to respond to multimodal texts and on potential opportunities for writing center to collaborate with institutional partners in supporting multimodal composing (such as with writing programs) (see Appendix A). In writing the survey questions, one goal was to understand writing center employees' awareness of the number and types of multimodal projects brought to their writing centers. Additionally, I wanted to gauge respondents' awareness of the scholarly conversation surrounding multiliteracy centers in order to determine if respondents entered the survey with a similar knowledge base. To organize my data and for the participants' ease-of-use, I divided my survey into four sections focusing on the demographics of participants, their experience with multimodal composing in the writing center (including their experience training tutors to respond to multimodal composing), awareness/importance of multiliteracy centers, and opportunities for collaboration. I used a variety of question formats when writing my survey, including multiple choice, Likert scale, and short answer questions. This hybrid format allowed for both quantifiable data and personalized response, arguably providing more well-rounded results. Lauer and Asher

(1988) note that multiple choice questions are “succinct, parsimonious, easily aggregated for analysis, and standardized, allowing the researcher to compare responses to those of other groups” (65). On the other hand, “Open-ended questions yield longer, more variable responses and provide less predetermined, more basic types of responses, but they are difficult to analyze.” Using a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions gave me access to data I could analyze alongside longer reflections of participants, and both gave respondents the opportunity to portray the current state of multimodal composing at their centers and their attitude toward assisting students with these texts.

Population

The primary population of my survey was any writing center administrator or staff member, regardless of whether they were familiar with the topic of multiliteracy centers. In describing the procedures they followed in designing a CCCC grant-supported survey, Anderson et al. (2006) write that researchers using surveys should consider “the medium of survey distribution” alongside defining the intended population and writing questions (61). Online surveys have changed how survey research is conducted, but though researchers can more easily disseminate their survey online, the researcher is also in less control of who ultimately receives the survey (if the original recipients forward the link to recipients unfamiliar to the researcher). Online surveys may reach a larger and broader respondent pool if they are conducted online, and I ensured that my survey would reach my intended participants by distributing the survey link through the Wcenter and WPA listservs—online communities of writing professionals. After subscribing, participants in listservs communicate with each other by sending emails that are distributed to all members of the

group. For writing center professionals, reading and posting to the Wcenter listserv is one way to stay informed about the larger writing center community—perhaps asking for strategies they can apply to their center’s tutor training workshop or offering advice for discussing new program ideas with college administrators. Because the average respondent to my survey was active on either the Wcenter or WPA listerv, he or she could have been well-informed about writing center theory and current conversations in writing center scholarship, or at least active enough on the listserv to open the link to my survey. Additionally, because potential respondents would self-select to take the survey (and knew the topic of the survey before they clicked on the survey link), they had some interest in the topic even if they had a negative opinion of multiliteracy center research. Although I believe this method is a fair way to gather data on the national writing center professional population, I also understand that because the population of an anonymous online survey is not well-defined, my data is not an accurate representation of all writing centers currently functioning in the United States. However, the survey still provided data that fulfills my purpose of providing a broad view of current multiliteracy center practice to compare to the interviews and sites visits I describe in later chapters. Additionally, compared to interview subjects and administrators at the sites I visited, the valuing of multiliteracy center practices by the survey population was not as certain.

Survey Results

From September 3, 2013 until September 18, 2013, I conducted a pilot survey in order to test my questions. I contacted potential respondents through the South Central Writing Centers Association listserv, which includes members from four states: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. As of January 2014, 181 writing center professionals

subscribe to the SCWCA-listserv, and 32 took my pilot survey (Garrett). The order and wording of the survey questions primarily stayed the same from the development of the pilot survey through the opening of the revised survey. In fact, a validating aspect of the pilot survey is that the data from the pilot mirrored the data gathered from the revised survey; although the number who took the pilot was much lower, the percentage of responses on many of the answers were similar. The changes I made between the pilot and the revised surveys included small changes in word choice, correcting one typo, and adding a few additional options to multiple choice questions. After the pilot survey, I revised the questions and emailed a link to the Wcenter and WPA listservs on September 23, 2013. The survey window was for two months and closed in November 24, 2013, at which point I had 106 respondents who had opened the link to my survey.¹⁶ In the paragraphs that follow, I will discuss the results of questions from the survey divided into the following sections: demographics, multimodal composing, multiliteracy centers, and opportunities for collaboration.

Demographics

Understanding the demographics of survey participants is essential to gaining a broad view of multimodal composing in writing centers. Fifty-four percent of respondents identified themselves as either the Director or Coordinator of their center, and that number climbs to 83% when adding Assistant Directors and Professional Writing Consultants (see fig. 2.1). Additionally, 81% of respondents identified their institution as a four-year school,

¹⁶ As of December 17, 2013, 2537 people are subscribed to the Wcenter listserv. Although the final tally of respondents is small compared to the number of total listserv subscribers, this number does not represent the number of active members (Bowen). Additionally, this number does not take into account the writing center professionals who received the link through the WPA listserv.

though fairly evenly spread between public (25%), private (20%), and research-oriented, PhD-granting schools (25%) (see fig. 2.2).

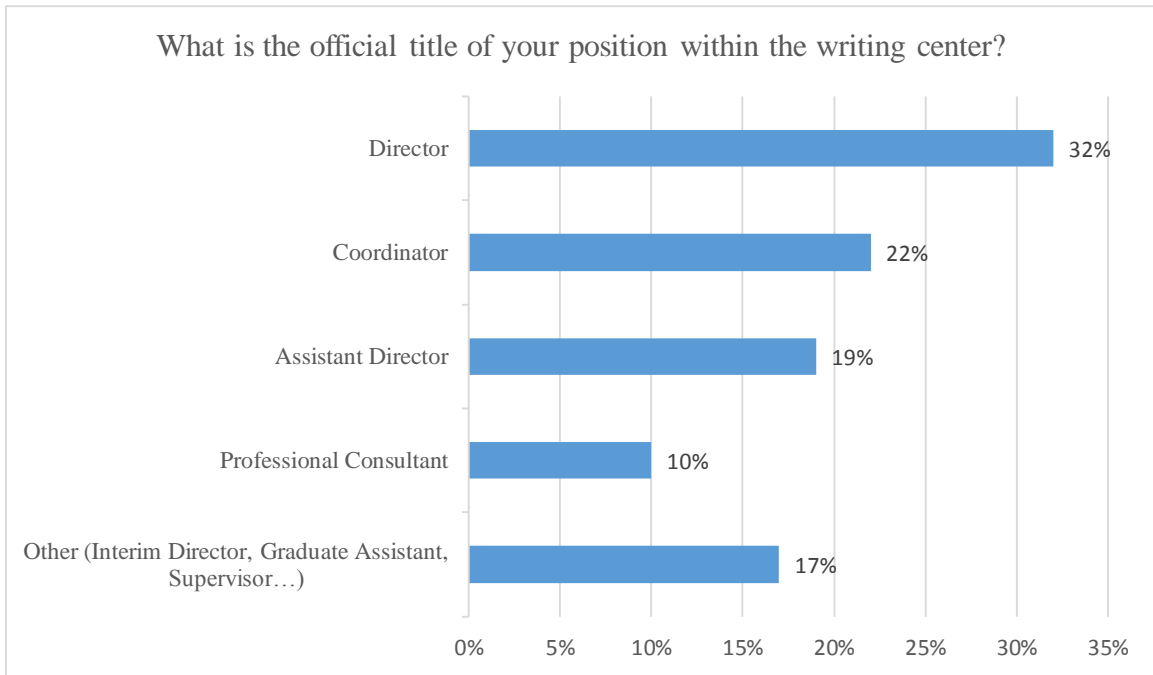


Fig. 2.1. Chart 1

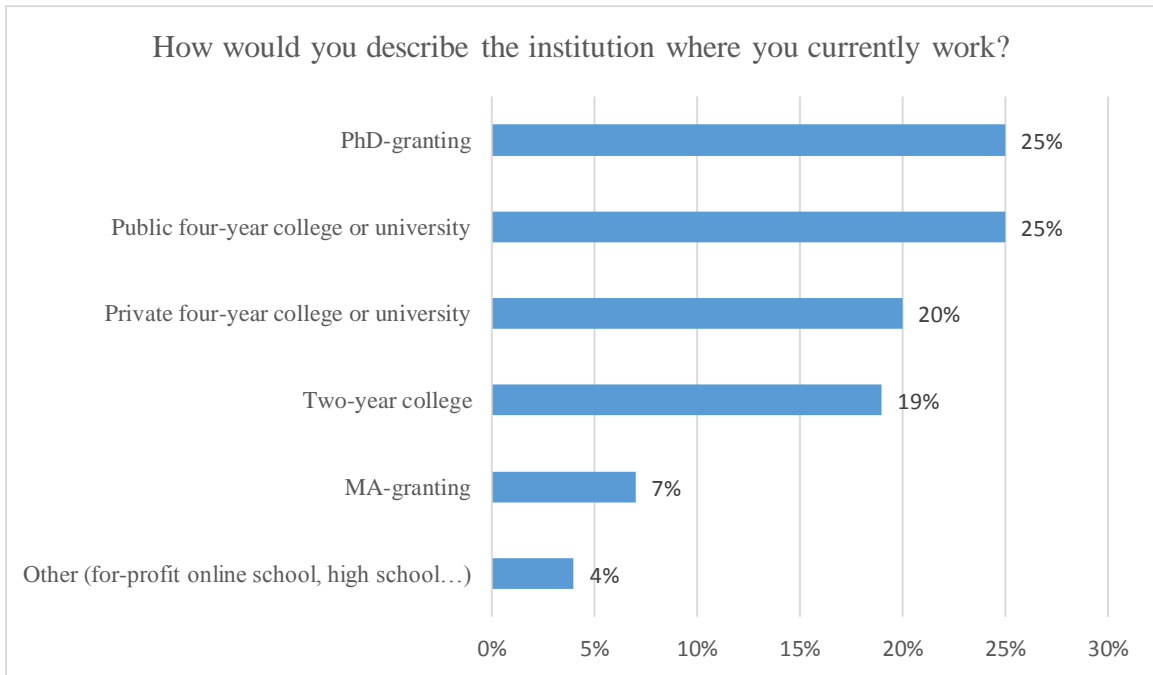


Fig. 2.2. Chart 2

This specific population of writing center professionals—directors or coordinators at four-year schools—has been well-represented in the very few published quantitative research studies of writing centers. In a 2000-2001 survey of writing center directors conducted by the Writing Center Research Project (WCRP), 80% of respondents worked at four-year schools—though a higher number (35%) came from PhD-granting research universities than in my survey (Ervin 2).¹⁷ Although not representative of two-year schools or student tutors, respondents to my survey represent writing center professionals responsible for making decisions in their writing center. Also, as writing center professionals subscribed to the Wcenter listserv, these respondents have demonstrated an interest in the conversation of the larger writing center community.

Significantly, the majority of respondents came from full-time administrator, staff, lecturer, or instructor positions without tenure. Only 13% of respondents identified as an Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor (see fig. 2.3); however, these non-tenure-track administrators and instructors have many years of experience working in writing centers: 48% of respondents have worked at the writing center at their current institution for at least four years, and that number jumps to 72% when adding writing center experience at any institution.

¹⁷ The WCRP ran a yearly survey from 2000-2008, though the data from these surveys are no longer accessible. The ongoing WPA census project promises more comprehensive numbers about writing centers, but data will not be publically available until later in 2014.

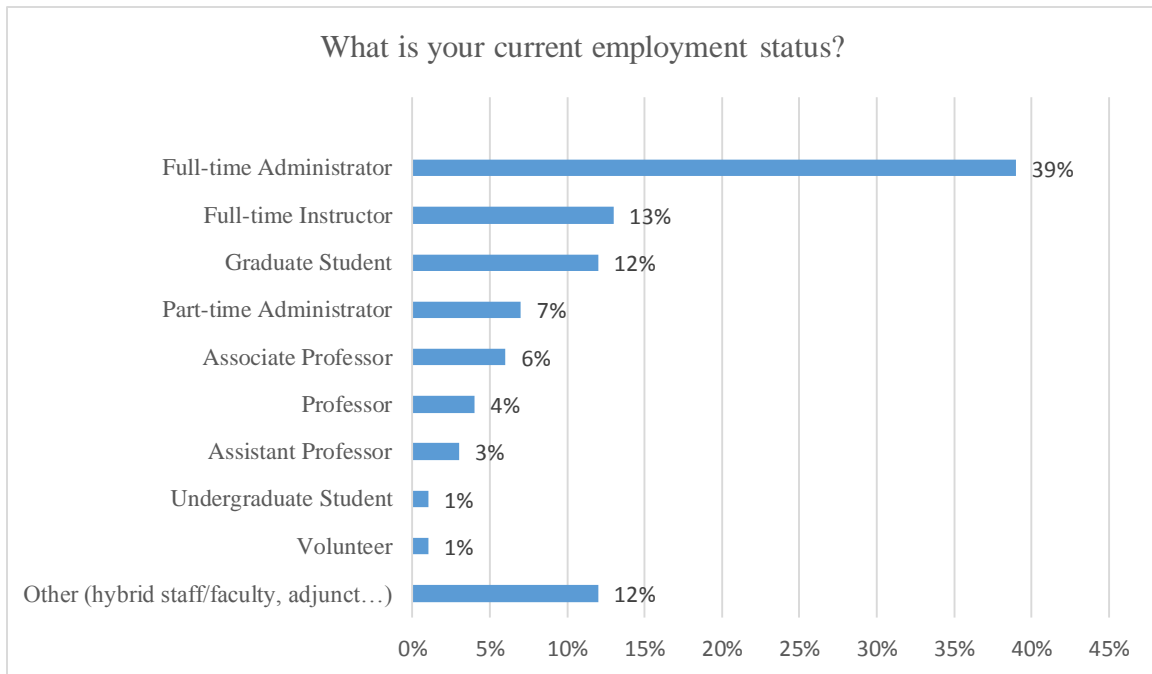


Fig 2.3. Chart 3

By comparison, of respondents to the 2000-2001 edition of the WCRP survey, the majority identified as non-tenurable faculty or staff (58%), although a much higher percentage (41.97%) identified as tenured or tenure-track faculty (Ervin 3). Additionally, the greatest number of respondents (46.39%) to the WCRP survey had at least five years of experience as a writing center director. The ongoing “professionalization” of writing centers, and the subsequent undervaluing of non-tenure-track directors, has been a controversial issue in past scholarship. This survey was conducted the same year Trimbur forecast the appearance of multiliteracy centers, and the general demographics of survey recipients have remained the same between the 2000-2001 WCRP survey and my survey in 2013: untenured, full-time writing center directors with established careers in writing centers. Two more recent studies have also determined that only a minority of writing center professionals hold faculty positions or tenure lines. Gellenr and Denny (2013) analyzed the membership of the International Writing Centers Association, and found that only 47% of writing center

professionals “hold faculty lines,” while 53% hold administrative (staff) positions (100). Isaacs and Knight (2014) presented results that were even more concerning. By looking through college and university websites for information about writing centers,¹⁸ they discovered that only 26% of directors are tenured or are in tenure-track positions (36). The tenuousness of writing center jobs could have consequences not only for the future of writing center, but also for the multiliteracy center. Writing center professionals in these positions may be less likely to have the institutional support or the time to investigate ways to support multimodal composing.

Despite their lack of job security, the experienced administrators who took my survey remain interested in following the trends of writing center research—as evidenced by their subscription to *Wcenter* and their willingness to complete the survey in the first place. Writing center scholars have often criticized the view of the professional value of writing centers from outside sources—including composition directors or English departments (Olson and Ashton Jones, 1988; Balester and McDonald, 2001); however, even among writing center directors, David Healy (1995) has found that “lack of understanding and recognition” is one of the most frustrating elements of writing center work (37-38). Healy states, “Writing center folklore tends to assume second-class citizenship for directors, many of whom are recruited to run the center in addition to teaching and/or performing other administrative duties” (30-31). While non-tenure-track directors are often overwhelmed with responsibilities, they still see themselves as professionals, and their participation in studies like mine, the WCRP’s, or Healy’s is evidence that they are actively engaged in thinking about their writing center work (if not aware of the larger scholarly conversation about

¹⁸ Isaacs and Knight use this research strategy to avoid the self-selection bias that occurs when taking a survey.

writing trends). This knowledgeable group of professionals represents many writing center directors across the country who care about the future of writing centers and who (as the next section of my survey demonstrates) have encountered, or at least considered addressing, multimodal composing in their writing centers.

Multimodal Composing in the Writing Center

In the two years since Clint Gardner completed a survey similar to mine on multimodal composing in writing centers, the number of writing centers with experience assisting students with multimodal projects appears to have increased. Gardner gathered 117 responses from members of the Wcenter listserv in 2011, the results of which he published in *Computers and Writing Online* in 2012. Although in his article he emphasizes responses from open-access institutions (such as his center at Salt Lake Community College), he also provides data for all respondents who took the survey. The most interesting result of Gardner's survey is that 46.15% of respondents said they had experience responding to multimodal documents at their writing centers, and 36.75% have responded to student web pages/sites or hypertexts. While "tutoring for traditional academic texts is the norm for all institutions" (at 99.15% of respondents), Gardner claims that "we can see that rhetorical media and curriculum is having an impact on the work that goes on in writing centers," though "how we are preparing tutors to respond to such writers. . .[remains] much in question." Gardner implies that there could be a time when multimodal documents are seen in as many writing centers as more traditional papers.

By comparison, a solid majority of respondents to my survey (70%) have encountered students bringing multimodal projects to their centers. Yet, while there may be an increasing

trend in the number of writing center professionals encountering multimodal texts, the number of tutorials for multimodal texts (as compared to the number of tutorials for other writing projects) is quite small. The majority of respondents to the survey (54%) estimate that multimodal projects make up less than 5% of the tutorials in their center, and an additional 29% of respondents identify the percentage of multimodal tutorials as between 6-15%. Only 8% of respondents estimated that 16-25% of tutorials at their centers are for multimodal projects (see fig. 2.4).

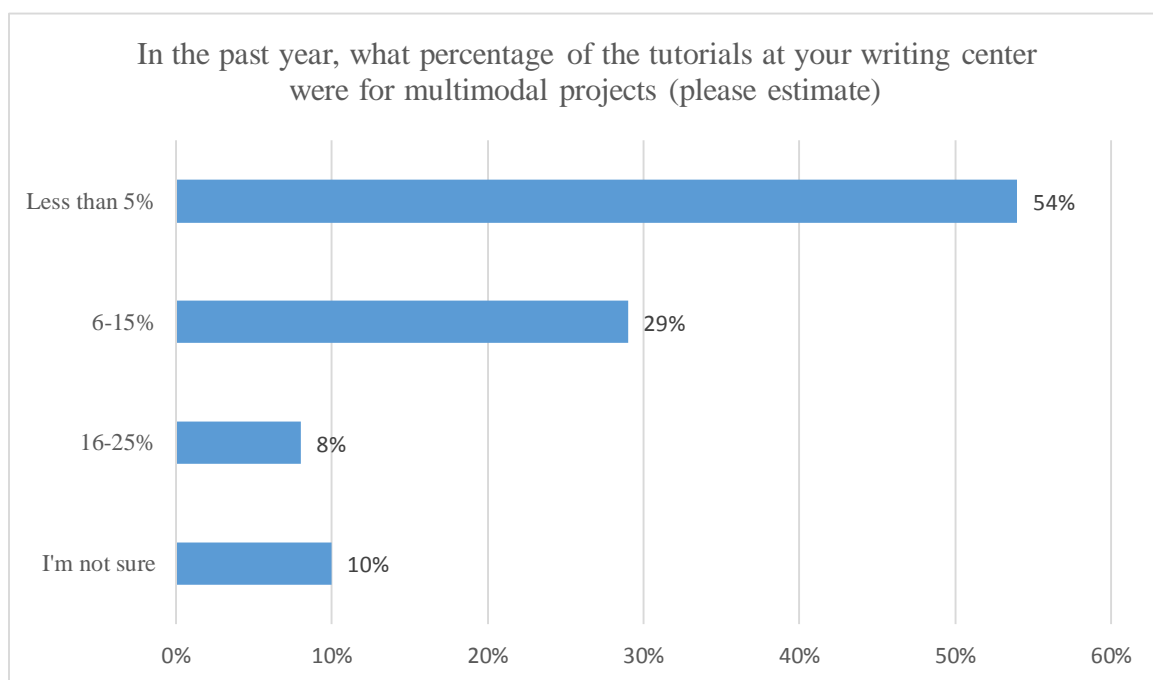


Fig 2.4. Chart 4

As I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, many scholars have been frustrated with the slow pace of scholarship on multiliteracy centers since the publication of Trimbur's "Multiliteracies, Social Futures, and Writing Centers" in 2000. Yet, my data seems to confirm that while progress in terms of multimodal composing at actual writing centers is slow, it is happening. In fact, Valerie Balester (2012) argues that while she has also experienced slow progress in developing support for the multiliteracy center at Texas A&M,

she also believes that this process of generating support creates new possibilities. “As we generate possibilities,” she writes, “we also create change” (Balester et al.). This slow progress also means that reluctant or overwhelmed writing center administrators have time to “catch up” to the centers already actively promoting their ability to assist students with multimodal projects.

For those centers that assist students with multimodal projects, the most common projects brought to the center are slide presentations and oral presentations. These types of assignments are often the first foray for writing instructors into assigning multimodal projects, and Balester has noticed that most writing-intensive courses at Texas A&M “don’t venture beyond the oral presentation with slides.” When asked to identify the types of multimodal projects they had seen at their center, 83% of respondents reported encountering slide presentations, and 63% had seen students seek help with oral presentations. While combining an “oral presentation with slides” could be a good introduction to multimodal composing for both instructor and student, poorly-designed slide presentations are also often criticized for being an ineffective means of communicating a message to an audience—an argument Edward Tufte has attempted to spread to a wide audience through a scholarly monograph on the subject (*The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint*, 2003), as well as an article in *Wired Magazine* from that same year (“Power Point is Evil”). Additionally, while students are usually familiar with PowerPoint software, they often produce text-heavy slides and do not connect their oral argument with their visual argument (Kapper, 2003). Scholars in technical writing have attempted to rehabilitate the reputation of PowerPoint as a tool for composing visual arguments (Duomont, 2005), and Jo Mackiewicz (2008) has studied the intentions of students who know what makes an effective presentation and determined that

they “want to do more” with the software (162). If slide presentations are the most commonly-assigned multimodal project (as the survey results indicate), then naturally these projects will be the most commonly brought to the writing center, and thus the writing center should be prepared to help students with these assignments. It will be up to the writing center to make students aware of effective design choices when composing arguments that combine oral and visual modes.

One additional explanation for the high numbers of oral presentations might be the recent trend has been combining previously-established writing and communication (or speaking) centers (Maugh, 2012). Speaking centers function very similarly to writing centers, and consultants at these centers help the writer with the written text of the speech as well as with presentation style or with visual aids. A few examples of this trend include Stanford University’s Hume Center for Writing and Speaking, and the Multiliteracy Centers at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro (Littlejohn and Cuny, 2013; Lee, Alfano, and Carpenter, 2013). The combination of these centers, and the popularity of these more traditional multimodal projects in writing centers, is an encouraging sign for the future growth of multiliteracy centers. Once students understand that the writing center can help them with assignments other than written essays, they will learn that they can take other types of multimodal texts to the center as well.

Despite this overreliance on more traditional multimodal assignments, the results of my survey indicate that digital multimodal texts will continue to grow in importance in writing centers. In fact, digital multimodal texts already have a presence in writing centers. With the exception of oral presentations, the most common multimodal projects brought to the center are primarily composed by combining modes on a computer: 44% of respondents

have encountered students seeking help with website design, 40% with a blog, 33% with a video, and 31% with an infographic (see fig. 2.5).

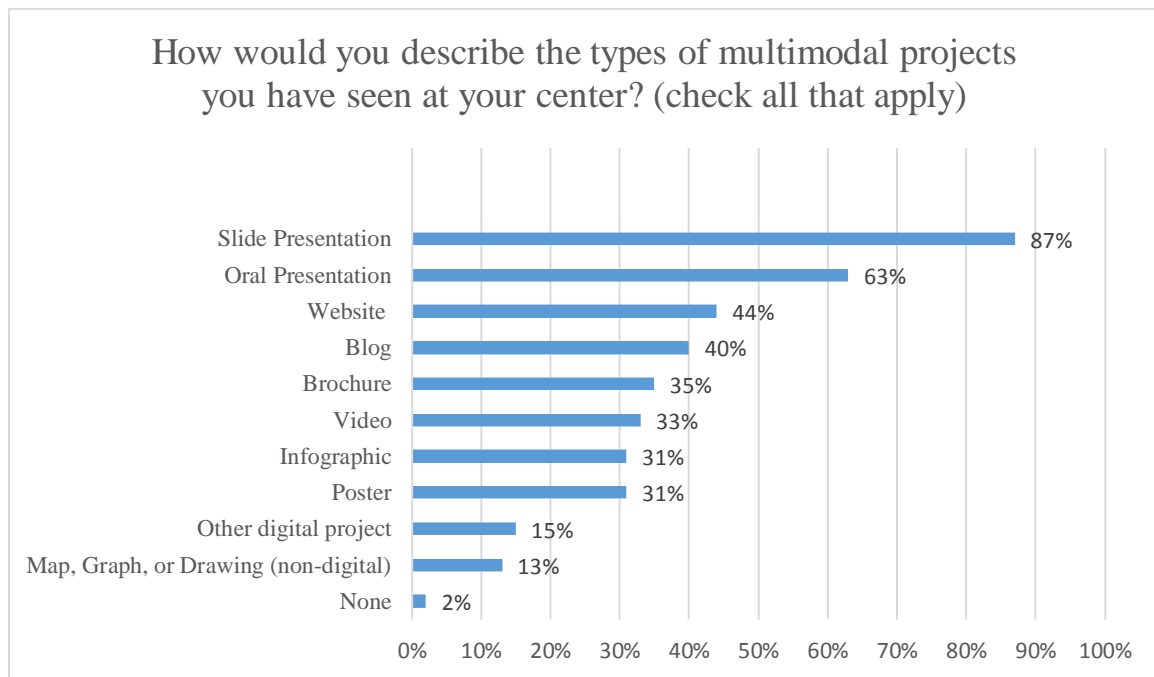


Fig. 2.5. Chart 5

One explanation for the rise of multimodality in composition studies has been increased access to digital technology; yet, in general, as Sohui Lee and Russell Carpenter (2013) have noticed, “Writing centers have mostly followed the trends in the writing field led by composition studies” (xvii). Using this logic, slow progress in the conversation about multiliteracy centers in the years immediately following John Trimbur’s (2000) introduction of the concept could be due to composition making similarly slow progress in implementing multimodal composing in the classroom. Michael Pemberton (2003), as reviewed in the introduction, has noted that writing centers have so many demands on their time and resources, and as a result many directors believe they should wait until a trend is established

before they should respond.¹⁹ Alternatively, another possible conclusion to draw from Lee and Carpenter is that if digital multimodal composing continues to grow in composition studies, writing centers will begin to see more students bring digital multimodal texts. Yet the challenge of preparing multiliteracy centers to respond to a range of digital multimodal texts connects with another challenge of operating a multiliteracy center: preparing tutors to respond to all potential multimodal texts students will compose and bring to the center.

Tutor Training

Tutor training has always been a much-discussed topic in writing center theory, and a large percentage of writing center professionals continues to identify tutor training as the largest challenge of operating a multiliteracy center. The largest percentage of respondents (49%) chose “training tutors to respond to both multimodal and word-based texts” as the most difficult aspect of helping students with multimodal projects, and the related issue of “training tutors in technology” was the second most-identified challenge (10%). In the long discussion of tutor training strategies in writing center scholarship, a few returning themes include the effectiveness of non-directive or directive tutoring strategies (Brooks, 1991; Corbett, 2006), and the role of computers and the online writing lab (OWL) in tutor training (Inman and Sewell, 2000). As reviewed in my introduction, the limited scholarly conversation about tutor training in the multiliteracy center has focused on adapting the emphasis of training—again calling into question the role of non-directive tutoring and the role of technology in tutor training. David Sheridan (2006) and Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2009) have argued that writing centers must prepare tutors to respond to technical

¹⁹ I will explore Pemberton’s claim in more detail later in the chapter.

concerns—operating software programs or equipment such as scanners—alongside higher-level rhetorical concerns. Others have argued that the emphasis of training does not need to change. Teddi Fishman (2010) admits that her “cardinal rules of [multiliteracy center] tutoring. . . have much in common with guidelines for writing center tutors” (69). Michael Pemberton (2003) is more negative in his analysis of potential futures for hypertexts/digital multimodal texts in the writing center. He predicts that writing centers will require additional time and resources to train tutors in technology and asks, “Must writing centers make significant changes in what they already do quite well—work with students, one-to-one, on papers that already span a wide range of discourses across multiple disciplines?” (15). These concerns are echoed in the results of the survey. Currently respondents are not changing their tutor training strategy, but they feel what they are doing is inadequate to address the varied rhetorical and technological needs of the students bringing multimodal texts to the writing center.

Writing center professionals recognize the need for a new approach to tutor training, but they have not changed their practices yet. When asked whether tutors at their center “are trained to respond differently to a multimodal text (as opposed to an essay or word-based text),” 60% of respondents to the survey answered “No.” Perhaps the challenge lies in helping tutors understand that they can respond to multimodal projects in much the same way as more traditional essays—by approaching them rhetorically. David Sheridan has stated in more than one publication that multiliteracy center tutorials should retain an emphasis on the rhetorical dimensions of a text, such as whether the text persuades an audience or achieves its purpose. However, Sheridan also believes that tutors in the multiliteracy center must understand technical dimensions of a text, and will also need “pedagogical literacies” to

know “when to ask a question. . .and when to provide direction” when working with a student (“All Things” 276). When given a chance to explain their approach to tutor training, many respondents easily fit within Sheridan’s training strategy. While the majority of respondents indicated that tutor training for responding to multimodal texts did not differ significantly from training for more traditional texts, upon reflection they realized that tutors needed something more from their training in order to fully respond to the needs of student writers. As one respondent explained the tutoring practices at his or her center: “They [tutors] still look at audience and purpose, but with an eye toward connecting through multimodal approaches. They also have to consider other aspects not present in a written text, like body language in a video, for example.” Another respondent agrees that while tutor response “is still based in being a good and active reader/listener,” with multimodal texts “there is more for the tutors to consider.” From these responses, it appears that tutorials for multimodal or word-based texts have similar starting points, and other respondents noted that the “writer-centered” and collaborative nature of the writing center can help any student with any text; however, respondents’ conclusions about “ending points” for multimodal compositions—about adapting training for “multimodal approaches”—is inconclusive. This lack of clarity is understandable because many respondents have only recently encountered multimodal composing in their writing centers.

A related debate introduced by the survey results is the argument that writing centers should train tutors to use specific equipment or software if they want them to respond adequately to multimodal texts. The role of technology is related to the challenge of training tutors in the multiliteracy center—yet only 12% of respondents indicated that their centers trained students on equipment, and 15% indicated that their center primarily hired tutors

already experienced with equipment or software. Instead, writing centers rely on tutors who are self-taught—a conclusion that Clint Gardner draws from the results of his 2011 survey—or they train tutors to help students with the purpose and audience of their multimodal text, but send them to computer labs or other resources if they need help with technology. David Sheridan believes that a multiliteracy center should offer technological help alongside rhetorical help, although he understands the other side of the argument. In “All Things To All People: Multiliteracy Consulting and the Materiality of Rhetoric” (2010), David Sheridan relates a “nightmare” scenario of a student looking for help with technology:

A client makes an appointment with one of our Digital Writing Consultants (DWCs). When the client arrives, the DWC leads with our usual set of questions meant to generate a rich profiles of the rhetorical situation: Tell me a little bit about your project? Who is your audience? What is your purpose? What opportunities are there for using images, sounds, and words to reach our audience and achieve your purpose more effectively? But the client waves his or her hand through the air impatiently, cutting these questions short. He or she pulls out a photograph and hands it to the DWC, saying “I just need to scan this.” (75-76).

While multiliteracy centers do not want to be a place where students go for merely technical help, Sheridan worries, “If students need to go to separate sources to get technical and rhetorical help, then many of them, for pragmatic reason, will simply skip the rhetorical support altogether” (“Words” 338). The act of combining rhetorical and technological approaches to tutoring will remain important as the scholarly conversation about multiliteracy centers goes forward. Still, as reviewed in the next section, most respondents

justify increased attention to multimodal composing in the writing center and foresee the importance of multimodal composing in writing centers in the future.

Multiliteracy Centers

The multiliteracy center is a concept with impressive range that encompasses many different practices, and in asking respondents to define the multiliteracy center, I was impressed by the meaning-making that fit under the umbrella of multiple literacies. While the most common conception of the multiliteracy center was as a place that supports multimodal composing (23 out of 35 responses),²⁰ three respondents mentioned that languages other than English would be welcome in a multiliteracy center. When Nancy Grimm established the Multiliteracies Center at Michigan Technological University, her intention was in line with these respondents—she wanted her center to value the multiplicity of languages and cultures. Grimm (2012) explains that her center “had taken an approach to staff education that understood ‘writing’ as moving among discourses, cultures, languages, modalities, and dialects, all with highly charged identities and communally recognized ways of making meaning and always situated within political and ideological contexts” (Balester et al.). So, for Grimm, “multiliteracy” applied to both language diversity and multimodal composition. One respondent echoes Grimm when he or she explains that an emphasis in multilingualism would provide tutors and writers with a “metacognitive awareness of the social and cultural forces that influence communication discourses.” Of the definitions of the multiliteracy center focused on multimodal composing, I was surprised that only six respondents explicitly mentioned the role of “electronic communication” or digital literacy as an essential part of

²⁰ Because this short-answer question was optional, I only received 35 responses.

the multiliteracy center. Perhaps the other respondents assumed the vital role of technology in the center, though composition scholars such as Patricia Dunn (2001) and Anne Frances Wysocki (2004) have argued that students can produce multimodal texts without relying on technology. The variety of definitions I received demonstrates that many writing centers already value the meaning created through multiple modes, an evaluation confirmed when I asked respondents to define the importance of supporting multimodal composing in the writing center.

The vast majority of writing center professionals believes that the work of multiliteracy centers is important, and this number includes those who aren't currently seeing multimodal composing at their schools. An extraordinary 94% of respondents believe that it is at least somewhat important for writing centers to assist with multimodal compositions, with 38% believing that this work is "very important." Of the 21 respondents who are not currently seeing multimodal composing in their centers, 19 believe that it is at least somewhat important for writing centers to help students with multimodal projects. However, respondents were more evenly divided about being willing to define their center as a multiliteracy center. While 34% of respondents answered that they consider their writing center to be a multiliteracy center, and 34% responded that they do not, an additional 18% of respondents either hope that their center will become a multiliteracy center in the near future, or are in the progress of becoming one. Although these results do not indicate the feasibility of writing centers represented by the survey transitioning to multiliteracy centers, they do indicate that a large number of those respondents who do not currently run a multiliteracy center feel that they should or will need to in the future.

Despite the majority of respondents encountering multimodal compositions in their writing centers, and despite respondents' wide-ranging definitions of the multiliteracy center, most do not claim to be familiar with the disciplinary conversation about multiliteracy centers. Only 33% of respondents answered that they were familiar with multiliteracy centers from writing center research, although an additional 18% of respondents answered that they were "somewhat" familiar with multiliteracy centers. From these results, it appears that some respondents who believe writing centers should assist students with multimodal projects are not familiar with the concept of multiliteracy centers; yet, when I asked respondents to explain why multimodal composing is important, the same respondents echoed multiliteracy scholarship justifying writing center support of multimodal composing. As I described in the first chapter of the dissertation, the justification for multiliteracy centers usually falls into two categories: 1) that writing centers "need" to become multiliteracy centers to ensure their place on campus as a writing resource and 2) that writing centers "value" the meaning-making opportunity provided to students when they learn how to compose in multiple modes. Without directly referencing writing center scholarship, respondents' justification for the importance of multiliteracy centers consistently fell into these two categories. Twenty-five responses to this question (out of 58 responses) fell more on the "value" side of the divide, 13 responses could be categorized as justifying the "need" for multiliteracy centers, and five responses cited both reasons for considering multimodality as an important part of writing centers.

Of course, not all respondents are pleased by what they see as a major shift in the foundation of writing center work, even if the shift is slow. One respondent, out of eleven, who was unenthusiastic about multimodal composing in the writing center, wrote that he or

she is worried about “trying to be all things to all people”—perhaps referencing Michael Pemberton’s use of the colloquialism from “Planning for Hypertexts in the Writing Center. . .Or Not” (2003). The respondent continues: “I think that we will probably need to begin doing this as more students are assigned these projects and need help with their composition, particularly in our first-year writing program. I just worry about how I can help tutors develop these skills, along with all the other skills they need.” In a particularly piercing section of Pemberton’s article, he describes the often overwhelming number of trends a writing center director must acknowledge as part of tutor training:

Already confronted with the diverse needs of ESL students, learning-disabled students, second-dialect students, nontraditional students, students from a variety of disciplines, students in first-year composition courses, graduate students, and students in professional writing courses, writing center directors may decide it’s in their best interest to defer workshops on the intricacies of hypertext until the need becomes critical—or at least more critical than many of the other critical needs the writing center has to respond to. (20)

Pemberton is correct that writing center directors must be aware of a growing number of student populations and the pedagogical trends in higher education that they represent. The lesson to take from writing center scholarship is that the writing center has a history of responding to needs—whether the need is ESL students (Bruce and Rafoth, 2009), learning disabled college writers (Neff, 1994), or (now) multimodal composing. Writing center directors often have to meet needs as they arise, and do not have the resources to anticipate future trends; however, as indicated by the number of respondents seeing multimodal projects brought to their centers, multimodal composing is a trend that writing centers will

need to respond to, or risk irrelevancy. For those respondents representing this justification for addressing multimodality in their centers, responses included, “these are the assignments students are working on, so we need to be prepared to assist them in completing those assignments,” and “more and more, students are creating these types of projects rather than a written assignment.” From the answers to this section, including the overwhelming agreement in the importance of multimodal composing in writing centers, the need for continued research about multiliteracy centers is clear. Multimodal composing is a valuable (and increasingly inevitable) practice, and writing centers should investigate how to best support students in the many ways they think and compose—including the option of collaborating with other institutional partners.

The Possibility of Collaboration

Institutional forces and inter-departmental politics can sometimes impede the work of collaboration. The survey specifically asked about experiences collaborating with composition programs (one potential partnership writing centers can pursue), and while the majority of respondents (43%) had not encountered barriers when collaborating with their colleagues in the composition program (though it is unclear whether these respondents had successful collaborative experiences or whether they had merely never attempted collaboration), 31% of respondents had a negative collaborative experience to relate. When asked to explain their answer, these respondents cited “miscommunication,” “insular departments,” and limited knowledge of “the role or function of a writing center” as impacting efforts to collaborate. In a particularly astute reply, one respondent writes, “The writing center essentially gets placed in the position as remedial and only for writing—rather

than as a central location for learning and expanding multiple literacies.” The writing center has been fighting this sort of language for a long time. For writing center professionals taking the survey, it must be particularly frustrating that the writing center cannot shake the reputation as a location for remedial assistance, rather than a place for all students to improve their writing. As reviewed in the Introduction, a hierarchical relationship exists between composition faculty and the writing center in many universities (Fitzgerald, 2013; Geller and Denny, 2013) It is important to note that, for the most part, respondents to the survey more often blamed English Departments as a whole rather than composition programs or composition faculty for the lack of collaboration at their institutions. The rise of multimodal composing may provide an opportunity to put their “common theoretical perspective” to good use by complimenting composition’s strength in classroom teaching with the writing center’s strength in individualized instruction (Waldo 74). A silver lining I’ve discovered from my results is that respondents’ explanations for their negative collaborative experiences primarily center on institutional or departmental conditions, and not on the additional challenge of supporting multimodal composing.

Overwhelmingly, respondents to the survey want to collaborate with composition programs to promote multimodal composing. A large majority of respondents, 81%, agreed that “writing centers should collaborate with composition programs in supporting multimodal composing on campus.” Although the success of collaboration often depends on the relationship between potential partners, and many possible impediments to collaboration exist, one potential implication of these results is that multimodal composing can be an opening for collaboration between programs that do not currently communicate.

Collaboration between the writing center and the composition program could be enacted successfully if both sides share a commitment to the value of multimodal composing. Collaborative efforts do not have to be revolutionary or highly disruptive to writing center organization or to the composition curriculum. A large percentage of respondents (49%) indicated that a collaborative solution could involve having composition instructors also work in the writing center, or having them share multimodal assignments and objectives with the writing center (44%)—although these solutions depend on compensation, organizational structure, and resources of the center or department. Other popular options for collaboration included the writing center either sponsoring workshops on multimodal composing for composition instructors or students (33%), or participating in workshops sponsored by composition programs or English departments (28%). Although only chosen by a small percentage of respondents (9%), some writing centers collaborate with composition programs by developing assignments together. Respondents also provided excellent ideas related to encouraging more collaboration in the future, from simple solutions such as “just staying in contact with each in other,” to sharing equipment or other resources. Another idea from a respondent is that “writing center directors could bring faculty who assign multimodal assignments into training sessions for consultant/faculty conversations (we do this now with a variety of other focuses).” This form of collaboration between writing centers and writing programs seems like it would be particularly effective because it moves beyond the curricular or administrative level and affects the consultants and instructors who interact with students in a variety of departments.

Conclusion

One surprising result of my survey is that writing centers are not only responding to an increased number of multimodal assignments coming from composition courses, but also to a need on campus from other disciplines. When asked to identify the courses that assign the multimodal projects brought to their writing centers, 56% of respondents identified first-year composition courses and 44% identified other composition or English courses, yet 69% of respondents said that these assignments came from Communication courses, and 60% saw these assignments coming from non-writing intensive courses in the students' major. From these results, it appears that students understand that the writing center can help them with writing in all its forms and that the writing center is not responding to a need from any one department, but has the opportunity to create the need themselves.

The multiliteracy center is an opportunity to improve collaborative relationships between writing centers and composition program, as well as other institutional partners. Survey data implies that these collaborations will start with initiatives from within the writing center, and these initiatives are one possible antidote to the undervaluing of writing centers within an institution. One respondent noted that providing a "cohesive message about the value of multimodal composition to the greater university audience (particularly administration), [could] help to further justify the existence of the center in the first place." As evidenced by this reply, one implication of the survey results is that a successful multiliteracy center is one that leads the composition program and even the institution in this area.

The next chapter of my dissertation compares the conclusions I've drawn from the survey data to interviews I conducted with established multiliteracy center directors. Despite

their lack of status, with only 13% in tenured or tenure-track positions, the writing center professionals who responded to the survey understand the need to respond to multimodal composing in their centers. These respondents represent the majority of writing centers, while the administrators of established multiliteracy centers I interviewed have professional clout within the writing center community through scholarly output, as well as more resources and institutional support than many writing centers. Yet, established multiliteracy centers have faced challenges that other centers have faced or will face when supporting multimodal composing, and these centers offer potential solutions that can apply to less-privileged writing center settings. Additionally, I build on the examples of collaboration provided by my survey respondents to establish that proactive collaboration with a variety of institutional partners is an important part of building successful multiliteracy centers and to helping students in any discipline. In other words, for writing centers who believe in the educational value of multimodal composing, proactively supporting multimodal composing can have far-reaching significance on the campus as a whole.

Chapter III: Established Multiliteracy Centers

One purpose of studying established multiliteracy centers, or centers with a record of providing assistance with multimodal projects, is to compare the experiences of expert multiliteracy center directors to the data collected from the survey (a broad study of multimodal composing in writing centers) in order to understand the state of multimodal composing more narrowly and address concerns about tutor training. As with survey data, studying established centers is only generalizable to a point—the six centers analyzed in this chapter each operate in a different context; indeed, several of these centers are housed in elite or otherwise well-funded institutions. Several centers have a long history at their institutions and the administrators of these centers hold tenure-track or at least secure positions. Even with these obvious advantages, I use transcripts of interviews with the administrators at these centers, the publications of these administrators, publications about the centers, and the websites of the writing centers that are part of the study to identify common successful practices and common challenges for multiliteracy centers. For these centers, proactive promotion of multimodal composing occurs both inside and outside the walls of the center, leading to an increasingly important role for the writing center as leader, promoter, and essential space for multimodal composing across campus.

“Expert” Administrators and “Established” Multiliteracy Centers

The established multiliteracy centers included in this study are well-known to the larger writing center community, primarily due to the publication efforts and other scholarly activities of the centers’ administrators. From November 2013-February 2014, I interviewed administrators of multiliteracy centers at Texas A&M University, Salt Lake Community College, University of Michigan, Michigan Technological University, Ball State University,

and Stanford University (see Appendix B for interview questions). In contacting potential interview subjects, I looked for “expert” administrators, which I defined as those who have published about multiliteracy centers, have operated a writing center that helps students with multimodal texts, or both. The administrators I spoke to have several years of experience in an administrative capacity at their current institution, and the majority of them have published on the subject of multiliteracy centers. The six centers included in this study are well-represented in “The Idea of a Multiliteracy Center: Six Responses,” published in a special issue on multiliteracy centers in *Praxis* (2012) and reviewed in the introduction of this dissertation: four of the six authors of the article agreed to an interview (Valerie Balester, Sohui Lee, Naomi Silver, and Jackie Grutsch McKinney), and while contributor Nancy Grimm has retired, the next director of the Multiliteracies Center at Michigan Tech (Karla Kitalong) also agreed to an interview. With the addition of Clint Gardner, director of the Student Writing Center at Salt Lake Community College, the established centers in this study represent four-year, two-year, public, and private institutions across all four time zones in the continental United States.

By nature of being recognized through writing center scholarship, these administrators demonstrate professional clout not often achieved by full time or part time staff administrators with limited time or support for publishing opportunities. When analyzing the role and responsibilities of these administrators within the colleges and universities they work for, four patterns of privilege for established multiliteracy centers emerge:

1. Writing Center History: several of the centers studied in this chapter have a long history, giving the center a more secure position within the university/institution.
2. Famous Founder: several of the centers were either founded by a well-respected scholar in Rhetoric and Composition, or the center has been run by a string of “star” administrators.
3. Secure Position: Administrators at these centers are tenured, on the tenure track, or have long-established careers at the center they are working for.
4. Funding and Space: Most of the centers represented by the interviews are housed in well-funded institutions and receive adequate funding. Many centers have resources for technology and renovated spaces to support multimodal composing.

The sections that follow provide a brief history of the centers included in this study, offer a description of multimodal composing in the centers, and introduce each interview participant. Each section reviews the institutional context that makes each center unique (and often even exceptional); however, established multiliteracy centers promote multimodal composing through a variety of methods, and some of these methods could work in different (less privileged) institutional contexts.

The University Writing Center (Texas A & M University)—Valerie Balester

The University Writing Center at Texas A & M University balances the needs of various disciplines through offering tutoring for written and multimodal texts alongside organizing courses to fulfill the university’s writing and communications-in-the-disciplines

requirement. Valerie Balester established the University Writing Center (UWC) in 2001, and she has been described as the center's "most ardent champion" ("University Writing"). Balester is a well-respected scholar in both composition and writing center studies, focusing specifically on student diversity and writing instruction (1993) and on writing centers (1992; 2001; 2012). During her tenure as Executive Director of the UWC, Balester has overseen many changes (including the establishment of a communications-in-the-disciplines program housed within the writing center), and her current position combines aspects of writing center and writing program administration. While the history of the University Writing Center is relatively short, Balester's reputation in the discipline and her additional administrative responsibilities through writing and communication-in-the-disciplines (along with the integration of the writing center into credit-bearing courses and the money these courses provide), has cemented the importance of the University Writing Center within the university.

Multimodal composing at Texas A & M is partially entwined with the communications-in-the-disciplines requirement established by Balester. She became "convinced early on that learning to write in the disciplines was critical," including the skill of writing in multiple modes ("University Writing"). According to the UWC website, the "electronic communication" requirement in communication-in-the-disciplines courses (or C courses) is defined as "websites, videos, podcasts, and other broadcasting media" ("W&C"). All of these multimodal components are supported within the UWC. In 2007, the same year C courses were established, the UWC "began offering assistance with oral communication," including "podcasts, speeches, and videos," and Balester and her staff continue to use a

variety of strategies (described below) to encourage students to bring these projects to the writing center (“University Writing”).

Digital Media Consulting at the Hume Center for Writing and Speaking (Stanford University)—Sohui Lee

The Hume Writing Center at Stanford University, established the same year Balester founded the UWC at Texas A&M, was founded by Andrea Lunsford—one of the most prolific and well-respected scholars in Rhetoric and Composition. An additional comparison between Balester and Lunsford is that Lunsford also integrated the writing center into newly-established writing courses in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric (PWR). PWR lecturers spend time as consultants in the writing center (as Lunsford did while she was Director of the PWR), and while these lecturer appointments do not have tenure, they are secure, renewable positions filled by scholars with impressive experience and scholarly output (Lee “Personal Message”).

Former Associate Director Sohui Lee, interviewed for this project, credits Lunsford’s leadership in her own success building and promoting the Digital Media Consulting (DMC) program within the Hume Writing Center in 2010. At that time, Lee started the DMC through establishing “a really firm need that there are actual course assignments being offered across the board that involve video or multimodal presentations.” In a 2012 campus newspaper article recognizing the 10th anniversary of the center, Lee (then Associate Director at Hume) describes the center as “committed to celebrating writing in all its forms, from traditional writing to new media writing and doing all we can to help Stanford’s culture of writing thrive” (qtd.in Reichard). While the writing center uses undergraduate writing tutors for

drop-in appointments, Digital Media Consultants are professional consultants drawn from PWR lecturers. These lecturers have extensive experience in digital composing, teach it in “first-year and upper-division writing courses, and help students with a variety of multimodal projects including web design, videos, podcasts, and research posters (Lee “Personal Message”; “Digital Media”). For PWR lecturers, consulting with students as a DMC is a “privilege” and part of Andrea Lunsford’s legacy (Lee “Personal Message”).

During her tenure as Assistant and Associate Director of the center (ending in 2011) and in her current position as Lecturer in the Program of Writing and Rhetoric (PWR), Lee continues to build awareness and support for the DMC program and the Hume Writing Center, trains Digital Media Consultants, and contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation about multiliteracy centers. A close collaborator with Russell Carpenter, Lee co-edited the *Routledge Reader on Writing Centers and New Media* (2013), is co-editing with Carpenter a 2016 special issue on multiliteracy centers for *Computers and Composition*, and contributed an article to the first issue of *Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation* (2014). In 2013 the Hume Writing Center merged with the University’s speaking center, moved to a newly-remodeled space, and became the Hume Center for Writing and Speaking—further establishing the connection between multimodal composing and the writing center.

Sweetland Center for Writing (University of Michigan)—Naomi Silver

Unlike the writing centers at Texas A & M and Stanford, the Gayle Morris Sweetland Center for Writing at University of Michigan has a very long history as a writing center. The center was originally established as the English Composition Board in 1976, and as a

provider of writing courses it has been an essential part of writing instruction for generations of students (“Sweetland Center”). Like Texas A&M, the Sweetland Center for Writing oversees writing courses; unlike Balester’s center, Sweetland offers both lower-division first-year composition and upper-division writing-in-the-disciplines courses. Even more, Sweetland also oversees a writing minor and new media writing courses, and this integration with curriculum gives it institutional clout and room for developing new programs. The most recent director at Sweetland is Anne Ruggles Gere, a former CCCC chair (like Lunsford) and an important rhetoric and composition scholar.

From 2001-2003, David Sheridan directed the Sweetland Multiliteracy Center from within the Sweetland Center for Writing. Funded by a \$22,000 grant, the center used emerging technologies to “strengthen visual and aural forms of communication in addition to writing” (Shiff). Sheridan spoke about the process of building the Sweetland Multiliteracy Center to Krista Homiccz Millar in 2003 (reviewed in the Introduction), and since the center’s closing that year, Sheridan has compared running the center at University of Michigan to his current position directing the Language and Media Center at Michigan State University. The main difference he identified was that the Sweetland Multiliteracy Center was “not a separate facility” and “still part of the writing center.” Although the Multiliteracy Center closed in 2003, “Sweetland still works with a large amount of multimodal and New Media writing, and students are encouraged to bring these kinds of projects to the center” (“Sweetland Center”).

Naomi Silver, interviewed for this chapter, became Associate Director of Sweetland in 2007, and she writes that as an administrator in a center “which houses both a writing center and first-year and upper-level writing programs,” she has “a professional and scholarly

interest in the effects of a writing center ethos on writing program development, assessment, and faculty and graduate instructor professional development” (“Naomi Silver”). In other words, her position and the resources at her disposal allow her to pursue new programs. Silver also has developed several of the new media courses that Sweetland offers, and in her section of the 2012 *Praxis* article “The Idea of a Multiliteracy Center: Six Responses,” Silver describes the success of these courses and argues that writing centers can take “the lead” in supporting multiliteracies.

The Multiliteracies Center (Michigan Technological University)—Karla Saari Kitalong

Michigan Technological University’s Multiliteracies Center (the only center in the study that uses “multiliteracy” in its name) expands the definition of “multiliteracy” to include not only the multiple ways students learn or the modes they use to think, write, and compose, but also the multiple languages and cultures students embed in their writing. Former director Nancy Grimm changed the name of the writing center to the Multiliteracies Center in 2010—a process, she says, that “did not signal a sudden change in direction but a desire for a more apt designation of what we do in the Center” (Balester et al.). The mission of the center reads: “At the Michigan Tech Multiliteracies Center (MTMC), we work with students, faculty, and staff to address the challenges of learning and communicating in complex and culturally diverse environments” (“Michigan Tech”). Grimm’s long tenure as director of the center, and her contributions to writing center scholarship, gave her the clout to be able to radically revise the writing center into her definition of a multiliteracy center.

After over 20 years as director of the center, Grimm retired, and Karla Kitalong took over as director of the Multiliteracies Center in 2013.²¹ Michigan Tech has a long history with new media/multimodal composing. As reviewed in the introduction, Dennis Lynch and Anne Frances Wysocki were among the first to teach a multimodal composing class, though both have since left Michigan Tech for the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. After she became director, Kitalong actively solicited students to bring multimodal projects to the center, and she has seen more of these projects in the center in the past year. Kitalong, whose “research and teaching interests are situated at the intersections of visual rhetoric and usability” is a tenured Associate Professor and also the Director of Composition (“Karla Saari Kitalong”). As with the other administrators discussed so far, Kitalong has had experience sharing writing center and writing program administrative responsibilities, indicating the importance of her position within the institution.

Student Writing Center (Salt Lake Community College)—Clint Gardner

Salt Lake Community College (SLCC), the only two-year school represented in this chapter, is also prominent due to its size. It is “Utah’s largest college with. . .more than 60,000 students on 10 campuses and with online classes” (“About SLCC”). Although the main center resides on the Taylorsville Redwood campus, the SLCC Student Writing Center also operates satellite locations at three other SLCC campuses. Clint Gardner, Director of the Student Writing Center, has worked in an administrative role at the center since 1991: first as Writing Tutor Coordinator, then Coordinator of the center, and now Director (“About Clint

²¹ Abraham Romney took over as director of the center from Kitalong in 2014.

Gardner”). Gardner is a well-established writing center professional and scholar and an active member of the larger writing center community.

Gardner believes writing centers should be prepared to respond to multimodal composing, which he considers to be vitally important to the future of writing centers. As reviewed in previous chapters, Gardner conducted a survey of Wcenter subscribers, similar to my own, about multimodal composing in writing centers—although Gardner’s emphasis was on open-access institutions (such as SLCC). A President of the International Writing Center Association (IWCA) from 2005-2007, Gardner is dedicated to promoting connections and communication between writing centers—primarily through the PeerCentered blog he coordinates (“Professional”). PeerCentered “is a space for peer writing tutors/consultants or anyone interested in collaborative learning in writing centers to blog with their colleagues from around the world,” and where they share common concerns and best practices (“PeerCentered”). In “Meet the Author” interactive videoconferences, organized through PeerCentered, Gardner interviews the authors of recently-published writing center scholarship, and encourages audience members to submit questions online in real-time. Recent participants in the “Meet the Author” series included Russell Carpenter and Sohui Lee for *The Routledge Reader on Writing Centers and New Media*. Through Gardner’s impressive influence within writing center studies and his long tenure at SLCC, Gardner has developed support for the SLCC Student Writing Center.

The Writing Center (Ball State University)—Jackie Grutsch McKinney

Like Sweetland, the Writing Center at Ball State University has a long history; established as the Writing Clinic in 1966, the center changed its name in the early 1980s and

moved to a new location (“History”). Since that time, the center has hosted regional and national writing center conferences and has worked to increase access for students through online tutoring—most recently extending online tutoring hours to times when the center is closed. In 2003, Ball State hired Jackie Grutsch McKinney as its first tenure-track Director of the Writing Center, indicating the institution’s commitment to the writing center. Grutsch McKinney, whose scholarship on multiliteracy centers has been reviewed in previous chapters of this dissertation, is a leading scholarly voice in the writing center community. Since the publication of “New Media Matters: Tutoring in the Late Age of Print” in *The Writing Center Journal* in 2009 and “The New Media (R)evolution: Multiple Models for Multiliteracies” in Sheridan and Inman’s collection in 2010, Grutsch McKinney stepped away from her position in the writing center to become Director of Composition at Ball State. As of summer 2014, Grutsch McKinney has returned as Director of the Writing Center, and (like Balester, Silver, and Kitalong) balances writing center and writing program administrative responsibilities. This integration of writing program and writing center administration, a pattern among the established multiliteracy centers in my study, can signal increased institutional security for the writing center and for multimodal composing. Additionally, an administrator may more easily integrate multimodal composing into the composition curriculum if he or she is also in charge of supporting this curricular change in the writing center.

All six established multiliteracy centers in this study share a close relationship to the composition program at their institutions, to writing instructors, or to writing-intensive courses across disciplines. As discussed in the previous chapter, an overwhelming number of respondents to the survey (all involved in writing centers) believe it is important for writing

centers to assist students with multimodal compositions, but many respondents do not have access to the same privileges of these six centers, whose administrators enjoy secure job status, professional clout, and resources within their institutions. Even so, studying these centers offers a list of characteristics that allow writing centers to support multimodal composing. Along with effective tutor training, the physical space of the center, integration with composition programs, and opportunities for collaboration with other institutional partners (discussed later), these centers share two assets that may be easier to replicate among less-privileged institutions: 1. willingness to adapt to changing composing practices, and 2. belief in the value of (and need for) multiliteracy centers.

Adapting to Changing Literacy Practices

As with the writing centers represented in the survey, the established multiliteracy centers in my study are also seeing a slow but steady growth of multimodal composing. Valerie Balester describes the number of multimodal consultations as “increasing very slowly and very steadily,” while Naomi Silver describes the increasing number of multimodal projects at the center as “not a dramatic increase, by any means.” These centers are taking advantage of the slow pace of the growth of multimodal composing to build support and awareness for multiliteracy center services. As reviewed in the Introduction, writing instruction is undergoing a “multimodal turn” (Sheridan, 2010); several composition scholars are paying attention to this trend, and writing centers also need to respond. Administrators at established multiliteracy centers understand the shift, yet survey data and interviews with administrators confirm that growth in this area is slow because it is a process of changing perceptions of writing center work. Balester does not see her center’s approach to promoting multiple literacies to be negative: she defines one challenge of running a

multiliteracy center as “not expecting it to happen overnight, but being able to [have a] measured pace moving this along. . .I'm just thinking that we will get there.” Balester’s line of thinking recalls the introduction of computers to writing centers (reviewed in Chapter I)—an earlier trend in writing center scholarship that was initially controversial, but slowly accepted. Likewise, multimodal composing is coming to writing centers, but Balester is arguing that writing centers can slowly and carefully adapt to multimodal composing in their own centers.

Established multiliteracy center directors agree that no matter if the change is fast or slow, writing programs and writing centers still need to be prepared to adapt. Karla Kitalong at one point asked her Assistant Director, “Shouldn't we start training the consultants to support multimodal and visual rhetoric, that sort of thing?" When the Assistant Director answered that there was no demand for these tutorials, Kitalong replied, “Just because there's no demand for it doesn't mean we shouldn't be ready.” As mentioned previously, Michael Pemberton (2003) has critiqued the number of trends writing centers are expected to acknowledge or the student groups writing centers must be prepared to assist; however, a large amount of writing center scholarship is devoted to the diversity of students’ needs, whether ESL students (Bruce and Rafoth, 2009), racially or culturally-diverse students (Barron and Grimm, 2002), or even learning-disabled college writers in a multiliteracy center environment (Hitt, 2012), to name a few. Whether administrators are currently seeing these student groups in their centers, writing center scholarship has established a precedent for preparing for these trends, including the trend of multimodal composing.

Even if writing center administrators are not currently encountering multimodal projects in their centers, the demand for these services may already exist on campus. Jackie

Grutsch McKinney is suspicious of claims that writing centers have “no demand” for services on multimodal projects: “When people have asked me before, ‘My school doesn't do any multimodal texts, [so] why would we train tutors if there is no requirement?’ I [disagree and] say, ‘Well, [train them] anyways, because there's stuff happening already.’” Established multiliteracy centers anticipate the needs of the students they serve and are willing to adapt to changing needs, but they also appreciate the potential consequences if they are not prepared.

Defending Multiliteracy Center Work: Need and Value

Interviews with the directors of established centers crystalize the motives of writing centers choosing to become multiliteracy centers—concurring with survey data and prior scholarship that writing centers face potential consequences for ignoring multimodal composing, but also providing insight into the valuable meaning-making opportunity for students when they learn how to compose in multiple modes. As reviewed in previous chapters, the exigency for writing centers to become multiliteracy centers varies from center to center, but usually falls into the two (often overlapping) categories of “need” or “value”: that writing centers should become multiliteracy centers both to respond to a need and to ensure their place on campus as a writing resource, and because of the value of multimodal composing to student writers (Grutsch McKinney, 2009, 2010; Sheridan, 2010; Selfe, 2010; Gardner, 2012).

Established multiliteracy centers understand that writing centers will encounter consequences if they do not respond to the growing need for assistance on multimodal projects. From the results of a 2011 survey he conducted through the Wcenter listserv, Clint Gardner describes the results as “dangerous to some extent, because the number of assignments [respondents reported] was increasing, but [writing centers] weren't responding

to it.” Gardner believes that writing centers are going to be “forced” into responding to multimodal projects, and that the consequences if they don’t are grim: “Ultimately, I think we’re kind of behind the times in some ways, and if we fall behind too much, writing centers are going to be seen as irrelevant. Because if they are just focusing on text . . . then they become what they mostly fear, which [are] grammar centers and language centers.”

Ultimately, however, many scholars in both composition and writing centers, including the six multiliteracy center administrators I interviewed, cite multiple exigencies, including that composing in multiple modes is an essential part of learning.

Administrators at established multiliteracy centers defend multimodal composing as a valuable resource for student writers, arguing that writing centers should help students become better thinkers and writers as well as prepare them for the multimodal writing they will do after college. These directors are using all available resources and arguments to build support for multimodal composing in their centers and throughout the university, which is one reason their multiliteracy centers are successful. Gardner states that multimodal writing instruction will have a positive impact on how students “will interact in the future with either colleagues or at their workplace,” while Balester’s motivation “is to bring to students ways of communicating that are more current, important, and are going to be found even in academic work more and more.” Even though Balester says growth in the number of multimodal projects students bring to her center is slow, she also has invested and pushed for classes to teach more multimodal assignments—often through the discipline-specific writing and communication courses organized through the writing center.

Some established multiliteracy center directors do not view multimodal composing as a burden or a time-consuming adaptation. Jackie Grutsch McKinney argues that writing has

always been multimodal; instead, now writers have the technological resources to pay attention to their multimodal composing process. Grutsch McKinney credits Jody Shipka for this idea during her interview: “My basic premise is that, sort of like Jodi Shipka, things have been multimodal all along, and it's not that we're doing something new and fancy now, we're just paying attention to it differently.” Shipka (2011) writes in *Toward a Composition Made Whole*: “If we acknowledge that literacy and learning have always been multimodal. . .the challenge becomes one of finding ways to attend more fully—in our scholarship, research, as well as our teaching—to the material, multimodal aspects of all communicative practice” (21). Grutsch McKinney’s argument is that writing has not changed, but the audiences and purposes for writing have changed, alongside increased access to the technology necessary to create multimodal texts: “Multimodal is the way we've written and we've always written. We have the possibility or the affordances with our current writing technologies to write differently. It was hard to be multimodal with a typewriter--it's not hard anymore.” With a slight change in perspective, Sohui Lee similarly states, “It is not that people did not know how to visualize things, or draw—it's an ancient art. But, the fact that we are expecting more people to be more articulate or provide better expression visually than we did before is. . .part of what happens when we move into that digital age.” For these scholars, writing centers must now pay attention to the multimodal nature of writing, and value “new ways of thinking in different modes” (Lee). In other words, the change writing centers must account for is not a fundamental change in writing, but a change in thinking. Established multiliteracy centers are leaders in demonstrating this change in thinking, but this shift could also create an opening for less experienced centers that wish to guide students through this change.

Ultimately, for many writing centers, it is the mission of the writing center to support multimodal composing—no matter the challenge or lack of resources. Even for writing centers at less privileged institutions, this argument is important. Karla Kitalong states, “The more avenues of communication that are available to people, the more challenge, the more stress it puts on our abilities to keep up. I do not think you can, as a multiliteracy center, close any kind of support. I think you have to be open to supporting all different types of communication.” Naomi Silver also identifies multimodal composing as a responsibility of the writing center: “In our case, our mission is to support writing across the university in every department and in every school and college. And so, we need to be ready to work with any kind of writing.” Established multiliteracy centers justify multimodal composing as an essential responsibility of the writing center. They also believe that the multiliteracy center is the place to encourage and grow multimodal composing, both within the center and throughout campus. Their resources and institutional clout make them leaders on the front of multiliteracy centers, but their willingness to adapt, defend the need for multiliteracy centers, and believe in the value of multimodal composing contribute to their success.

Proactive promotion of multimodal composing occurs, according to Silver, when the center operates as a “change agent on campus in terms of changing the way that people are thinking about writing and what writing is and how it functions.” As Balester adds, “We are not responding to it, we are actually trying to get people to do it,” and she takes “active steps” to increase both the number of multimodal tutorials in the writing center and the number of multimodal assignments in writing-intensive courses. For expert multiliteracy center directors, the writing center is an essential space for writing coming from courses, but also a promoter of writing from within the center. They not only adapt to changing literacy

practices, but because they value multimodal composing they can lead multimodal composing initiatives across campus. These centers can proactively promote multimodal composing by using their peer tutors as a resource.

Tutor Training in Established Multiliteracy Centers

As established in the previous chapter, survey participants identified tutor training as the largest challenge of running a multiliteracy center. Interview subjects indicate that established multiliteracy centers are encountering the same challenges as the broad spectrum of writing center professionals, but these expert administrators also provide solutions to the conundrum of tutor training in the multiliteracy center. Tutor training is undeniably a challenge for multiliteracy centers, but well-trained tutors can also play a role in increasing awareness of the center across campus. Through requiring coursework and workshops, introducing tutors to the scholarly conversation about multiliteracy centers, and assigning multimodal projects to tutors, administrators at established multiliteracy centers are training tutors to become a trusted resource for students—drawing more students to the center space and promoting multimodal composing as a valuable way to communicate.

Several interview subjects define tutor training as the main challenge of running a multiliteracy center; however, they also share new insights into why training is such a challenge—not only for administrators, but for tutors as well. Valerie Balester acknowledges that tutor training can be “overwhelming” for writing center tutors, who must be prepared for students to bring a range of projects using a range of modes. Karla Kitalong also cites the challenge of preparing tutors, many of whom are undergraduate students, “to be able to respond productively to whoever walks in the door, with whatever problem.” As discussed in previous chapters, writing center scholars have contemplated how the role of tutors will shift

in the multiliteracy center (Pemberton 2003; Murphy and Hawkes 2010); David Sheridan has even used the term “superconsultant” to describe the increasing role of a tutor in a multiliteracy center (“All Things”). Beyond published interpretations of tutor training in the multiliteracy center, the administrators who participated in interviews understand that tutors are overwhelmed because they consider themselves to be “good writers” who are more comfortable and confident with written words on a page. Naomi Silver confirms that many tutors at Sweetland are “not always comfortable” with multimodal composing, and one frustration she encounters is that tutors do not take advantage of the help available to them at the center. A long-repeating lament in writing center scholarship is that students who consider themselves to be “good writers” do not believe they need to visit the writing center (Devlin, 1996). Even with outreach efforts to the English Department and “literally thousands of publicity fliers” distributed across campus, Frank Devlin writes that his center does not assist many “strong” writers (144). Unlike the students Devlin targets, tutors at multiliteracy centers are already familiar with the services the center offers; yet, Silver says that one difficulty of tutor training is helping tutors move past the idea that “they’re the good writers” that do not need to use the writing center—remnants of the remedial stigma still attached to many writing centers. The multiliteracy center is available for all students, and the challenge for administrators is to increase tutors’ confidence and familiarity with multimodal composing through a variety of formal and informal training opportunities.

Two of the most common methods for writing center tutors to receive training are for-credit coursework and paid workshops, and established multiliteracy centers use both of these methods to educate new tutors about multimodal texts. Undergraduate student tutors at Texas A&M University, University of Michigan, Michigan Technological University, and

Salt Lake Community College are required to complete a course on writing center theory and practice, which follows the course requirement of many other writing centers (Hey and Nahrwold 1994; Schick et al. 2010; Driscoll and Harcourt 2012). Of course, a training course for new tutors entering the multiliteracy center will have the additional objective of introducing students to multimodal composing. Clint Gardner mentions that he includes a unit at the end of his course focusing on both online and multimodal consulting, but he admits that because he is seeing more students bring multimodal projects to the writing center, he can no longer relegate instruction on multimodal tutorials to the end of the course; instead, this instruction will become more “integrated” throughout the semester because it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between multimodal tutorials and tutorials for traditionally-written texts.

In addition to the strategy of integrating multimodal tutor training in a required writing course, weekly workshops and staff meetings fill the gap in teaching and reinforce procedures for assisting student writers with multimodal projects. While Kitalong mentions a one-credit required course for new “writing coaches,” all writing coaches (old and new) also meet weekly for an additional hour of training. The required course is scaffolded with workshops, which is similar to the training process at the Sweetland Center for Writing. Silver says that during the required course at Sweetland, “Students get a decent amount of exposure. . .to the idea of multimodal writing, and some practice [with multimodal tutorials] as well.” During weekly staff meetings, the writing center tries to bring in at least one outside speaker during the semester that can focus on “multimodal work.” Using coursework and workshops or staff meeting in tandem, tutors at these multiliteracy centers are not expected to learn all that they need to about the multimodal projects they will encounter right away. As

Schick et al. (2012) state, “the Tutoring Writing course never really ends,” and as with the patience administrators practice regarding the pace of multimodal composing increasing on their campuses, administrators are also patient in training tutors to be prepared for the variety of compositions they will encounter in the multiliteracy center (5).

Introducing new tutors to the scholarly conversation about multiliteracy centers can help tutors become a resource for student writers. Several administrators have used this approach as part of their training, including Gardner (referenced above), Silver, and Sohui Lee. Silver says that in the semester-long course for new consultants at Sweetland, they read “seminal pieces on multiliteracy centers and new media writing and multimodal writing,” including the “usual suspects”: Grutsch McKinney, David Sheridan, and Cynthia Selfe. According to two of the goals for the course, titled “Seminar in Peer Tutoring,” students will “read current and classical theory about peer tutoring in writing,” as well as prepare (through observation and experience) to “tutor a range of genres, modes, and media” (“Writing 300”). This “professionalization” model of tutor training, primarily defined by requiring students to read writing center scholarship, has long been controversial. While Peter Vandenberg (1999) is concerned that writing center administrators “expect student tutors to replicate dominant institutional and literate values and to reproduce them in others as a condition of employment,” more recent scholarship has argued that pairing scholarship with observations and on-the-job-training will be beneficial. According to Judy Gill (2006), “Those of us who teach these courses want our students to understand the larger institutional, theoretical, and historical context in which tutoring takes place and to expose them to the issues and debates within the field,” a desire perhaps even more important for multiliteracy centers (3).

Directors at established multiliteracy centers know the scholarly conversation about multimodal composing and share it with their tutors. Sohui Lee developed the *Routledge Reader on Writing Centers and New Media* (2013), reviewed in the Introduction, due to a similar desire to provide context for consultants in the Hume Writing Center. In planning training workshops for Digital Media Consultants, Lee needed to establish definitions for terms such as “new media,” as well as pick a side in debates such as whether the center would use “multimedia” or “multimodal” to refer to computer-mediated texts composed with images, words, sounds, etc. She was not concerned about the “professionalization” controversy (reviewed above) because consultants for the DMC program are Lecturers with terminal degrees rather than students. To address this challenge, Lee had “to pull together some readings. . .so that we can have the same foundation to build on,” and the result became the *Routledge Reader* that Lee co-edited with Russell Carpenter. She decided to publish this resource with Carpenter “because we realized that I think a lot of other centers need to have that theoretical foundation to build on, and our scholarship needs that as well.” Instead of having to repeatedly define new media, scholars and administrators can refer to the book and build on an established definition.

A strategy for tutor training based on practice, rather than theory, is for multiliteracy centers to have tutors compose multimodal projects as part of their training. One of the goals of Writing 300, the seminar course required for writing tutors at the Sweetland Center for Writing is to “Create texts of varying genres, modes, and media” (which also counts toward students’ upper-division writing requirement) (“Writing 300”). Silver says, “The fact that we’re assigning our own multimodal work and helping students figure that out. . .changes our perspective when a student brings in a multimodal assignment.” In writing centers such as

Silver's or Balester's, where writing courses are coordinated through the writing center (and include a multimodal component), writing center tutors are logically more attuned to the requirements of these courses and how they can help student writers enrolled in these courses. Outside of coursework, Balester encourages her consultants to learn about multimodal composing by creating multimodal resources for the center website. Similarly, she asks tutors to develop workshops on topics such as designing posters, which the tutors can then present to classes when requested by faculty. Balester also sends student tutors to writing center conferences to gain experience composing and giving a multimodal presentation to a real-life audience. Ann Litman (2008) writes that tutor participation at conferences is the "antidote" to the "theory/practice divide" criticized by scholars like Peter Vandenberg (6). She argues: "The presence of tutors at conferences allows these tutors to go beyond being exposed to scholarship to acquiring ownership of the professional conversation by adding their voices to the discussion." Through these examples tutors learn about multimodal composing, and students and faculty discover resources online or through the presentations of tutors. Whether through presenting at conferences or composing multimodal resources for the multiliteracy center, taking ownership is an important way tutors become experts in multimodal composing. These strategies encourage tutors to be proactive in their support of multimodal composing, both within the multiliteracy center and across campus.

Although expert multiliteracy center directors have reflected on their approach to tutor training and have crafted solutions, the role of technology in tutor training divides the subjects in my study. As reviewed in previous chapters, publications about multiliteracy centers disagree about the level of technological help tutors should provide to students. While Michael Pemberton (2003) argues that tutors' knowledge of technology (or lack thereof)

should not be a concern, Sheridan disagrees because it is difficult for tutors to separate “technical and rhetorical dimensions” of a multimodal text (“Words” 338). The amount of training on technology a tutor receives depends on the amount of technological help a tutor is expected to give, and responses on this topic are split among the administrators participating in interviews. Balester strongly argues that “multimedia support does not mean technical support,” and that tutors should focus on providing rhetorical (rather than technical) help for student writers. She continues:

We also have to know where [on campus] can students get the technical support to learn how to use the software. . . We want to teach [students] how to make good transitions in [their] video, how long should [their] video be, how do [they] address [their] audience? We don't want to teach. . . software. We don't want to pay for the software, and we're lucky because we are big enough to do that.

Balester’s description of directing students to resources on campus where they can receive help with technology echoes the response of other administrators I interviewed. Some successful multiliteracy centers rely on good technical support found elsewhere on campus. Silver, Kitalong, and Lee also mention a center separate from the writing center that provides students with technical help, which Silver calls a “division of labor” that allows the multiliteracy center to focus on the composition. For these centers, separating labor is the best way to promote multimodal composing within the center, save resources (both in terms of time and money), and avoid overwhelming tutors.

At the very least, the success of multiliteracy centers is often dependent on access to technology resources, either within the center or through another unit on campus. One

potential issue with directing students elsewhere for technical assistance, and one that both Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2009) and David Sheridan (2006) have mentioned in publications, is that students are unlikely to bring their writing to two separate centers—one for the technical help and the other for rhetorical help (assuming there is even a place on campus for technical help). As reviewed in the Introduction, Sheridan is concerned that students needing to visit two centers will “skip the rhetorical help altogether” (“Words” 338). Lee shares this concern that students at Stanford will decide to go to the “multimedia studio” at Stanford University before the Hume Center for Writing and Speaking. Students, she says, “think that all they need to do is understand the tools. They don't understand that there's a connection between having tools and being able to use them to a persuasive effect.” Oftentimes, new tutors do not understand this connection either. As described in the previous chapter, only a very small number of survey participants reported that tutors in their center were trained to use equipment or software. If administrators intend for the tutors at their centers to offer rhetorical and technological assistance on multimodal projects, they will need to offer training on technology. As Jackie Grutsch McKinney demonstrates, training tutors on specific equipment or programs does not need to take up an excessive amount of time or writing center resources, and she often addresses technological issues at staff meeting as the need arises.

Tutors can be a resource for multimodal composing by studying it and composing their own multimodal projects. Many administrators would also agree with Valerie Balester, who says that the most important aspect of tutor training is creating a “culture” where tutors “understand that they don't have to know everything about it, but they can learn a little bit about it in order to be helpful to students.” Training in technology is also important for tutors

in the multiliteracy center to learn, but this training is often dependent on the center's resources. Similarly, the physical space of a multiliteracy center is dependent on the funding and institutional position of the center; despite the privilege inherent in access to such resources, a space built or renovated to support multimodal texts is a common characteristic of successful multiliteracy centers.

Physical Space of the Center

The physical space of a multiliteracy center can promote the center and build awareness among students and faculty. With the increasing number of multiliteracy centers, the importance of writing center "space" has taken on new levels of meaning. For Sohui Lee, Christine Alfano, and Russell Carpenter (2012), "space" in the multiliteracy center includes not only the "size and layout of the physical structure," but also "zones of activity and flow of traffic," a range of technologies "from computer technologies to other writing technologies such as traditional whiteboards or even chalkboards," and even "design or decoration" (53). All these aspects impact the effectiveness of the multiliteracy center space as a supporter of 21st century literacies.

In particular, renovations to existing writing center spaces and new technology resources help multiliteracy centers support multimodal composing. In interviews with Silver and Gardner, both mention plans for renovations to the writing center or describe a "new space" which they hope will help increase the number of students bringing multimodal projects (or really any project) to the writing center. Silver describes the change as "a more open space that I think will enable more work with technology," which echoes an interview with Kitalong. The push to invest in technology at Kitalong's center will involve television screens mounted "on all the study room walls and iPads," which she feels will "make it more

likely that people will come [for] multimodal. . .text.” Multiliteracy directors such as Kitalong treat an investment in the space of the center as an investment toward future growth—both in the number of students coming to the center and in the number of multimodal compositions they bring. In his introduction to *Cases on Higher Education Spaces: Innovation, Collaboration, and Technology* (2012), Carpenter writes that multiliteracy center spaces “are interactive, visual, and flexible. . .[and] offer students the opportunity to learn in environments that provide them with compelling experiences that are relatable to the 21st-century workplace” (xxvii). The physical space of an intentionally-designed multiliteracy center provides a distinct advantage for students needing help with multimodal projects, and the importance of this topic will continue in the next chapter focusing on site visits to two newly-established centers. Tutor training and the center space are resources writing centers can use to expand the range of the center’s impact. To further spread the message of multimodal composing, established multiliteracy centers are open to fostering collaborative relationships with many different institutional partners.

Opportunities for Collaboration

Beyond characteristics such as adaptability to changing writing practices and resources such as well-trained tutors and the physical space of the center, established multiliteracy centers work to promote multimodal composing across the university. As reported in the previous chapter, survey data demonstrates the desire for more collaboration between writing centers and writing programs, but questions in the survey limited the discussion of potential partners for multiliteracy centers by focusing on composition. Interviews with administrators at established multiliteracy centers did not have this limitation. While they, too, answered questions about partnerships with writing programs,

they also argued that methods of seeking out collaborative relationships with other institutional partners can have wide-ranging benefits.

Integration with Composition Programs

As reviewed in the Introduction, collaboration between writing centers and composition has suffered in the past, often due to an unspoken hierarchy on many campuses that privileges the position of composition over the writing center. Lauren Fitzgerald (2012) reviews the under privileging of writing centers by composition studies in the history of writing center scholarship, but is quick to point out, though, that writing centers may be exaggerating the difference “between writing center and writing classrooms”—a conclusion that could encourage writing centers to reevaluate assumptions about composition studies (86). The same could be true for assumptions about writing centers, such as that writing centers follow the trends in composition theory. As cited previously, Lee and Carpenter (2013) have observed that writing trends are “led by composition studies,” and that “one reason writing center practitioners were slower to address multimodal composition” could be that students were simply not assigned multimodal projects (xvii). Despite this assumption, the support that the multiliteracy center can provide does not need to follow a new composing initiative; instead, multiliteracy center administrators often share administrative responsibilities for composition programs and develop multimodal composing initiatives themselves. Of course, this form of proactive promotion of multimodal composing results from a privileged status for the center within an institution or from the faculty status of the administrator.

All of the administrators who participated in interviews have either shared some writing program administration responsibilities, sat on curriculum committees, or in some

other way were involved in the teaching of writing through the writing program. While these recurring characteristics demonstrate the status of these administrators, they also show the involvement necessary to change how writing is taught. As writing center director at Ball State University, Jackie Grutsch McKinney supported colleague Kristie S. Fleckenstein's proposal to add a multimodal component to first and second-year writing courses: "We wanted to be clear right from the start when we made these changes that the writing center was there as a support system. . . We knew that the writing center would be ready to deal with these projects." As the current director of the writing program, Grutsch McKinney is now overseeing a multimodal composing requirement she helped put into place. As this example demonstrates, curriculum development is one option for building a proactive collaborative relationship between writing centers and writing programs, if both the writing center and writing program administrator have equal status. Along with Grutsch McKinney, Clint Gardner has also worked on curriculum committees and helped develop or revise the curriculum to include an emphasis on multimodal composing. Valerie Balester, who previously wrote in *Praxis* about her multiliteracy center as an "agent of curricular change," developed required communication courses (referenced earlier) that include oral and visual presentation assignments (Balester et al.). If writing centers and writing programs value multimodal composing and want to promote it, emphasizing curricular change is one way they can be proactive in furthering the reach of multimodal composing on campus. By working together, their message can reach more students and have more of an impact, assuming they can work together as equals.

For writing center directors with faculty status who want to be more active in developing writing program curricula, Grutsch McKinney suggests finding out which

meetings to attend and which committees to volunteer for—“even when it’s not directly related to multiliteracies”—as part of a strategy to “influence change on campus.” Joe Essid (2005) uses a similar active approach at the University of Richmond to revise a new plan for the first-year writing requirement. In his role as writing center director and writing program administrator, he encouraged the task force leading the curricular change to listen to the concerns of adjunct instructors, arguing that “their voices will lead, in our new gen-ed curriculum, to a consistent approach to writing well informed by writing center praxis” (4). Involvement with the development of writing curriculum is just one example of writing center activism establishing a connection with composition programs. A variety of specific strategies and initiatives can also encourage and prolong such a partnership.

Gardner and Grutsch McKinney describe the symbiotic nature of communication between the writing center and writing program at their schools. While Gardner and Grutsch McKinney enjoy equal status between the writing center and writing program, encouraging communication between writing centers and writing programs to promote collaboration and multimodal composition could apply to other settings. Grutsch McKinney says that the writing center at Ball State University does not even need to communicate with the writing program, and that the writing center simply “knows when things happen in the writing program.” Grutsch McKinney describes the relationship as “tightly inter-wound,” while Gardner uses the term “synergistic.” In explaining how the writing center and writing program decided to support multimodal writing at Salt Lake Community College, Gardner cannot remember which was first: “I think they kind of all kind of grew up around each other. . .I was pretty involved in working with multimodal documents. . .early on [by] working online with students. So, I don't know if we did it first, or if the department followed

along. . .we just sort of got along with each other.” This language is very similar to language used by Mark L. Waldo, who also sees “the ideal relationship between writing center and program. . .as almost symbiotic” (75). He continues that “this purposeful bonding. . .makes the program and center essential to the academic mission of the university, not peripheral to it.” As mentioned previously, Balester, Naomi Silver, and Karla Kitalong have held positions with joint writing center and writing program administration responsibilities, but in these positions they can collaborate with instructors and tutors to promote each program to the students they encounter in the writing center or writing classroom. These joint appointments can offer increased institutional security and support, and they offer the administrator additional clout within an institution; however, while these positions can be a sign of status, they are also common among small liberal arts colleges who cannot afford to hire an administrator/faculty member to direct the writing center and writing program. Ianetta et al. (2006), writing from a variety of both private and public schools, conclude that even from taking into account institutional differences, writing center directors (WCDs) are also writing program administrators (WPAs). They write, “Viewing WCDs as WPAs builds connections between local knowledge and the wider community of scholar-teachers in and out of writing centers” (37). The implication of this synergy is that collaboration works to promote multimodal composing beyond the walls of the classroom or the center to across the entire college or university.

Both Naomi Silver and Clint Gardner provide extended examples of how their message of outreach can have an impact that spreads from required writing courses to other instructors and to other parts of the school. Gardner sees the influence of required first-year composition courses, such as English 1010 at Salt Lake Community College as:

shaping what students are doing in traditional papers for [other] college classes. . .Students who want to engage [will] have a multimodal document of some sort that they will want to give to their history professor, and sometimes that works, sometimes it doesn't, but I've known students to do an audio/video sort of thing in [place of] a traditional sort of essay that they're supposed to write—a research essay, for example.

In this example, students learn about multimodal composing in a composition class, bring it to the writing center and get help, then begin another class in another department and spread the message. Silver calls this act “cross-pollination”: students come to the writing center because of courses taught through the Sweetland writing minor or through new media courses, and then return to the center when they compose in multiple modes for another class or another department. The cross-pollination also has a positive effect on the writing center staff: “The fact that we're assigning our own multimodal work and helping students figure that out changes the way that we are going to help . . .or at least changes our perspective when a student brings in a multimodal assignment [to the writing center]” (Silver). In this way the cross-pollination benefits the students who enter the multiliteracy center, but also the teachers who teach in the writing program, the tutors who work at the writing center, and the administrators at the writing center as well.

Collaboration through Outreach Across Disciplines

Through supporting a shared multimodal initiative with writing programs, writing centers are actually in a prime position to proactively encourage and promote writing throughout their institutions—ultimately benefitting students, administrators, tutors, and

faculty across disciplines. Experienced multiliteracy center directors are using more explicit outreach efforts to bring in students outside of writing-intensive courses. While the writing center has natural ties to the writing program curriculum, the interdisciplinary nature of writing centers means multiliteracy centers have more inroads in supporting the spread of an emphasis on multimodality to different departments. In fact, according to the results of my survey, more respondents identified students bringing multimodal projects to the center from communication courses (69%) or non-writing intensive courses in the student's major (60%), than from first-year composition courses (56%). At Texas A&M, students from the Dwight Look College of Engineering, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and the College of Education and Human Development use the center in high numbers, which the University's newspaper cites as evidence that Valerie Balester's "mission to improve writing across the disciplines is being realized" ("University Writing Center"). In her interview, Balester speaks about supporting faculty in disciplines outside of English who have assigned oral presentations or poster design projects for years but did not call them multimodal: "We're providing support for them to do it, and feedback, and instruction, and things they didn't have and they were still doing it." Oftentimes this help comes from resources on the writing center website directed at faculty, but can also include consultations with faculty or workshops to help with assigning and assessing these projects. In this way the writing center supports the multimodal composing already happening on campus while also encouraging faculty to reflect on the learning outcomes for these assignments, and perhaps even increasing the number of multimodal projects they assign.

One key method of proactively supporting multimodal composing is by building relationships with faculty unfamiliar with the work of the multiliteracy center through

outreach. Balester uses outreach to inform faculty of the value of multimodal composing, while Silver uses her outreach efforts “to help faculty understand how they might develop multimodal assignments or work with various kinds of digital media writing.” For Sohui Lee, outreach is an opportunity to make connections, and she provides a very specific example of how she has built relationships at Stanford University: “I just read an article about some professor [at Stanford] who's being highlighted because he was doing some interesting video in his Urban Studies class. As soon as I saw that I emailed him, and then he came in and we had a talk. So, I think that's the kind of work one has to do. It's got to be a lot of outreach; it's a lot of marketing.” While privilege within an institution makes this form of outreach easier, even writing center directors with less experience at a specific institution can make connections with faculty in other departments.

Additional avenues for finding potential collaborative relationships include building awareness for multimodal composing through marketing and online resources. The Sweetland Center for Writing has built a reputation as a multiliteracy center and as a writing program that teaches new media classes, and one way they have built this awareness is through marketing. Sweetland recently launched a fully-online multimodal version of their yearly newsletter, including information about their writing minor, new writing instruction initiatives for multilingual undergraduate writers and students writing for science courses, and a detailed history of the center presented on an interactive timeline (“Sweetland”). Balester promotes awareness for her multiliteracy center through a video essay contest held for students once or twice per year. She also recommends that writing centers host online resources to help student writers composing multimodal projects, but also seek out faculty who are interested in assigning these projects and can use these resources. With all of the

resources on multimodal composing already available, this act of collaboration can be as simple as “connecting people to resources that are already out there, rather than creating your own.” (Balester). Similarly, Silver believes word-of-mouth can be as effective a marketing tool as “more comprehensive ad campaigns.” For writing center directors, a commitment to multimodal composing requires networking and forming close relationships with instructors who teach multimodal assignments in writing-intensive and non-writing-intensive courses.

Conclusion

One reason writing centers can seek out institutional partners to support multimodal composing is because of the potential effect of the collaboration on the larger institutional community. Lee believes “multiliteracy centers are. . .bringing with [them] a different way of thinking,” just as multimodal composing values a different way to make meaning. The rewards of these partnerships could spread across campus and benefit the entire institution, as evidenced by the next chapter of the dissertation: an analysis of two-newly established multiliteracy centers. As Michelle Eodice (2004) writes:

The material practices and the ethos generated in writing centers emanate and travel—whether to online environments or virtual peer tutoring, or to satellite locales in residence halls or community centers, or to your home office or favorite coffee shop. Although we seem to recognize these activities when they fall within our own brick and mortar or electronic environments, we often fail to carry them beyond—to the offices, committees, programs, and faculty who could learn from us (116).

Eodice’s call is especially applicable in the context of two newly-established multiliteracy centers in the same metropolitan area. These schools, one a community college and the other

an elite private university, are part of a multimodal composing initiative on their campuses. As with the established multiliteracy centers studied in this chapter, these centers have resources and impressive physical spaces to conduct tutorials. Unlike the established multiliteracy centers, these new centers do not have a historical writing center to fall back on, nor do their directors have tenure-track positions or established clout within their college or university. Still, some strategies used by established multiliteracy centers apply to these new contexts. The willingness of these new centers to adapt to changing literacy practices and their outreach efforts to other disciplines build awareness for their centers, but also create a shared multimodal composing initiative they can spread across campus and even outside the university to benefit the larger metropolitan community.

Chapter IV: Site Visits to Newly-Established Multiliteracy Centers

The previous chapter reported that established multiliteracy centers have resources to help them support multimodal composing (such as funding, tutors, and the physical space of the center). These centers also have characteristics that can be replicated in other institutional contexts: a willingness to adapt to the needs of student writers and a belief in the value of teaching multimodal composing. Additionally, the example of established multiliteracy centers demonstrates the potential value of collaboration and outreach with other disciplines. In undertaking research visits to two brand-new multiliteracy centers, I wanted to know if administrators used their center's resources and collaborated with other disciplines for the same purpose. Through these site visits, I discovered that while both centers I visited have encountered institutional challenges in offering new support for multimodal composing, fostering a multimodal composing initiative on campus can have far-reaching benefits.

In February 2014, I visited two multiliteracy centers in the Houston area, both less than two years old. Galveston College, a community college on Galveston Island, opened its center in January 2014, while Rice University's new Center for Written, Oral, and Visual Communication (CWOVC) opened in August of 2012. I first heard of the CWOVC at Rice during a conference at the University of Texas-Austin in February 2013. A contingency from the CWOVC were attending the conference, and after I gave a presentation about multiliteracy centers, Tracy Volz, Director of the Program in Writing and Communication at Rice, gave me her card. A few months later, after I had obtained permission to visit the CWOVC from Jennifer Shade Wilson, director of the center, I found a listing for a Multiliteracy Center at Galveston College on the Writing Center Directory (sponsored by St.

Cloud State University). I inquired about visiting Galveston College because I thought the comparisons between two recently-opened multiliteracy centers at two very different types of institutions in the same metropolitan area would be fruitful.

Whereas the multiliteracy centers I studied in the previous chapter were established first as writing centers and adapted to respond to multimodal texts, the newly-established centers I visited at Rice University and Galveston College were established first as multiliteracy centers, and I was curious about the benefits of designing a space for multimodal tutorials from the start—as opposed to renovating a previous writing center space. Brand-new centers face particular challenges such as building awareness for the center’s services among students and faculty—especially if the campus is unfamiliar with the idea of writing center tutoring. On the other hand, these new multiliteracy centers avoid other challenges, such as retrofitting writing center space for multimodal tutorials, or adapting tutoring practices with little warning; instead, these new centers anticipated the equipment, arrangement of space, and tutoring practices they would need before their doors opened for the first time.

My visit to these two very different institutions demonstrate how multiliteracy centers can be built to serve a wide range of students—from students enrolled in Developmental Education programs, to ESL students, to students in the hard sciences and engineering composing presentations and posters—and even beyond to extracurricular writing projects that benefit the community. As with the established multiliteracy centers I analyzed in the previous chapter, integration between the multiliteracy center and writing instruction is important to the schools I visited: the multiliteracy center at Galveston College is integrated within a developmental literacy program, and the CWOVC at Rice University is integrated

within a writing and communication program. Additionally, as with established multiliteracy centers, both centers are active in building relationships with other institutional partners. In the end, I analyze in this chapter how a multimodal curricular initiative begins at two very different institutions, and how this initiative spreads by drawing students to the physical space of the center (and the center's equipment), through tutor training, and through outreach to other disciplines to eventually impact the larger community outside of the university.

Galveston College

Institutional Context

The Multiliteracy Center at Galveston College demonstrates both what one person can accomplish when given grant money to lead an initiative to provide an under-served student population with technology and tutoring, and the additional challenges of building a multiliteracy center without campus-wide institutional support. Galveston College enrolls approximately 2400 students per semester and is one of the smallest community colleges in Texas (“GC at a Glance”)²². Opened in 1967, the college initially consisted of one building repurposed from an abandoned orphanage. Today, the main campus consists of five buildings. Curriculum areas with high enrollment include Nursing and Radiography, though the largest number of students enrolls in the General Studies Associate of Arts degree program with the intended purpose of transferring to a four-year school (“GC Factbook 2013”). According to Multiliteracy Center director Phillip Presswood, a multiliteracy center can be especially relevant in a community college environment, where many “students enter the workplace directly from [Galveston College],” and where composing with multiple modes often “translates directly to success in the workplace.” Preparing students for the kind

²² This number increases to over 5000 students when including non-credit Continuing Education courses.

of writing they will do after college is one of the exigencies behind the creation of multiliteracy centers.

The primary purpose of the Multiliteracy Center at Galveston College, which opened in January 2014, is to assist students enrolled in developmental writing and reading courses. The center is attached to the college's Developmental Education Program and is funded entirely by a Developmental Education Grant from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THEBC), with the intention to "significantly boost student success and college completing of underprepared students" (THEBC)²³. Students who do not pass the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) exams in math, English, or reading must complete courses in the Developmental Education Program, which uses "collaborative studies learning communities . . . and media-assisted courses" to help students "develop a career path" ("FAQ about GC"; "Developmental Education"). Around 200 students are enrolled in Developmental Education courses at a time; once students pass these non-credit-bearing courses, they can continue to credit-bearing general education courses (Presswood). The multiliteracy center is first and foremost a tool for "retaining" and "engaging" students enrolled in the Developmental Education program, primarily through coordinating support for the multimodal projects students are assigned in their Integrated Reading and Writing (INRW) courses. Between the opening of the center in January and the day I visited the center on February 11, 2014, tutors had conducted between 30-40 tutorials—all for students from Developmental Literacy courses. When compared to the institutional context of the established multiliteracy centers discussed in the last chapter, the differences at first appear to be greater than the similarities: the funding for the center at Galveston appeared through an outside grant, not through the

²³ Twelve community colleges in the state of Texas were awarded the grant during the 2012 cycle.

support of the institution, and Presswood does not have a tenure track position. Without Presswood the future of the Multiliteracy Center would be very much in doubt. On the other hand, Presswood's experience confirms that valuing multimodal composing, integrating writing instruction and the multiliteracy center, emphasizing the role of technology, and promoting outreach across the institution can create valuable opportunities to develop new centers.

Administrative Staff

The Multiliteracy Center at Galveston College is the initiative of Phillip Presswood, an instructor of Integrated Reading and Writing (INRW) courses and the Program Coordinator of Developmental Literacy ("Developmental Education")²⁴. By building a multiliteracy center, he is trying to bring increased attention to multimodal composing in the Developmental Education program that will hopefully spread across campus. Presswood is a former Galveston College student who later earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the University of Houston-Clear Lake ("Phillip Presswood"). It was there that he began working as a writing center tutor and when he encountered "multiliteracies" for the first time. During an interview with Presswood, he spoke about Chloe Diepenbrock, director of the writing center at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, who had an "interest in multiliteracy and different ways of composing a text—different ways of interpreting what "text" means—and. . .I was heavily influenced by that." Soon after Presswood returned to Galveston College to teach writing and reading courses in the Developmental Education program he had the idea of building a multiliteracy center, but he had no access to funding for his idea.

²⁴ The Developmental Education program also offers courses in Mathematics.

Presswood learned about the grant from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board three days before the application was due in early 2012, and he was able to submit an application in time. By December 2012, Presswood learned that he would receive the grant, and that Galveston College would receive \$320,000 over a two-year period to develop the Multiliteracy Center;²⁵ however, Presswood encountered an unexpected complication: “It took me three months to convince the college's administration that I was telling the truth. They didn't believe I had the money.” The entirety of 2013 Presswood spent finding a space for the center, buying furniture and equipment, and hiring and training a tutoring staff, in addition to his regular teaching load. As discussed in the next section, Presswood’s multiliteracy center is providing access to technology and proactive technical and rhetorical support of digital multimodal texts to students enrolled in developmental literacy courses. He is not waiting to respond to a need on campus for increased multimodal composing—he is creating the need himself.

Multimodal Curricular Initiative

Presswood believes that the “greatest difference” between writing centers and multiliteracy centers “is the use of technology.” He continues: “A writing center can function, theoretically, with a typewriter and a pad of paper. It really could. A multiliteracy center could not function with a typewriter and a pad of paper. It would not be a metacognitive activity—using different forms of technology.” Therefore, for Presswood, multimodal composing primarily occurs on a computer, and the primary purpose of the

²⁵ According to the Galveston College 2013 budget, the school received \$145,500.00 for the first year of the grant. Presswood is confident that the THEBC will extend the grant for a third year.

multiliteracy center at Galveston College is to provide access to technology (and instruction on technology) to under-privileged students. The idea for the center was inspired by a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program for high school students at a Galveston public school where students had wide access to one-on-one tutoring and to a range of computers and cutting-edge equipment.²⁶ Presswood described the program as “functioning as a school within a school,” much as the Developmental Education program functions within Galveston College. Unlike the Developmental Education program, the STEM program primarily benefited students with privileged backgrounds and excluded under-performing students (often on racial lines). After observing the program in person, Presswood began to consider how a similar level of access to tutoring and technology would benefit the students he taught in Developmental Literacy courses. He thought, “What would happen if we turned this [program] upside down [and put] high-end audio recording equipment and HD portable cameras in the hands of students with hands-on guidance and training?” He was already aware of the concept of multiliteracy centers, and he began envisioning a center at Galveston College where students could “better their way of ordering their ideas and composing texts in different ways,” which is something he began to emphasize in his writing classes. The discussion of access to technology has been a common topic in the field of composition studies (Powell, 2007), often connecting to the “digital divide,” based on race and socioeconomic class, between those with access to technology and those without (Grabill, 2003). As Cynthia L. Selfe (1999) has reported, “Computers continue to be distributed differentially along the related axes of race and socioeconomic status, and this distribution contributes to ongoing patterns of racism and to the continuation of poverty”

²⁶ Presswood found out about this program through participation in a non-specified grant.

(6). She warns that “English composition. . .teachers who hope to address some of the inequities associated with the national effort to expand technological literacy in more productive ways may find the task a difficult one,” but Presswood’s attempt has already cleared the initial hurdle of securing funding for such an endeavor (130). The next step is to build awareness and support for the multiliteracy center through contact with students in the Developmental Education program.

To spur the growth of Presswood’s curricular initiative during the year-long process of building the Multiliteracy Center at Galveston College, Presswood began by assigning multimodal writing assignments to his Integrated Reading and Writing (INRW) classes in the Developmental Education program. Presswood is the coordinator of INRW courses, and multimodal composing and using digital media are both part of the program’s objectives (“Developmental Education”).²⁷ Presswood believes multimodal projects will help underprivileged students learn how to use technology they normally would not have access to, as well as prepare them for the kind of composing they may need to do after completing courses or a degree program at Galveston. A few semesters before the center opened, Presswood placed an increased emphasis on multimodal composing in his classes, and now that the center is open, students complete six assignments—each with a multimodal component. The first assignment students complete asks them to find an image in the textbook that represents their educational journey. Although this assignment does not ask students to create an image, they are writing about an image, which Presswood categorizes as multimodal. From there, students further develop their skills in multimodal composing through assignments that build on each other throughout the semester. For example, students in Presswood’s Spring 2014

²⁷ One other instructor teaches INRW courses.

INRW course are required to visit the Multiliteracy Center and work with a tutor to find a clip on YouTube about “multimodal composition” and write a description of the clip. For the next assignment, students take what they learned from the YouTube assignment and write their definition of multimodal composing, and then “describe how it can be used in colleges to teach writing skills. . .and [how it] better prepares students for the workplace, compared to traditional writing assignments” in 250-words (“Multimodal”). Then, “Using audio recording software in the Multiliteracy Center,” students create an audio essay. Most importantly, “Tutors and your instructor will be on hand to assist you as you learn computer literacy skills during this assignment.” These assignments fulfill the objectives of Developmental literacy courses, including: “Compose a variety of multimodal words that demonstrate clear focus, the logical development of ideas in a well-organized paragraph and essay formats, and the use of appropriate language that advances the author's purpose” and “Present information in digital media using presentation software and hardware” (“Developmental”). Lisa Bickmore and Ron Christiansen (2010)²⁸ argue that developing multimodal assignments in the two-year composition classroom entails “developing assignments and assignment sequences that actively engage students’ existing familiar practices, encourage them to develop new ones, and invite them to consider how the multimodal documents that emerge from their work and play might function in their lives and in the social settings in which they themselves circulate” (238). Presswood’s assignments are attempting to connect students’ previous educational experiences to the instruction in technology they will need to continue their

²⁸ Both are colleagues of Clint Gardner at Salt Lake Community College (discussed in the previous chapter). The multimodal projects they describe are brought to the SLCC Student Writing Center.

educations. Additionally, with these assignments, Presswood is producing the need for a multiliteracy center from within his classes.

The most important indicator of the success of Presswood's initiative to date is not whether the Multiliteracy Center or multimodal composing grows on campus, but how students have responded to the initiative thus far. In this area, Presswood has had definite success; he has noticed a difference in retention and student success once he began his multimodal composing initiative in his classes: "Last semester we had a 100% pass rate in our top-level developmental education. No one even dropped out. They all stayed. They all completed the course. It's unheard of. The average in the state is about 50-55% pass, and we had 100% pass rate." Presswood believes that multimodal composing is primarily responsible for retaining his students: "It keeps them interested. It keeps them awake." Now that the Multiliteracy Center is open, it can provide Developmental Education students with access to transformative technologies, options in mode of communication, support, and alternate pathways to composing traditional texts. The campus-wide multimodal composing initiative at Galveston College is only just beginning, but the undeniable success seen in the Developmental Education program demonstrates the promise of multimodal composing (and, by extension, the multiliteracy center) in the future.

The Multiliteracy Center at Galveston College is integrated into the Developmental Education program and was built primarily to serve students enrolled in Developmental Education courses; however, while Presswood admits that the "terms of the grant specify that we focus on remedial education," he was also clear in the grant application that the multiliteracy center would be open "to the full campus community" eventually. In this way, Presswood's curricular multimodal initiative is proactive and will grow to include other parts

of the campus, similar to the goal of established multiliteracy centers studied in the previous chapter. Presswood describes his vision of the Multiliteracy Center at Galveston College as “a concerted effort that aligned between the curriculum, assignments, tutoring, support services, counseling, advisement, placement, and instruction.” In order to fulfill this vision, Presswood has been educating many of the Galveston College administrators: sending “the same readings I was sending my students” to the Vice-President “to try to educate her as to what a multiliteracy center is.” Presswood describes this process as “an uphill battle to explain, not only to her but to other faculty, staff, employees, existing tutors, what multiliteracy means,” but it is also an extremely important step in furthering the reach of the Multiliteracy Center. For now, Presswood remains focused on the current goal of developing the Multiliteracy Center from within the Developmental Education program, while keeping an eye on opportunities for future growth. This balance is evident from the Developmental Literacy webpage. Currently, the only mention of the Multiliteracy Center on the Galveston College website is on the Developmental Literacy webpage, yet the description of the center clearly states that the center, whose “primary function is to teach writing using technology and innovative methods through the use of audio, visual, and web-based writing production” is open to “all members of the GC community: students, faculty, staff, and alumni.” Although this language is not easily accessible to students outside of the Developmental Education program, its inclusion indicates that Presswood intends for the center to become a campus-wide resource once the physical space of the center is complete.

Physical Space and Technology in the Center

One method of spreading a multimodal curricular initiative is through designing a welcoming physical space that supports multimodal composing through one-on-one tutoring. Although Presswood is trying to build such a space with his center, he has encountered complications due to its location on campus. The largest challenge Presswood encountered after receiving the grant funding was finding a suitable location for the center. Eventually the college's President assigned the center space in the Student Success Center—a one-room tutoring center focused on “helping all Galveston College learners with general study and test-taking skills and subject-specific tutoring” (“Student Success Center”). Sharing space with the Student Success Center was not what Presswood intended, and he tried to communicate to administrators that “writing is a very specialized activity” that deserves a separate space. Presswood believes, “The aesthetics—the design of the room—need to be very different for a writing center versus anything else.” Sharing space with the Student Success Center has been “a source of great confusion for faculty, staff, and students” and “has caused a lot of conflict in the space.” Presswood says that he understands why the existing tutors and the existing director of the Student Success Center feel “forced out of the space.” To “bridge the divide,” the Director of the Student Success Center was made the Assistant Director of the Multiliteracy Center, and she was included in many of the decisions when designing the Multiliteracy Center space. Although these kinds of collaborations can be happy, especially when carefully considered and planned (Carter and Dunbar-Odom, 2009), Sara Littlejohn and Kimberly M. Cuny review a similarly fraught collaboration between a Communication-across-the-curriculum digital literacy center and a digital technology center at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. The intention was to create a “digital

commons,” or “a centralized location for one or more digital support services, such as technological, how-to support or critical and rhetorical technological literacy” (105). While the authors see the idea of a digital commons as “consistent with the recent trend of universities collaborating. . .to create centralized hubs for digital support and design,” the collaboration was ultimately not successful because it “resulted in a problematic disconnect between how the space should look and what the space should do” (88, 87). The digital commons would include “two different types of services”: a “Digital Technology Center” offering technical support and a “Digital Literacy Center” offering rhetorical help.²⁹ Likewise, the Student Success Center space at Galveston College provides different services through the Multiliteracy Center and the subject-specific tutoring provided by the Student Success Center (91).

Shannon Carter and Donna Dunbar-Odom (2009) have had a much more positive experience building a center that offers many different services. The Converging Literacies Center (CLiC) at Texas A&M-Commerce “is a deeply integrated model for writing programs, bringing together the writing center, first-year writing, basic writing, professional development activities, graduate coursework, and research activities to re-imagine and support twenty-first-century literacies.” Carter and Dunbar-Odom state that building their new center was not “seamless,” and that “one difficulty was finding the appropriate physical space,” but CLiC eventually found a central and visible location “on the main floor of our library in the center of the campus.” The Student Success Center and multiliteracy center at Galveston College have a central location, though Presswood is working on making the

²⁹ As reviewed in earlier chapters, much debate has ensued over whether multiliteracy centers should provide technical support alongside a rhetorical response. Galveston College’s center does both, though this discussion will continue in the next section about Rice University.

location more visible. Unlike the many services brought together in the CLiC, the collaboration between the multiliteracy center and the Student Success center is “forced,” rather than willing (Presswood). The challenge is that a shared space, like Presswood’s multiliteracy center, is “more than just four walls, with new furniture and new technology” (Littlejohn and Cuny 89). Understanding the purpose of the space is essential, and while Presswood understands the purpose of the multiliteracy center, he now has to adjust the purpose of space in order to share it. Lea Currie and Michelle Eodice (2005) agree that “as many writing centers seek shared space, the initial motivation typically has more to do with their perceived marginalized status and unstable funding sources” (47). “Teaming” with another location (in their case, the library), “is vital to making both the spaces and the values inherent there sustainable.” Although the Multiliteracy Center and Student Success Center at Galveston College are only inching towards increased collaboration at this point, collaboration between the two could be an essential part of building awareness for both centers—the success of one can help the other. Additionally, through forced collaboration and shared space, Galveston College can create a learning commons where students can receive one-on-one tutoring in any subject.

The Multiliteracy Center is located on the first floor of Galveston College’s Northern Building.³⁰ Taking up a large portion of the first floor of the Northern Building is an enclosed courtyard with streetlamp lighting, foliage, and an indoor fountain (see fig. 4.1). This area provides a meeting place for students and an area to sit and study. Although this is a high-traffic area, the entrance to the Student Success Center and the Multiliteracy Center is tucked behind the fountain and without permanent signage (see fig. 4.2).

³⁰ The Northern Building is a shared-use space with classrooms, faculty offices, and is connected to the library.



Fig. 4.1. The first floor of Galveston College's Northern Building



Fig. 4.2. Entrance to the Student Success Center and Multiliteracy Center

Presswood has attempted to make the space more visible by creating a reception area in the enclosed courtyard space, directly outside the door to the center. He has purchased a reception desk and eye-catching overhang to draw attention to the entrance of the center (see fig. 4.3); however, the reception area was not yet installed during my visit.³¹



Fig. 4.3. Reception area for Multiliteracy Center (not in use)

³¹ Presswood had purchased a desktop computer for the reception desk so that students could check in for their Multiliteracy Center appointment on the computer when they arrive; however, because the reception area is outside of the Multiliteracy Center space (in an area that cannot be secured), Presswood was not allowed to install the computer.

Once inside the large open room that encompasses the Multiliteracy Center and the Student Success Center, the demarcation of space is not easily apparent. With white walls, wall-to-wall carpeting, and blue accents across the space, the easiest way to determine the Multiliteracy center “side” of the room is through the arrangement of furniture. Students using the Student Success Center sit at long rectangular tables and use desktop computers, while students in the Multiliteracy Center sit at smaller, angular tables (see fig. 4.4). Much of the technology Presswood intended to have at the center had not been delivered as of the time of my visit.



Fig. 4.4. The Multiliteracy Center. The door leads to a sound-proof recording booth.

Although the location of the center has been problematic, Presswood has attempted to build awareness through the design process of the center—involving both the director of the Student Success Center, his colleagues in the Developmental Literacy Program, and his students in design choices. Presswood started a blog to detail the development of the center, and has used the space to educate his readers (usually his students) about multimodal

composing and multiliteracy centers. On March 6, 2013, Presswood posted a picture of a table with the caption: “This kind of seating gets writer-composers engaged with each other while offering an overall view at a text” (“Peer Conferencing”) (see fig. 4.5). Almost a year later, when I visited the center in February 2014, I saw the same table from his blog, which was a deliberate purchase to bring tutor and student closer together during consultations (see fig. 4.6). As reviewed in the Introduction, James Inman (2001) was one of the first scholars to detail the process of designing a multiliteracy center space. The space of the center Inman helped design at Furman University could adapt to students bringing any kind of communicative project—from the comfortable couches used for one-on-one writing consultations, to cubicles for individualized work, to the two soundproofed technology labs for multimedia projects. This flexibility in both how the center uses space and how students use the center is one of Inman’s “guiding principles” for “designing any interdisciplinary spaces for engaged learning.” The multiliteracy center space at Galveston College has limited flexibility because it has been retrofitted for multimodal consultations, much like established multiliteracy centers reviewed in the last chapter that began as writing centers and had to adapt their tutoring practices and space. Sharing space is not ideal, but Presswood is trying to be flexible, in the areas he can, through strategic furniture design and a variety of technologies available to students.



Fig. 4.5. Picture from Presswood's blog (Mar 2013)



Fig. 4.6. Table at the Multiliteracy Center (Feb 2014)

The most exciting aspect of the Galveston College Multiliteracy Center, and the one that will probably draw in the most students, is the impressive array of technology and equipment Presswood has purchased for the space, including state-of-the-art recording equipment, a soundproof booth, and specially-designed seating for viewing videos and presentations (see fig. 4.7 and fig. 4.8). As mentioned earlier, providing technology for under-privileged students enrolled in developmental literacy courses was one reason Presswood wanted to build a multiliteracy center. An additional hindrance to opening the center was purchasing equipment. The purchasing process at Galveston College often takes two or three months, and equipment wasn't fully installed as of Feb 2014; however, the array of technology that will be available to students was more than what I had encountered at any other point of my research, and part of Presswood's plan for the center at the start. When Presswood wrote the grant for the Multiliteracy Center, his purpose was to put high-quality equipment, such as recording equipment, in the hands of his students, but with the support and instruction of trained consultants. As reviewed elsewhere in the dissertation, the role of

technology in writing centers was first treated with ambivalence (Carino 1998; Hobson 1998), though David Sheridan (2006; 2010) and Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2009; 2010) have argued that multiliteracy centers have a responsibility to provide technical assistance to student writers.



Fig. 4.7. Inside the sound-proof recording booth.



Fig. 4.8. Although not yet installed, this seating will face A flat-screen television to view videos or slide presentations during tutorials.

Tutor Training

As I've established in the previous two chapters, tutor training is a challenge, but it can also be a resource for the multiliteracy center. Tutors help Developmental Education students, but if tutors know how to use technology to produce well-designed multimodal texts, and if they believe in the value of the multiliteracy center, they can be a major promoter of the center to all students. Presswood currently employs five consultants with diverse backgrounds: two are former Developmental Education students who are continuing in degree programs at Galveston College (GC), one is a retired music instructor from GC, one is a former student from GC, and one is a graduate student from the University of Houston. Presswood says: "It really ranges in age and background, and some are specialized

in the arts, some are specialized in technology, some are specialized in writing . . .some went through the [Developmental Education] coursework and so can easily identify [with students coming to the center].” The center is staffed 8:30-7:00 Monday to Thursday, and when I was there on a Tuesday morning, the center had two tutors working. Although this schedule seems ambitious for a new center, Presswood believes that the number of tutors and hours of operation will only grow. This robust schedule for a brand-new center not only creates access for Developmental Education students enrolled in INRW courses, this approach also builds awareness for the multiliteracy center because students using the student success center, perhaps unaware of the multiliteracy center’s existence, will notice that the multiliteracy center is fully-staffed and operational.

In terms of a tutor training philosophy, Presswood uses many of the same strategies used by administrators at established multiliteracy centers (discussed in the previous chapter) by discussing scholarship about multiliteracy centers and training students to use technology. Presswood also took what he could from his tutoring days at the University of Houston-Clear Lake and director Chloe Diepenbrock. Presswood had very little time to prepare tutors for the work they would be doing once the center opened in January 2014. He says, “I had between Thanksgiving [2013] and January 3rd [2014] to find tutors, train them, and make everybody happy—and I did.” To save time, Presswood asked tutors to read scholarship about multiliteracy centers—a strategy also employed by experienced multiliteracy center administrators (such as Clint Gardner and Naomi Silver) because tutors will be more enthusiastic about promoting the multiliteracy center if they understand where the ideas for the center come from. In particular, Presswood mentions “Cynthia Selfe, [and the] NCTE statement on multiliteracy and multimodal composition” though he admits, “I sort of

overloaded them with a lot of information. To their credit, they read it and really tried to understand it. What they didn't understand we talked about.” As other writing center scholars have argued, tutors should be exposed to experiential tutor training alongside the professional conversation—a tactic Presswood also uses with his tutors. Because the multiliteracy center space was not ready when Presswood began tutor training, they received “some theory background before they even started the formal training in the space.” Although his training method seems in line with the training other administrators employ, Presswood claims that he’s had to “make up a lot of my own training program.” Presswood wants to learn more about tutor training practices in a multiliteracy center setting, and he will adapt his approach to tutor training according to the experiences of current tutors and as the center’s services eventually expand outside of the Developmental Education program.

Like David Sheridan (2006; 2010) and Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2009; 2010), Presswood emphasizes training in technology as much as he does the rhetorical purpose of multiliteracy center tutoring. As reviewed in the previous section, technology plays a large role in Presswood’s definition of a multiliteracy center, and part of the purpose of the center is to train students to use the equipment for potential future uses, along with producing an effective multimodal composition through use of the equipment. This philosophy requires training his consultants on the equipment as well, before the tutors can help students. He will provide even more training on technology once it is all installed. During weekly staff meetings with the tutors, “We usually spend about half the time going over some ‘techy’ thing. We just talked about our appointment software--we're using WC online, which is very popular with writing centers. . . We spent about 30 minutes on that, and then we looked at two sample student essays.” This approach echoes Jackie Grutsch McKinney’s method of

introducing tutors at Ball State's writing center to technological resources during staff meetings (discussed in the previous chapter). Two of Presswood's tutors confirmed this balanced approach to the rhetorical and technological dimensions of tutoring. Most of the consultations they have conducted so far have been for pre-writing activities or brainstorming sessions, and they expect to help students more with technology once all the equipment is installed. Even so, Presswood is concerned about balancing his emphasis on technology with the primary rhetorical purpose of the center: for students to effectively communicate in multiple modes.

One tutoring strategy that Presswood employs to build awareness for the center is to use one of his tutors as an "embedded" tutor in his INRW course. The tutor attends most sessions of the course, and acts as an "expert" in the course's assignments at the multiliteracy center. This tutor was also formerly enrolled in the Developmental Education program, so she is also a symbol of what currently enrolled Developmental Education students can achieve. Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman (2005) call this method of tutoring "classroom-based," and write that this form of tutoring "performs for students the social nature of writing and of knowledge making; it enacts writing as collaboration" (7). While embedding tutors in writing classrooms is more of a tutoring strategy than an aspect of tutor training, the tutor learns about teaching and about multimodal composing from being embedded, and the students enrolled in the course know that the embedded tutor is a resource they can utilize in the multiliteracy center. Presswood's tutor is the first and only embedded tutor, but this program will grow and expand as the multiliteracy center grows. As reviewed later in this chapter, Rice also uses embedded tutors, and their program is more extensive. Still, even with one tutor embedded in one course, the tutor can be a resource for multimodal

composing, and classroom-based tutoring can “meet the needs of many different kinds of learners” by supplementing classroom instruction with one-on-one support in the multiliteracy center (Spigelman and Grobman 7).

Outreach

As established by interviews with expert multiliteracy directors in the previous chapter, outreach to composition programs, faculty in other disciplines, and students is essential to a multiliteracy center’s proactive promoting of multimodal composing. At this early point in the history of the Galveston College multiliteracy center, embedding tutors in courses is the primary method of providing outreach. Additionally, according to Presswood, “Students have toured the space. We've had tutors make presentations to [developmental] classes. Each class has had a tutor do a presentation so that they can identify with a face and feel a little more comfortable, because this is all very scary to them sometimes, as I understand.” Although the multiliteracy center is an integral part of the Developmental Literacy program, Presswood’s outreach efforts also focus beyond Developmental Literacy courses to reach disciplines further afield.

According to Neal Lerner (2013), “Writing centers have. . .displayed a remarkable capacity to collaborate with other institutional partners outside the writing program” (231). While the natural first step would be to collaborate with humanities or English classes, Presswood has a different course of action in mind:

I have launched a program called "Faculty Spotlight." It's a podcast series that we've just started, and we are interviewing a new faculty every week (or we want to). Probably once a week, for short hour-long, 45-minute long interview

about who they are, why they are interested in their field, what is interesting about it. It serves as an advertisement for their program, and it gets them educated about what we do in the multiliteracy center at the same time. So, everybody wins.

Presswood would particularly like to target faculty in the hard sciences to participate in the podcasts, because he believes, “The more people that know what is happening to you on a college campus, the better it is for you.” Because the multiliteracy center has only been open for a few months, and primarily dedicated to a small subset of students (at least initially), efforts at outreach are only beginning; yet, Presswood realizes that building awareness for the center is essential as the work of the center continues.

For two former Developmental Education students, now working in a multiliteracy center, the work of the center excites them. When asked “What does the word multiliteracy mean to you?,” one of Presswood’s tutors responds “multiple ways of looking at writing,” while the other adds, “There isn’t just one way for you to write something, and this [center] allows you to express the way you wanted to.” These students have been successful in the program, and they want to spread what they’ve learned about multimodal composing to other Developmental Education students through the Multiliteracy Center. Through his students, Presswood is slowly winning converts in all areas of campus, though he calls it exhausting work. By receiving a multi-year grant and starting the center through the Developmental Education program, the multimodal composing initiative at Galveston College will have the time and resources to spread, though the time-limitation of resources may prove to be a challenge if Presswood hasn’t developed support in other areas of the campus after the three-year grant is over. Galveston College wouldn’t have a multiliteracy center without Phillip

Presswood, but with time and enthusiasm, it may become an essential part of writing instruction on campus.

Rice University

Institutional Context

Unlike Phillip Presswood's singular vision and initiative for the Galveston College Multiliteracy Center, a university-wide initiative to improve writing and communication instruction at Rice University led to the simultaneous development of the Center for Written, Oral, and Visual Communication (CWOVC) and the Program in Writing and Communication (PWC). Rice University is consistently ranked among the top 20 universities in the United States and the top 100 universities in the world ("This is Rice"). Approximately 3900 undergraduate students are currently enrolled, with 2600 graduate students. Like Stanford University (discussed in the last chapter), Rice is an elite and well-funded institution, and the university as a whole has decided to invest funds in the development of writing and communication instruction. When these programs were approved in 2011 (and implemented in 2012), the Rice University Faculty Senate agreed that "a successful communication program requires investment from all areas of the university. Until these programs were created, Rice did not have a writing program or writing center space, and writing courses were only required for ELL or struggling writers. Due to this history, Rice understands that such a program will not work if its faculty is seen as "merely providing a service to other parts of the campus" (Michie et al.). While Galveston College's Multiliteracy Center will be the primary agent of spreading a multimodal composing initiative, the CWOVC at Rice is a piece of a much-larger initiative. Still, the CWOVC holds an essential

job in promoting multimodal writing instruction through its one-on-one contact with students.

While all of Rice's eight schools³², encompassing many paths of study, are consistently ranked among the top programs in the country, until recently the school did not put much emphasis on writing instruction ("This is Rice"). Until the Fall 2012 semester, the requirement to enroll in a composition or communication course was reserved for undergraduate students who failed a composition exam upon entrance to the university.

These students, a great many of whom were non-native English speakers attending college in the United States, would enroll in a remedial writing course through the Program in Communication Excellence,³³ which disbanded once the PWC became operational in 2012.

According to Rice's Office of International Students and Scholars, in the past decade, the number of international undergraduate students has increased by 357% (11). During the Fall 2013 semester, international students made up 11.86% of the undergraduate population (6).

The increasing number of English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students attending Rice was one impetus for the formation of the CWOVC and PWC, but many faculty members believe that increased attention to writing instruction would benefit other student populations.

According to Gail Shuck (2013), Writing Program Administrators attending to the needs of ESL students should "create programs that work for all students" (66). Shuck's definition of "ESL" is "not a clearly identifiable group of students," but "a set of practices. . .that increase

³² Rice University's eight schools are the School of Architecture, the Susan M. Glasscock School of Continuing Studies, the George R. Brown School of Engineering, the School of Humanities, the Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of Business, The Sheppard School of Music, the Weiss School of Natural Science, and the School of Social Sciences.

³³ Students who failed the composition course were required to take COMM 103 ("Academic Writing and Argument"), but many international students with "serious mechanical problems with their writing" first enrolled in COMM 100 ("Fundamentals of Academic Communication") (Michie et al.).

educational opportunities and success for all students, regardless of language background” (67). Helena Michie and Susan McIntosh (2012), both instrumental to the process of creating the PWC and CWOVC, write that a new writing program at Rice would focus “on improving and enhancing the writing and communication skills of all students, regardless of their skill level when they matriculate. This reflects our foundational belief that everyone—even good writers—can write better.” Many members of the Rice faculty, unhappy that writing instruction was reserved for struggling writers, were enthusiastic about the opportunity to radically revise the writing curriculum by requiring a first-year writing-intensive course and providing essential support services for all students through the multiliteracy center.

According to Matthew Taylor, Associate Dean of Undergraduates, the “genesis” for what would become a new writing and communication program and multiliteracy center was the arrival of a new Dean of Undergraduates and Provost in the fall of 2010. Before this point, faculty had been clamoring for an increased attention to writing instruction, but it wasn’t until this change of leadership that the university began to address “a big gap in our curriculum” (Taylor). With the support of the Dean and Provost, the Faculty Senate at Rice began to investigate changes to writing and reading instruction that would amount to the “most important undergraduate academic curricular initiative in 40 years.” The Faculty Senate at Rice University is made up of over thirty faculty members representing all of Rice’s eight schools. The Faculty Senate was formed in 2005 “to investigate, discuss, and decide on matters concerning academic affairs of the university,” and they first began to investigate implementing a new emphasis on writing and communication instruction at Rice in 2010 (“About the Faculty Senate”). At that time, a Working Group of five faculty

members recommended an external review of Rice's current program³⁴ which was conducted during the Spring 2011 semester ("Faculty Senate Meeting December"). A new Working Group formed in 2011 to decide on final recommendations, and members from this group represented a range of disciplines, including English, Music, Biochemistry & Cell Biology, Bioengineering, and Political Science (along with an undergraduate and graduate student representative) (Michie et al.). Additionally, Working Group members conferred with a Faculty Advisory Group with representatives from seven of the eight schools. Helena Michie, chair of the Working Group, represented the English Department, but the final recommendations of the group embody an interdisciplinary approach to writing and communication instruction. Michie presented final recommendations to the Faculty Senate during the Fall 2011 semester— and these recommendations included a required first-year writing-intensive seminar, the creation of the CWOVC, and an "upper-level communication in the discipline component" to be developed after setting up the first-year seminar course and the CWOVC. To supervise all three components, the group recommended the creation of a Program in Writing and Communication, which was approved by the full senate on November 30, 2011 ("Faculty Senate Meeting November").³⁵ This robust program, with writing and communication support for both undergraduate and graduate students, would replace the previous program that was limited to struggling writers.

Implementation of the Working Group's recommendations began immediately after they were approved by the Faculty Senate. Although implementation of the entire program

³⁴ Representatives from peer institutions reviewed Rice's program, but reviewers were not named in the faculty report.

³⁵ The PWC and the CWOVC were both approved in November 2011, but the Senate reserved the right to revisit the communication in the discipline component in 2015 (Wilson "Personal Message").

was expected to take four years (specifically the Communication in the Disciplines requirement), the primary responsibility of interim PWC co-directors Matthew Taylor and Terry Doody (from the English Department) was to establish the first-year seminar course and the CWOVC by the start of the Fall 2012 semester. With the help of a Faculty Advisory Board that included members from the Faculty Senate Working Group who wrote the report, Taylor and Doody had eight months (from January to August 2012) to write learning objectives for the First-year Writing-Intensive Seminar (FWIS) courses, hire and train full-time instructors for those courses, design the CWOVC space, hire a director and associate directors for the center, and open the center. By the end of August 2012, the CWOVC staff had trained the first group of graduate and undergraduate student tutors and began offering consultations.

During its first year of operation, the CWOVC conducted 1550 consultations (Volz “Program”). First-year students made up almost half of these consultations (n=731), and with the direct connection between the PWC (in charge of the FWIS courses) and the CWOVC, it is unsurprising that the majority of students who initially used the CWOVC were first-year students introduced to the center through their FWIS course. Perhaps more surprising is that graduate students were the second most-likely group to use the center, responsible for 262 of the 1550 consultations in the CWOVC the first year. Before the CWOVC opened graduate students did not have access to any writing center services, and it appears that these students are already beginning to find the center. Additionally, as more students are introduced to the CWOVC through their FWIS courses, students should continue to use the center throughout

their education at Rice. In fact, the center had 1500 appointments during the Fall 2013 semester alone—in only its second year of operation³⁶ (Festa).

The center currently employs 25 undergraduate and 13 graduate student tutors, and accomplishes its mission of providing “instruction and support for all members of the Rice community to develop the skills needed to effectively share their ideas with the world” through one-on-one consultations with students for traditionally-written essays and multimodal projects, in addition to numerous workshops and presentations given to students, faculty, and other campus groups (Wilson “Personal Message”; *Communication Consultant*). Although any new center has its challenges, implementation of CWOVC and the PWC has been relatively easy because of the university-wide support for improving instruction of writing and communication (specifically oral and visual communication). Like many of the established multiliteracy centers discussed in Chapter III, institutional support (and the funding that can come with it) makes the CWOVC privileged when compared to other writing centers. In other ways, the CWOVC is successful despite less than ideal characteristics, such as Rice’s lack of an established center to work from, the lack of faculty with a background in rhetoric and composition, and the lack of tenure for administrators of the CWOVC or the new communications program (the PWR). Nevertheless, cross-disciplinary support, a new space designed for multimodal consultations, undergraduate and graduate peer tutors, and a staff experienced with writing center work are some of the reasons the CWOVC has found immediate success in the two years it has been operational.

³⁶ I do not have statistics as to the classification of students who used the CWOVC during its second year of operation

Administrative Staff

Much of the initial success of the new center and the PWC can be attributed to the administrative staff of the CWOVC and PWC. Like Phillip Presswood at Galveston College they are committed to supporting the many ways students communicate, but unlike Presswood these administrators had the support of the entire campus before the CWOVC even opened. Additionally, many of the CWOVC and PWC administrators share a long-term connection to Rice and understand the culture of the university, and they rely on their specializations (in ESL, science-writing, visual material culture, or professional communication) to divide up administrative responsibilities.

As noted above, Matthew Taylor held the position of interim co-director of the PWC, and his responsibilities included setting up the FWIS courses, designing the CWOVC space, and hiring administrative staff for the CWOVC. Taylor has had a long-time relationship with Rice University; he earned his PhD in history from Rice and he has also taught history courses, served in the admissions office, and served as a resident faculty associate for one of the university's residential colleges (Taylor "Curriculum Vitae"). In 2005, Taylor joined the office of Rice's first Dean of Undergraduates, and he currently serves as Associate Dean of Undergraduates and Associate Vice Provost of the University. Taylor was recently recognized for his "extraordinary contributions to the university" by the Rice Board of Trustees, and his work establishing the CWOVC and the PWC has been a major accomplishment in the past few years (Passwaters).

Taylor describes the decision to hire Jennifer Shade Wilson to direct the CWOVC as "probably the best thing I did as director [of the PWC]." Like Taylor, Wilson also has long-lasting ties to Rice beginning with her undergraduate education, and she earned her PhD in

second language literacy from the University of Toronto (2012) (“Jennifer Shade Wilson”). Wilson also has administrative experience from her work as Assistant Director at the University of Houston writing center, where “she oversaw the program managers of the ESL and developmental writing programs, managed the peer tutors, developed a variety of writing in the disciplines projects, and taught freshman composition.” Wilson’s primary expertise is ESL. While she was completing her dissertation, she heard about the opening of the CWOVC and contacted former-colleague Taylor (Wilson and Bae). Wilson was offered the Director position of the CWOVC after a national search, and she arrived on campus August 1, 2012—just a few weeks before the center began offering tutorials and a few days before the center space was ready for occupancy.

The two Associate Directors of the CWOVC began their positions after Wilson: Elizabeth Festa, hired in part for her scholarly interest in visual communication (specifically visual material culture), started August 15th, and Kyung-Hee Bae, a former colleague of Wilson’s at the University of Houston with a background in science and expertise in ESL education, started in early September 2012 (Wilson and Bae). Like Taylor and Wilson, Festa had experience working at Rice; after earning her PhD from Vanderbilt, Festa began teaching in the Program for Communication Excellence—the precursor to the PWC—in 2007 (Festa). Taylor, Wilson, and Terry Doody hired Festa as the “visual” expert for the Center for Written, Oral, and Visual Communication, and Festa organizes many workshops on visual arguments for students and tutors, along with taking a leading role on tutor training (Taylor; Festa).

Kyung-Hee Bae has completed graduate coursework in Chemistry, but her current academic interests include “writing in the disciplines (WID), second language writing,

writing pedagogy and theory, genre theory and analysis, and writing center theory and practice.” (“Kyung-Hee Bae”). With experience as an English-language-learner herself, Bae understands the challenges of ESL students at Rice, and she is also considered the resident “expert” for science students using the center (Wilson and Bae). She worked with Jennifer Shade Wilson at the University of Houston writing center, first as ESL coordinator and later as assistant director after Wilson left to pursue her PhD. In fact, after Bae heard about the new center opening at Rice, she contacted her former-colleague Wilson, who then applied for the director position. As with Wilson and Festa, Bae shares a lecturer position (with a reduced teaching load) in the Program for Writing and Communication, where she most recently taught FWIS 100—a section set aside for underprepared (and often ESL) writers. Although Bae and Wilson have extensive experience in a writing center setting, and Festa has experience teaching writing, their varied interests outside of English or Rhetoric and Composition is important in the context of the CWOVC, where undergraduate and graduate students look for help on writing or multimodal projects from many different disciplines.

In 2013, Matt Taylor left his interim position, and Tracy Volz became the Director of the Program in Writing and Communication. Volz earned her PhD at Rice, has over two decades of experience teaching English and professional communication, and played an instrumental role in the Cain Project (organized through the School of Engineering) (Almond). The Cain Project was a ten-year program, funded by a donation, with the mission of “prepar[ing] students to lead through excellence in communication.” (“About the Cain Project”). While the project primarily assisted faculty in “sciences and engineering at Rice University to equip students for articulate, persuasive communication,” its success in part led to the emphasis in communication in the PWC, and the creation of the CWOVC as a

multiliteracy center rather than as a writing center (“About the Cain Project;” Michie et al.). As Assistant Director of the Cain Project, Volz taught students and faculty in the School of Engineering about the importance of written, oral, and visual communication, and now she is in charge of spreading this message to the entire campus. The PWC is the parent organization for the CWOVC, and while Volz does not supervise day-to-day operations in the center, the CWOVC and the PWC collaborate in many ways to ensure that students receive the instruction they need for any communicative project.

Multimodal Curricular Initiative

In the *Faculty Senate Working Group on Communication in the Curriculum Report and Recommendations*, the authors lament Rice’s “remedial approach” to writing instruction that does not fit the mission of the undergraduate program: “Our students must be able to speak, write, and present clearly, cogently, and persuasively” (Michie et al.). This report was authored by a group of faculty across disciplines, but was headed by Helena Michie—a Victorianist in the English Department. Rice University does not have faculty specializing in Rhetoric and Composition, but the cross-disciplinary faculty responsible for the creation of the CWOVC and PWC understood that writing and multimodal communication instruction was lacking for undergraduate students. The purpose of the report was to recommend changes “that will provide Rice students with the means to develop their writing and communication skills at a level that is competitive with that at peer institutions.” For decades, writing instruction at elite private institutions has carried the stigma of remediation. Paula Johnson (1977) describes a meeting of writing program administrators from institutions including Columbia, Stanford, Princeton, Harvard, and Yale, where attendees discussed the

“disquieting fact” that “a substantial number of freshmen” were enrolled at their institutions “for whose level of incompetence our introductory courses were not designed” (15). Kelly Ritter (2009) has provided a history of a surprisingly healthy basic writing program at Harvard and Yale, but for the most part elite schools have the reputation of stigmatizing required composition courses. In fact, Rice was one of the last among comparable institutions to reevaluate writing instruction; the Working Group’s Report compares writing and communication instruction at Rice to Stanford, Vanderbilt, and MIT (among others) and concludes that almost all comparable institutions have a writing center and a writing program in place (Michie et al.). Improving writing and communication instruction at Rice University is a campus-wide initiative. As an unnamed external reviewer of Rice’s previous remedial communication program concluded, “Rice is in the virtually unique position of being able to create a 21st Century Writing Program . . . precisely because it doesn’t have an entrenched, legacy program” (qtd. in Michie et al.). With the creation of the CWOVC and the PWC, Rice is trading remedial stigma for state-of-the-art writing instruction. Unlike Phillip Presswood at Galveston College, whose multiliteracy center is creating the need for multimodal writing instruction, the CWOVC and the PWC were created to respond to a need; however, the entire Rice campus is proactively promoting the implementation of the new writing center and writing program so that these programs, and multimodal composing on campus, will continue to grow.

According to the Faculty Senate Report that ultimately resulted in the establishment of the PWC and the CWOVC, Rice should base its writing and communication instruction on a series of principles. The principles most directly related to multimodal composing include:

- Writing is not simply a skill or the expression of already existing ideas, but is intimately linked to the process of thinking and modes of expression.
- Different disciplines may emphasize different aspects of communication and different kinds of writing. All disciplines can learn from the communication protocols of other disciplines: humanists can, for example, learn from the sciences to present their work more visually, while scientists can learn to be more attentive to the role of language in constructing as well as in reflecting meaning.
- Writing in its traditional sense of print on paper or words on a screen is part of a larger world of professional communication that includes oral and visual modes.
- Rice is uniquely positioned to respond to and to include in our vision new communication technologies and the emerging cultures they are creating. We can and must be flexible in looking not only to the persistent importance of traditional writing forms and to the dazzling array of present technologies but also to future changes in technologies of communication and their implications for writing, communication, and pedagogy. (Michie et al.)

Now that the center is established, it can proactively promote the principles mapped out by the Faculty Senate. The next few paragraphs demonstrate the commitment of the PWC and CWOVC to enacting these principles, and the methods they are using.

The faculty, administrators, and students I interviewed at Rice consistently used “communication instruction” to represent instruction for oral and visual arguments (most commonly poster design and accompanying presentations). At Rice, the definition of

“multimodal” is intertwined with “communication” because “communication” is the preferred term in the disciplines that value poster presentations (such as the hard sciences and engineering). One exigence for the creation of the PWC and CWOVC was the communication needs of students specializing in STEM disciplines—especially those with international backgrounds. The Office of International Students and scholars reports that the “largest percent of international students at Rice University study in one of the Engineering fields,” and “Natural Sciences and Social Sciences were second and third, respectively” (18). According to the second principle listed from the faculty senate report, “All disciplines can learn from the communication protocols of other disciplines” (Michie et al.). Through FWIS courses and consultations at the CWOVC, students in a variety of disciplines learn to value written, oral, and visual communication. In this way the center is operating more as a communications center or a Communications in the Disciplines (CID) program than a writing center. In fact, according to CWOVC Director Jennifer Shade Wilson:

We all see the center as much as a CID center as a multimodal center. The multimodality happens because CID is so varied, and of course there are so many modalities in which we express our ideas. But, we couldn't be an effective CID center without being a multimodal center. . . What happens. . . [in the center space] is basic consultations, but we're training our consultants to think about writing and communicating as, “What makes good writing? What makes good communicating across the disciplines?” (Wilson and Bae)

For Denise Ann Vrchota (2013), CID covers all forms of communication “except written,” including “nonverbal [and] computer-mediated communication;” using this logic, the CWOVC’s commitment to CID initiatives and to writing instruction will allow the center to

support all potential combinations of modes that students use to compose (Vrchota and Russell). By 2015, the PWC intends to develop and implement an upper-division CID course requirement through communication with departments and programs across campus (Volz). Even so, the CWOVC is already seeing students from these disciplines, enrolled in non-writing-intensive courses, bringing multimodal projects such as oral and poster presentations to the center.

In addition to multimodal composing within the disciplines, the CWOVC and PWC work together to proactively promote oral and visual communication through FWIS courses and workshops—fulfilling the first and third principles listed above (taken from the Faculty Senate report). While FWIS courses are writing-intensive, Matthew Taylor emphasized the importance the oral communication-related learning objectives for all FWIS sections. In FWIS classes, students will "Improve their ability to communicate correctly and effectively in writing and speech, taking into account audience and purpose," as well as "learn to articulate oral arguments and respond productively to arguments of others in formal presentations and in class discussion" (Taylor).³⁷ For the first year of the program, Taylor said that he did not require FWIS instructors to include an oral presentation assignment in their classes; instead, he told them, "You should work in oral presentations, and you should be conscious of the learning objectives and how you [conduct] your discussions." By the end of the first year, Taylor says he was more explicit in asking faculty to include oral presentations in the FWIS courses. FWIS courses do not include a learning objective related

³⁷ Taylor read these objectives to me during our interview, but they were authored by Helena Michie (chair of the Working Group that recommended the creation of the FWIS, and chair of the Faculty Advising Board assisting Taylor and co-interim director Terry Doody with the establishment of the PWC and CWOVC) (Wilson "Personal Message").

to visual communication, but helping students who compose in the visual mode will continue to grow in importance once the PWC enacts a communications-in-the-discipline requirement for upperclassmen, currently planned for 2015.

Although the CWOVC is not seeing as many multimodal texts as they do written texts, they are prepared to fulfill all parts of their mission. One way they support these texts is through workshops and programs they present to courses or groups of students. For example, Kyung-Hee Bae describes working with a Biochemistry course where students worked with research mentors either on or off campus (Wilson and Bae). Bae presented a workshop for the students and trained a few CWOVC consultants to work with the Biochemistry students one-on-one. In another example, graduate student consultants at the CWOVC approached Bae because they “recognized a need within their own department” for better instruction on designing posters and giving presentations, so Bae presented a workshop to Psychology graduate students. While I’ve established in the previous chapter that workshops are a common instructional tool in established multiliteracy centers and a good method of collaborating and promoting multimodal composing, these programs are very important to the day-to-day work of the CWOVC. Presenting workshops helps spread the mission of the center to student and faculty unaware of the center, and workshops also allow for increased collaboration between the PWC and the CWOVC. In fact, many of the workshops that focus on an aspect of multimodal composing, such as video production or digital storytelling, are given by lecturers in the PWC. According to Tracy Volz, lecturers in her program carry a 2-3 teaching load, and they receive one course release to work in the CWOVC. While they can earn this course release running a reading group or “managing the social media for the center and the program,” most choose to facilitate a workshop series.

According to Volz, “[The CWOVC] can't manage it all themselves, so we rely on the lecturers who have expertise in other areas, relative to the center staff.” According to the CWOVC website,³⁸ the purpose of the CWOVC is to “support the new Freshman Writing-Intensive Seminars (FWIS), undergraduate and graduate students seeking to improve their communication skills, and faculty looking for ways to integrate communication instruction into content-area courses.” In fact, since the time of my visit in February 2014, the CWOVC has taken a leading role in faculty outreach and development, including conducting a “week-long training workshop for new FWIS instructors” (Wilson “Personal Message”). As with the support for multimodal composing offered by established multiliteracy centers (described in the previous chapter), the support provided to undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty by the consultants and staff of the CWOVC is essential to promoting communication instruction (often multimodal) across campus. The center builds awareness for the campus-wide initiative through increasing its own visibility to students—primarily through the physical space of the center and through tutor training and tutoring practices. Finally, as stated in the fourth principle listed by the faculty senate report, the CWOVC is preparing to account for “future changes in technologies of communication and their implications for writing, communication, and pedagogy” (Michie et al.).

Physical Space and Technology in the Center

If the responsibility of the CWOVC is to proactively promote written, oral, and visual communication to students, it must have a physical space—a locus—where students can

³⁸ This language appeared on the website in June 2014, but I could not find it when I returned to the website in August 2014.

come and receive help on any act of composing they do for classes, for their personal benefit, or for extracurricular projects. The CWOVC space takes advantage of its central library location and open layout to draw students. The location chosen for the CWOVC was formerly a study area on the second floor of the Fondren Library. Unlike Phillip Presswood's difficulty in finding a space for the Galveston College Multiliteracy Center, the 3,500 sq. foot space that would become the CWOVC was mentioned specifically in the 2011 Faculty Senate Working Group Report, which calls it "big enough to accommodate individual consultation carrels, a place for group work, and cubicle offices for staff" (Michie et al.). Lea Currie and Michelle Eodice (2005), writing about a collaboration between the University of Kansas library and the writing center, observe that libraries "are trying to be less constrained by their traditional locations and to be seen as a service that can be used many places" (47). By the same token, writing centers may be "trying to break free of small, remote, unappealing location(s). . .[and] linking with libraries makes more visible the importance of writing to an interdisciplinary environment" (49). Although Littlejohn and Cuny (2013) experienced an unhappy collaboration with their university's library (reviewed in Galveston section), purposeful and planned collaboration between a writing center and a library (as with the CWOVC) can benefit both parties.

Although the Working Group designated the space, it was Matthew Taylor's job to purchase furniture and equipment, build office and meeting-room partitions, and design the layout of the space. His initial questions were: "Should it be open? Should it be cubicle? What's going to be most inviting? What's going to work best for tutoring and consulting on different types of work?" (Taylor). He visited a few other writing centers, and worked with the Faculty Advising Board before settling on an open floor plan—utilizing the light and

space of the center’s mezzanine location overlooking the first floor of the library. As Currie and Eodice argue, some institutions planning newly designed or renovated centers fall into the “space is space trap,” meaning that they load an available space “with equipment and furnishings without setting the spaces up to speak their mission, making the learning that takes place there less visible and less measurable” (47). James Inman, in a 2010 essay about designing multiliteracy centers, similarly writes, “Many centers appear to have been designed around furnishings and technologies, rather than what clients will actually be doing” (20). By comparison, the CWOVC was purposefully designed to welcome students to an open, inviting space, with particular attention paid to the “work” that would occur in the center and how furniture and equipment could encourage that work.

When a visitor approaches the reception area for the CWOVC, on the mezzanine level of the Fondren library, a large sign greets them to the Center for Written, Oral, and Visual communication—utilizing both words and images (a pencil and paper, a speech bubble, and an eye) to represent the multiple modes of communication serviced by the center (see fig. 4.9).

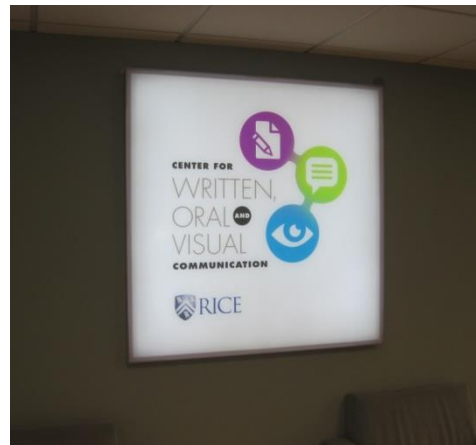


Fig. 4.9. Signage at reception area

After checking in at the reception desk, students are brought into the larger, open center space to a table where consultant and student can work side by side. Along one wall of the center is a bank of windows looking down onto the first floor of Fondren library, with offices for the Associate Directors, Director, and Program Coordinator along the opposite wall (see fig. 4.10).



Fig. 4.10. This image is from the opposite side of the CWOVC, looking towards the reception desk in the far corner. Note side-by-side seating at the consultation tables.

Next to the offices is a glassed-in seminar room, primarily used for small-group meetings and for consultation sessions for oral and slide presentations (see fig. 4.11). This room boasts an impressive array of technology that allows a consultant to record a student practicing his or her oral presentation (using a permanent camera attached to the ceiling), and then play the presentation back on a flat-screen television to review style, body language, and other aspects of a successful presentation (see fig. 4.12). Kelly³⁹, one of the graduate consultants at the CWOVC, mentioned during an interview that students can use the equipment to practice the slide presentations that often correspond with an oral presentation assignment. After the consultant records the student's presentation, they can review it on a "split screen with Power Point on one side and the person on the other." This technology is a

³⁹ Because Kelly is a student and an employee of the CWOVC, I am using a pseudonym.

resource for students, and a unique space to talk about the rhetorical dimensions of oral and visual arguments.



Fig. 4.11. Conference room used for small-group meetings and consultations for oral/visual presentations.



Fig. 4.12. Camera for recording presentations

Matthew Taylor notes that “equipping a room for the visual” was one of his goals in designing the center, and this technology also equips the CWOVC to promote its ability to help students with more than writing projects. On the other hand, while the CWOVC has the technology to view students’ multimodal presentations and provide feedback, it is not equipped to provide students with technical support; instead, students at Rice use the services of the Digital Media Commons (DMC) if they have questions about using specific programs or pieces of equipment. According the DMC website:

The Digital Media Commons supports the creation and use of multimedia in education, scholarship, and creative expression. Working toward this end, we provide services that include hands-on training, assistance with digital projects, and access to the essential tools for creating digital resources such as

digital video and audio, images and animations, PowerPoint presentations, web pages, and more (“DMC Mission”).

By comparison, the Multiliteracy Center at Galveston College assists student writers in both using technology and effectively conveying a message through the use of technology. As with several of the established multiliteracy centers discussed in the last chapter, such as the University Writing Center at Texas A&M and the Multiliteracies Center at Michigan Technological University, the CWOVC does not believe that it needs to offer technical support for multimodal compositions when a dedicated digital center is already located on campus. Additionally, the DMC is moving from an academic building on campus to the basement of the Fondren Library in time for the Fall 2014 semester—bringing the rhetorical assistance provided by the CWOVC and the technical help provided by the DMC into the same building (Viswanath).

Tutor Training

While workshops, seminars, and presentations are important responsibilities of the CWOVC, it is primarily a writing center where most students bring written projects (rather than oral presentations or visual arguments) to receive one-on-one help. Training undergraduate and graduate tutors is primarily the responsibility of Associate Director Elizabeth Festa. At the beginning of the academic year, “All undergraduate and graduate consultants go through 8-12 hours of orientation training in August, up to two hours of mid-year training in January, and up to three hours of mid-semester training in both the fall and the spring” (*Communication Consultant*). The August training is divided so that new tutors receive orientation training, while experienced consultants receive training on a new or more

advanced subject. For example, this year's training session for returning consultants focused on responding to poster presentations—a particular kind of visual argument. The primary philosophy of tutor training is to train tutors to respond generally to oral and written texts, while also training tutors to respond to specific assignments and genres. Through this combined emphasis on general tutoring practices and specific disciplinary conventions during training, tutors become a resource not only for the writing and oral presentation projects first-year students complete in the FWIS courses, but also for assisting graduate students, ESL students, and students enrolled in STEM courses .

Much of the advanced training that consultants receive is geared toward specific assignments that students are expected to bring to the center, specific genres (such as medical school, fellowship, and internship applications), or extracurricular activities such as the renowned Rice Undergraduate Research Symposium (RURS)—an event where Rice undergraduate students in a variety of fields present their research through oral and poster presentations (Festa). Sometimes all consultants receive this specialized training, but often only a few consultants become “dedicated consultants” trained to respond to a specific project or activity. Rice's approach is unique when considering the long-running debate about specialist or generalist tutors in writing center scholarship. In the pages of *Writing Lab Newsletter* and *The Writing Center Journal*, the conversation has focused on the benefits and drawbacks of hiring tutors with different majors or from different departments who understand the subject matter and conventions of writing in their disciplines (Kiedaisch and Dinitz, 1993; Tinberg and Cupples, 1996). Kristin Walker (1998) summarizes the main question from this line of inquiry as “Is it an asset for the tutors to be familiar with discipline-specific discourse conventions?” (27). While the CWOVC has hired tutors from a range of

disciplines, they actually approach the “specialist” or “generalist” tutor debate from a different angle. For example, during my visit to Rice, graduate students were preparing for the “90-second Thesis” competition, where students must explain the argument of their thesis or dissertation to a panel of judges in 90 seconds. Before the opening of the CWOVC, graduate students did not have a place on campus to receive help on written or multimodal projects, but now graduate consultants at the CWOVC can serve as a resource for their peers on a wide variety of genres and projects. For the “90-second Thesis” project, a group of graduate consultants at the CWOVC became “dedicated consultants,” and students preparing for the contest had the opportunity to set two appointments with one of these consultants. During the first appointment, students would read their prepared speech to the consultant, who would offer suggestions in terms of content, jargon, and presenting ideas in a way to be “heard” by an audience unfamiliar with the student’s field of study. The second appointment was a dress rehearsal; assuming that the student had finalized and memorized his or her speech, he or she would present to the consultant, who would focus on presentation, style, gestures, appearance, and other aspects of effective oral presentations. All the tutors assigned to help students with this project were fellow graduate students, with knowledge from their own experience on how to communicate their research to people outside their field, but they were also trained by the CWOVC to become a specialist and an important resource for this project.

An example of the more general approach to tutor training would be with oral presentations and written papers. As with most writing centers, consultations for written papers start with the consultant “setting goals for the session with a student,” “guiding the student through the session” (careful to “not edit the student’s paper”), and summarizing the

session at the end (*Communication Consultant*). This is the same general procedure for oral presentations, though consultants and students have the additional resource of an oral presentation rubric provided by the CWOVC. The rubric includes principles of oral presentation and slide design, but they are “general principles that are going to be applicable across the board.” (Festa). Elizabeth Festa describes the rubric as both “broad” and “detailed,” and that it “should encompass whatever [a student’s] project might be,” much in the same way that a tutor guides a consultation for a written essay.

An interview with an experienced graduate student tutor demonstrates how a tutor operates between the general training she’s received and specialized training for a specific project. As a dedicated consultant for the 90-second Thesis contest, Kelly would focus on sentence length and she “would point out jargon that they weren’t defining or that they couldn’t define within the 90-sec maximum time.” She would say to the student, “I’m your best audience because I don’t know what you’re talking about. How are you going to break this down even further? How can your audience understand gold-particle nanotechnology if they don’t even know what nanotechnology means?” By comparison, graduate students with conference papers can use more jargon because they are composing for a specialized audience. Still, Kelly would focus her response as a general audience member, asking questions such as: “Am I following your ideas?” “Are your slides presenting [the same message as your presentation]?” “Is your font consistent on your slides? Why are you making these choices?”

Unlike Phillip Presswood, who trains his students to help students with technical questions as well as rhetorical at the Galveston College Multiliteracy Center, the CWOVC focuses entirely on rhetorical instruction. As mentioned previously, the Digital Media

Commons (DMC) is a resource for students who need technical help, and the CWOVC has collaborated with the DMC to put together workshops to help students with both sides of the rhetorical/technical divide. For example, Festa is “going to be doing a workshop this fall with the director of the DMC for the Poverty, Justice, and Human Capability students. We're going to do digital storytelling. . .so, I'm going to talk about argumentation and that mode, and [the DMC] will tell [students] how to use Audacity, Adobe Photoshop, and iMovie to edit their film. So that's how we would tag-team with the DMC.” With both the CWOVC and the DMC in the library by the Fall 2014 semester, students will be able to get technical and rhetorical help on their multimodal compositions under one roof.

Embedded tutoring is an additional way the CWOVC uses their consultants as a resource for multimodal composing, and more specifically for first-year and underprepared ESL writers. Spigelman and Grobman (2005) (reviewed in the Galveston College section) write that “classroom-based writing tutoring describes tutoring arrangements clearly integral to writing instruction.” These tutors “facilitate peer writing groups, present programs, conference during classroom workshops, help teachers to design and carry out assignments, and much more” (1). This description fits Kelly’s experience as an embedded consultant for a FWIS 100 course (a course for underprepared writers): “The class met once a week with the professor on Mondays. Then on Wednesdays I met with a small break-out group from that class. I had four students that I met with in this very room once a week and we met as a group.” Additionally, Kelly “would meet with each student individually for a consulting appointment once a week.” This form of classroom-based tutoring involved a lot more contact between the tutor and the students in the class, but also required more time from the tutor. Although Kelly admits “it was a lot of work for a dedicated consultant,” she was also

happy to “meet the kids at Rice that are struggling most with writing.” Embedded or dedicated consultants are a mix of undergraduate and graduate students, but all are trained consultants for the CWOVC.

According to Festa, embedding CWOVC tutors could help with instruction for multimodal projects in the future: “The center should be embedded. . .so that you can be providing [multimodal] support along the way.” As described above, the CWOVC relies on workshops for multimodal instruction. Festa says, “A lot of times the workshop we’re offering is a one-time workshop, but you don’t want to come between the faculty member and the student. Unless you’ve been invited to be closely linked to a course, there’s only so much support you can provide. I feel like the one-time workshops we do introduce an idea, but to really help them internalize it, we would need to be coaching.” The potential benefits of an embedded consulting program, Spigelman and Grobman write, is that “Writing centers that provide classroom teachers with trained, knowledgeable personnel establish their credibility and achieve prominence within the institution” (10). For a newly-established multiliteracy center, classroom-based tutoring, like the embedded consultants at the CWOVC, are resources not only for students composing in multiple modes, but a resource for building awareness for the important work of the center.

Outreach

According to Neal Lerner (2013), “The writing center is a key ally for building and maintaining a writing program” (230). The workshops given by CWOVC staff and PWC lecturers serve multiple purposes, and one of them is outreach. The CWOVC builds awareness for its services through workshops for students and faculty and through

presentations to specific groups or classes. Beyond providing outreach to disciplines and students across the university, the CWOVC also collaborates with institutional partners at Rice to help students with multimodal projects that will benefit the community outside the university. This form of collaboration builds awareness and support for multiliteracy center services, but also benefits the students who learn from the centers' expertise, the faculty who involve the center, the community partner, and the people who receive the services of the community partner.

Many courses, schools, and programs housed at Rice University encourage undergraduate students to build connections to the community outside the university, often through hands-on service learning opportunities or research projects to inform and solve a problem for a community partner. The Center for Civic Engagement and the Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality are two programs that stand out for their commitment to “help students develop the capacity to exercise civic leadership by better understanding themselves, their responsibilities as citizens, the complexity of social issues, and the mechanisms for creating sustainable change in Houston and communities beyond” (“Service Statistics”). In the past year, staff from the CWOVC have worked with both of these groups to help students with multimodal projects composed for audiences outside the university. For students participating in these programs the ultimate goal was to connect with a community partner (often a non-profit organization), research a problem that affects the organization, compose an oral and visual argument that provides a solution to the problem, and then present the solution to the community partner. With both groups of students, the CWOVC was involved early in the process—presenting workshops on creating and designing an effective poster and delivering an oral presentation, providing feedback on

students' posters, and even (in one case) researching the community partner in order to further specialize the advice CWOVC staff provided for students. With junior and senior students enrolled in the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality program, Kyung-Hee Bae attended several sessions of a Practicum course as a representative of the CWOVC (Wilson and Bae). She provided feedback on posters and presentations in progress, and was invited to attend the students' presentations at the end of the semester. The course required students to work six hours a week at a non-profit organization in Houston, conduct a research project based on their work with the organization, and present their research. According to the website for the Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality, "Building relationships with local and wide-ranging communities is a defining feature of the Center's academic programs and community outreach initiatives" ("Research Clusters"). Common community partners include the Baylor Teen Clinic, The Houston Area Women's Center, and the Children's Assessment Center, and recent presentations arising from partnerships with these organizations include: "What Factors Encourage Spanish-Speaking Survivors of Domestic Violence To Seek Help?" (for the Houston Area Women's Center), "Barriers to Care for Spanish-Speaking Clients at the CAC" (for the Children's Assessment Center), and "Comparing Teen Health Clinic Staff and College Students' Attitudes Toward Sexual Assault" (for the Baylor Teen Clinic). For each of these presentations, the students' intent is to benefit "the needs of the organization and the clients it serves." Bae describes the "high-stakes" of the project "because it actually involves things that are happening with that community," and the CWOVC plays an important role in helping students develop effective multimodal arguments that not only satisfy a course requirement but that potentially benefit an audience outside the university (Wilson and Bae).

Community-engagement in composition theory and practice has a long history; however, the role of multimodal composing and the writing center in community service projects is under-represented in scholarship. According to Laura Julier, Kathleen Livingston, and Eli Goldblatt (2014), “The spirit of hands-on learning. . .has long been influential in the field of Writing Studies” (56). While a review of scholarship on “hands-on” writing instruction benefiting the community usually begins with Bruce Herzberg’s often anthologized “Community Service and Critical Teaching,” (originally published in 1994) Julier, Livingston, and Goldblatt organize their review of “Community-Engaged Pedagogies” by asking questions “most likely on the minds of people either starting out with community-engaged pedagogies or. . .seeking supportive allies,” such as “How will it help students?” and “How does this work benefit the communities we work in?” (56, 68). Although the community service projects at Rice University are multimodal and interdisciplinary, the answers Julier, Livingston, and Goldblatt provide to these questions are equally applicable. Students benefit from projects with “purposes outside of the classroom” because “they are able to wrestle with, analyze, revise and produce variations of discourse in ways sometimes presumed not possible in a classroom” (57). As reviewed in the previous chapter, established multiliteracy centers want to prepare students for the (often multimodal) composing they will encounter outside of the university, and the multimodal projects composed at Rice for outside audiences accomplishes that goal. As for the benefit to community partners, while Eli Goldblatt warns that the teachers sponsoring community-engaged writing should “make sure the learners and their sponsor organization are getting what they want from the relationship,” the potential “rewards of connection and added perspective are great” (68-69). These projects hold “mutual benefit” for student and community, but two questions applicable to Rice

remain unanswered in scholarship from composition studies: how do the multimodal aspects of projects composed for the larger community benefit students and community partners, and what is the impact of the multiliteracy center's involvement with these projects?

Thomas Deans (2000), in one of his many publications about service learning and composition, distinguishes between the purpose of writing in a service learning context as being “for,” “about,” or “with” community partners. In a review of panels and presentations about service-learning at the 2013 Conference on College Composition and Communication, Stephanie White concludes, “Especially when students are writing *for* the community, the exigencies they encounter beyond the classroom demand modes other than black text on white paper. They demand web, visual, and oral modes of communication” (emphasis added). White argues that multimodal compositions are especially effective in projects where students compose “for” a community partner, which also categorize the type of composing that occurs in community-engaged projects sponsored by Rice (and supported by the CWOVC). While White references two recent pieces of scholarship arguing for increased attention to digital composing the realm of community literacy (Grabill 2007; Bowden and Carpenter, 2012), she writes that at CCC 2013, “No presenters explicitly dealt with best practices for teaching multimodal composition in community-based writing courses. . . . Overall, in our field, very little scholarship has addressed the relationship between community-based and multimodal composition instruction.” White calls this lack of scholarship a “missing link,” and a similar connection is missing between writing centers and service learning initiatives. Tiffany Rousculp (2005) describes two different ways writing centers can involve themselves in community partnerships: either “directly” by sending tutors out into the community (Deciccio, 1999) or through collaborative relationships with

“service-learning initiatives on their college campuses,” which best fits the involvement of the CWOVC at Rice University (2). Still, Rousculp describes these examples as “ripples of writing center outreach”—insinuating that writing centers are only beginning to respond to “the exponential growth of service-learning and community service that has heavily influenced educational reform over the last two decades.” Almost a decade after Rousculp’s article, recent scholarship on the writing center’s relationship to service-learning projects is hard to identify. If, as White argues, multimodal compositions are more effective at presenting solutions to community problems, perhaps the multiliteracy center can provide the missing link between “multimodal composing and community-based composition instruction” by forging collaborative relationships with service-learning entities on campus. Rousculp writes that a benefit of “a writing center. . . tap[ping] into an established service-learning program,” is that “its staff may be able to form innovative community partnerships that bring institutional recognition for the center and, possibly, funding” (3). As demonstrated in the next example of collaboration between the CWOVC and the Houston Action Research Team (HART), students participating in a multimodal civic leadership and design project and the community partner benefiting from the project can both experience long-term benefits.

A more extensive example of the role the CWOVC plays in community-engagement projects is the Houston Action Research Team (HART), organized through the Center for Civic Leadership. Elizabeth Vann, the Director of Programs and Partnerships, organizes HART projects throughout the year. She hires an interdisciplinary team of undergraduate students for each HART project, and she pays them a little bit of money to work on the

project⁴⁰. HART “serve[s] as a bridge between Rice University and the City of Houston” and its primary purpose is “to work together with local community members and organizations to answer questions and address problems facing Houston and its citizens (“Houston Action”, “Center for Civic”). Because each HART project is based on the needs of a particular community organization, team members must tailor their interests and strengths to serve the community organization. Elizabeth Festa, as the representative of the CWOVC working with a HART group in the summer of 2013, also tailored the workshop she delivered to fit the needs of the particular HART project: a proposal to renovate the Eldorado Ballroom, “a historic African-American music venue in Houston’s Third Ward” (“Previous HART”). Project Rowhouses, a small arts-based community development organization in an under-served area of Houston, sponsored the project and asked students to research the history of the ballroom, propose a reasonable plan for renovation, and present their proposal to the non-profit’s board of directors. Early in the process, Festa gave a talk about poster design and presentation skills geared specifically to the task at hand, and she found the interdisciplinary gathering of students to be the most exciting aspect of the project: “It was really exciting to see students from [the] humanities, architecture and social sciences getting together to work on a project because they each come from different research backgrounds and make different assumptions.” Festa accounted for the diverse backgrounds of the students when she crafted her presentation, and she emphasized that most presentations delivered in similar situations by the CWOVC are geared for specific projects and specific students.

⁴⁰ It’s a paid internship—students do not receive course credit, which is different from some service-learning projects (according to Rousculp 2005).

Elizabeth Vann was especially impressed by the work Festa put into her presentation to the HART students. According to Vann, “I was not expecting the level of commitment and detail that she [Festa] put into this. . .She did incredible background research. She was working in tandem (before [students] met with her) doing research on their topic.” More importantly, “It was obvious when the students put together their final poster that they had drawn from what they had learned from her,” and the final presentation and poster that resulted were “presented successfully at multiple venues: one at a block-party event that the organization holds for community members and others (so more informal), and then again on campus in a much more formal symposium.” Afterwards, the team’s “vision for the Eldorado’s future was showcased in an exhibit at Project Row Houses, and serves as an important contribution to Project Row Houses’ community-focused development work in Houston’s Third Ward” (see fig. 4.13) (“Previous HART”). The result of the project is that Project Rowhouses is planning to move forward with the students’ proposal, and the organization has hired one of the students to continue working on the project. The student explained in an October 2013 article for the Rice newspaper, ““When we gave our report in August, it felt unfinished. . .I wanted to stick to the project, because I really want to see it through” (Williams). Vann describes the undeniable success of this particular project as “an incredible feat,” and the CWOVC played an important role in teaching students how to communicate effectively in multiple modes—ultimately providing students and the community with long-term benefits.

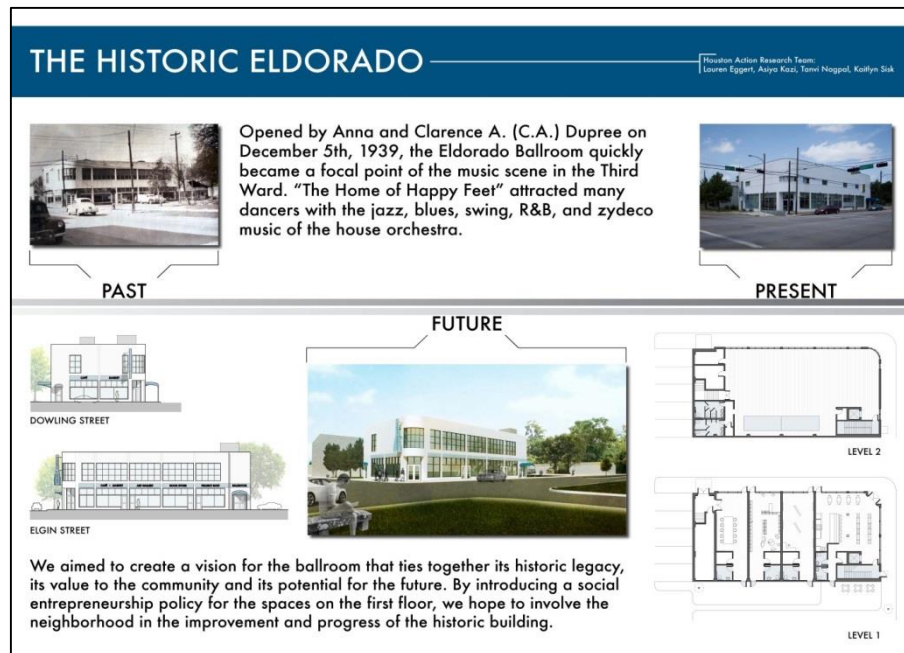


Fig. 4.13. Poster Designed for HART project benefitting Project Rowhouses

Conclusion

The multiliteracy centers at Rice and Galveston have several features that make them unique, and even privileged, when compared to other writing centers; however, like the privileged institutions discussed in Chapter III, some of their practices can be beneficial to other centers (especially those who come into contact with ELL and developmental writing students, or students in the sciences). In particular, the CWOVC at Rice and the Multiliteracy Center at Galveston demonstrate the importance of design for the physical space of a center, the similarities among tutor training at two very different institutions (such as embedded training), and methods of promoting a multimodal initiative, whether with only one person with a vision or with a whole university. Each chapter of this dissertation has expanded the reach and importance of the multiliteracy center—from establishing the broad need for multimodal support in writing center, to arguing that multiliteracy centers can be a leader

across campus on this issue through using writing center resources and collaborating with different institutional partners, and finally to introducing the role the multiliteracy center can play in benefitting the larger community outside the university. In the following chapter, the conclusion to this dissertation, I explore the implications of this expanded role for multiliteracy centers and methods to encourage writing centers to consider the multiliteracy center practices discussed in this dissertation.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Multiple Literacies in the Writing Center: Opportunities, Risks, and Rewards

In this dissertation, I have used qualitative research methods to understand the challenges of supporting multimodal composing in a writing center setting. I have examined multiliteracy center practice among writing centers broadly, and within specific multiliteracy centers, and I have discovered that multiliteracy centers can play a leading role in promoting multimodal composing on campus—whether through initiating or administering multimodal curricular initiatives, or through teaming up with other university partners to improve the community. First I will review the conclusions based on my research, and then I will look to potential areas for future research into multiliteracy centers.

The State of Multimodal Composing in Writing Centers

One of my guiding research questions was about the state of multimodal composing in writing centers, at both a national and local level. As stated in Chapter II, 70% of survey respondents are seeing multimodal projects in their centers, an increase from a previous survey over the same topic (Gardner, 2012). Directors at established multiliteracy centers (Chapter III) and at two newly-established multiliteracy centers (Chapter IV) confirm that the number of multimodal texts brought to the center is increasing, though at a slow and steady rate. For both of these groups, traditionally-written papers are still the predominant project brought to the center. From this data, it appears that while writing centers will need to be prepared for multimodal composing in their centers, they have time to respond. The best practices of the centers that participated in this study (listed below) may help these centers. Not all of what makes the centers in this study successful will apply to centers wishing to help students with multimodal projects, because the funding and institutional status many of

these centers have are not applicable in different contexts. All writing centers are different, but as David M. Sheridan argues, “the choice between a multiliteracy center and a traditional writing center is not an either-or choice, but a matter of finding a set of locations along various continua” (“Introduction” 8).

Characteristics of Successful Multiliteracy Centers

Responding to Multimodal composing is undeniably a challenge. As demonstrated in the introduction to this dissertation, some writing center administrators are concerned about the resources they will need to support multimodal composing, not only in monetary terms of equipment, staffing, and training, but also in terms of the mental and emotional resources they will spend by adding one more responsibility to their already heavy workload (Pemberton, 2003). Several survey participants in Chapter II agreed that moving their writing center towards a multiliteracy center model would involve a radical change, both in terms of technology and tutoring practices. Even experienced multiliteracy center administrators discussed in Chapter III, many in secure jobs at well-funded institutions, admitted to facing particular challenges when addressing multimodal composing at their centers—often in terms of resources, technology, and tutor training. One of my goals was to identify how multiliteracy centers addressed these common challenges, and I discovered that many of the centers in my study use recurring strategies, including:

- Willingness to adapt to students’ changing needs (understanding the need for writing centers to adapt) and enact change
- Positive attitude toward multimodal composing (belief in the value of multimodal composing for students)

- Institutional support (due to the writing center's history or a new multimodal composing initiative)
- Job security for administrators
- Integration with composition programs (through joint administrative appointments or another connection to writing programs) to support multimodal composing in writing classrooms and the writing center
- Technology available in the center
- A physical space designed with multimodal composing in mind
- Cross-disciplinary collaboration to build awareness for multimodal composing and for the center
- Collaboration with partners outside of the university to support multimodal composing that benefits the larger community

Some of these characteristics are dependent on institutional factors, such as funding and availability of technology, but many of these characteristics describe actions that the writing center or multiliteracy center can take to lead their institution in supporting and promoting multimodal composing.

Tutor Training

Another research question focused on strategies for tutor training, identified as a major challenge among survey respondents and established multiliteracy centers. From my research I discovered that tutors can be a resource for multimodal composing for the students who come to the center. Tutors can also represent the multiliteracy center through embedded tutoring practices, as shown in Chapter IV. Tutor training will become less of a challenge if students are given more opportunities for multimodal composing in composition classes,

such as through encouraging tutors to compose in multiple modes as part of their work in the center. This strategy may also help with the unresolved debate over technology training, as students can practice their technology skills when composing their own texts. Multiliteracy center tutors need to develop their skills as much as the students that come to the center. While not all centers will have technology, all centers will have tutors that can be used as a resource in the writing center, or in the classroom.

Opportunities for Collaboration

My final research question was about opportunities for collaboration for multiliteracy centers, and most of the collaborative relationships I discovered were sought out by multiliteracy centers. Collaboration can be a fruitful strategy for promoting multimodal composing, but it can also be a major challenge based on institutional constraints. A few survey questions, discussed in Chapter II, focused on opportunities for collaboration with composition programs, and several respondents reported that collaboration was not an easy solution to entrenched departmental problems. While collaboration was a successful strategy for many of the centers in my study, it is not easy. For the multiliteracy centers who wish to take the lead and promote multimodal composing, collaboration involves seeking out new partners across disciplines and arguing for the value of the center and its work. As I finished conducting interviews and traveled for the site visit portion of my study, I realized that while collaboration between writing centers and institutional partners was important, my argument could encompass an even wider definition of collaboration to also include non-writing-intensive disciplines and community partners outside the college or university. Not only does this form of collaboration further the spread of the multiliteracy center message, and

develops students' multimodal composing skills, it teaches students and other members of the institution that writing has value and can be the impetus for positive community change.

Expanding Definitions

If multiliteracy centers are the result of a valuable expansion of writing center work, one potential avenue of future research is to convince recalcitrant writing centers to embrace a designation as a multiliteracy center. Expanding the definition of the multiliteracy center (specifically in terms of technological resources and common tutoring practices) is one way to make the implementation of multiliteracy centers more feasible. Successfully encouraging skeptical centers and administrators embrace the concept of multiliteracies, primarily through bringing light to multimodal practices these centers already follow, could lead to increased visibility of multimodal composing practices among students, faculty, institutions, and community partners.

While my dissertation to this point has focused on digital multimodal texts, an expanded understanding of "multimodal" may make the transition to the multiliteracy center less difficult. Even without easy access to technology, many writing centers already value multiple literacies, and tutors at these centers help student writers by using multimodal activities such as drawing the organization of a piece of writing, using toys or manipulatives to relieve anxiety during a tutorial, or even talking through a particularly complicated section of a draft. These centers deserve the distinction as multiliteracy centers as much as those with more technological resources. As Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2010) observes, and as the evidence presented from the survey data, interviews, and site visits demonstrate, there is more than "just one possible model of addressing multiliteracies" ("The New Media" 208). Broadening the definition of the multiliteracy center, both in terms of the projects students

bring to the center and in terms of already common tutoring practices, may encourage more centers to support the many ways students compose and communicate. The potential reward for writing centers could include bringing new students into the center, and ultimately becoming an essential space for the whole campus, and for the larger community as well.

One argument for a digital emphasis in multiliteracy centers is that these centers respond to a need on many campuses to develop the digital literacy of both students and teachers. Even as early as 2004, when David Sheridan directed the Sweetland Multiliteracy Center (one of the first on record) from within the Sweetland Center for Writing, he pictured a very digital future for higher education:

What I envision is the academy really nurturing the kind of skill sets that it takes to communicate effectively in a digital environment and in using the web. What I envision (although it makes me blush with the sort of utopian ring that it brings with it) is that what it would mean to be educated in the twenty-first century would be, in part, to be able to communicate effectively using digital technologies. (Millar)

Many students already compose in digital environments, though they may not know how to communicate their purpose to a faceless internet audience. Similarly, many writing instructors need to understand the variety of semiotic options available to them in digital environments if they are going to effectively teach multimodal assignments. A multiliteracy center can help both of these populations, but overly limiting the definition of the multiliteracy center at this early stage could also limit the students seeking help from the center. Sheridan (2012) offers a convincing argument for the “digital studio” model of multiliteracy centers in his contribution to “The Idea of a Multiliteracy Center, but the

potential danger of separating digital or multimodal writing from more traditional forms of writing is that students may not understand that both methods of composing are valid ways to persuade, inform, or otherwise communicate a purpose to an audience (Balester et al.).

The extent to which multiliteracy centers and technology converge depends on individual institutions and the resources at the disposal of each center. Jackie Grutsch McKinney's concern is that administrators without access to money or technological equipment may not be convinced by scholarship focused on the "digital studio" model. She believes very strongly that multiliteracy centers are the obvious next step in the development of writing centers, and unlike the "anxieties" that Sheridan (2010) has encountered when students have assumed that the multiliteracy center is not much more than a computer help desk, McKinney writes, "I do not have concerns about working with multimodal texts—I think we have to" ("The New Media" 212). Yet as the director of Ball State University's writing center, Grutsch McKinney cannot afford to purchase and maintain thousands of dollars in new equipment at her center, not to mention train the consultants to use such equipment, and she is concerned that other multiliteracy center administrators, intentionally or not, are defining a universal model for multiliteracy centers focused on technology.

Computers are a well-established part of multimodal pedagogy, but an assumed symbiotic relationship between computers and multimodal assignments often ignores other methods of composing with multiple modes. Because many of the multimodal assignments taught in writing courses (and brought to the multiliteracy center) are produced on the computer, the implication is that "technology and literacy are inextricably linked" (Sheridan, "Words" 342). Following this logic, Christina Murphy and Lory Hawkes argue that the "multiple literacies" the writing center should support include "e-literacies," "digital

literacies,” and “information literacies;” however, digital literacies are not the same as multiple literacies (173). For example, the Digital ACT Studio at UNC-Greensboro originated as a Digital Literacy Center, but the directors of the university’s writing and speaking centers, Sarah Littlejohn and Kimberly M. Cuny, decided that if the studio would “offer integrated oral, written, visual, and technical feedback. . .[it would] be a more effective institutional configuration” (103). Eventually, Littlejohn and Cuny joined their centers (along with the newly reconfigured Digital ACT studio) under the banner of the UNC-Greensboro Multiliteracy Centers. This emphasis on “oral, written, visual, and technical feedback” echoes the language of The New London Group in “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies”—discussed in the Introduction as the inspiration for the term “multiliteracy centers.” The New London Group’s list of multiliteracies, including linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal, are not only associated with the production of digital texts. The group argues that all writing is already multimodal, and using this logic, the multimodal projects that students bring to the writing center do not have to rely on the computer (81). More importantly, expanding the definition of multiple literacies to include non-digital literacies might convince more writing centers that they already have the resources to respond effectively to multimodal texts.

A speech or presentation is perhaps the most common non-digital multimodal assignment brought to the writing center. Consultants not only can help the writer with the written text of the speech, but also with presentation style or with visual aids. Some schools have speaking or communication centers that operate alongside or within the writing center; for example, at Stanford University’s Hume Center for Writing and Speaking, students can meet with consultants to brainstorm ideas, practice their presentations, and even videotape

and watch their speeches to improve their delivery. Sohui Lee writes that she has had to carve “a place for digital media consulting within the existing parameters of the [center],” and a foundation of supporting non-digital multimodal presentations might make the task of building support for digital multimodal composing within the existing writing center slightly easier (Lee, Alfano, and Carpenter 54). At the same time, while administrators do not need to invest as heavily in equipment or software programs to help students with presentations, opening the definition of “multimodal text” to include both digital and non-digital options may just as easily overextend administrators. David Sheridan (2010) acknowledges that multiliteracy centers could be open to the possibility of non-digital modes, but then he asks, “What forms of communication, if any, would be excluded from such a center [?] Would a student working on a painting be welcome? . . . What about a student expressing his or her ideas through a performance such as a song or a dance?” (“Introduction” 6). Through either designing a website or choreographing a dance, students combine multiple modes to create meaning, and thus both would technically belong under the purview of the multiliteracy center. Realistically though, no center can fully support all the ways students compose, or, as Sheridan writes, “the diversity of semiotic options composers have in the 21st century.” Each individual administrator must decide where to draw the line, but completely ignoring the possibility of becoming a multiliteracy center will not serve student’s needs. Enlarging the understanding of multimodal composing to include both digital and non-digital options is one way to convince skeptical administrators that the practices of a multiliteracy center do not need to radically change from those of a writing center.

If the multiliteracy center is a place where different kinds of projects are welcome, it can also be a place where different methods of writing instruction are welcome. This

argument is connected to a common justification for multimodal composition pedagogy—that besides valuing non-traditional writing assignments, multimodal methods can help struggling student writers produce traditional, alphabetic texts by encouraging students’ strengths in other modes. Patricia A. Dunn (2001) adapts her list of “multiple literacies” from Howard Gardner’s list of multiple intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (2). These “learning styles” or “ways of knowing” are often employed during the drafting and revising process in the writing classroom, and this emphasis on multiple literacies as part of writing pedagogy also describes what happens during a writing center tutorial. Many consultants in the writing center already encourage students to use their multiple literacies to revise their writing. Any combination of tutoring practices such as sketching a map or outline for a research essay or encouraging students to move around the room while talking about their writing are examples of multimodal tutoring. Some of these methods are mentioned in *Creative Approaches to Writing Centers* (2008), a collection of essays edited by Kevin Dvorak and Shanti Bruce. For example, Chad Verbais references Howard Gardner’s “tactile or kinesthetic” learning style in his essay “Incorporating Play and Toys into the Writing Center.” He argues, “Using toys in a Writing Center environment can, in many ways, introduce a tactile learner to various writing concepts. A tactile learner can touch and manipulate toys that might represent parts of speech, or play with a stress ball, which might stimulate creativity during a session” (138). Verbais has found that encouraging some students to pick up something to hold or fiddle with could relieve stress or serve as a distraction “when they were nervous or stumped about how to proceed with a thought” and thus made the tutorial more successful (142). In another essay from *Creative Approaches to*

Writing Centers, Anne Ellen Geller uses this type of pedagogy with her tutors, encouraging them to draw a picture representing a recent tutorial as part of a training exercise. Geller has developed a prompt that encourages reflection and abstract thinking: “Capture a moment that you’re left thinking about from a conference you had this past week and represent it visually” (164). One benefit of this type of exercise is that tutors become aware of how multimodal practices work with their own learning styles, perhaps encouraging them to in turn use these methods with students. Michigan State writing center director Trixie Smith has presented a session on using manipulatives as part of writing tutorials at a gathering of the International Writing Centers Association. In a posting to the IWCA listserv, she wrote: “We have a long list of things used in our center. I don’t think I can say exactly what each is used for because they are always there and available and different consultants and clients use them in different ways.” While these scholars do not use “multiliteracy center” to describe their work, tutors who consider multiple modes as part of a tutorial, whether the tutorial is for an essay, a website, or a presentation, are already part of a multiliteracy center.

For centers that have the resources and capability to support digital composing, consultants can approach digital and non-digital compositions using the same multimodal tutoring practices, other centers can start with the understanding that the work tutors already do is multimodal. The only difference in training that Sohui Lee requires is that her tutors must “practice their own multimodal composing skills,” so that they become “producers not just users or readers” (Balester et al.). This requirement, which several experienced multiliteracy center administrators replicate in their training practices (see Chapter III), seems reasonable because all writing center administrators expect tutors to be proficient writers who understand writing conventions. Also logical is that when a student brings a

multimodal project to the multiliteracy center, a tutorial would involve “multimodal production in the invention stage”—simply meaning that a consultation about a multimodal project would also involve multiple modes, including writing, drawing, moving, or speaking (Lee, Alfano, and Carpenter 41). Lee at Stanford, and Christine Alfano and Russell Carpenter at Eastern Kentucky University, describe the multimodal production that takes place during a tutorial at their centers, focusing specifically on how storyboards can help students compose visual arguments or create digital video projects. The suggestions Lee, Alfano, and Carpenter give their tutors include using post-it notes for the individual frames of the storyboard (since they can be easily rearranged), and showing the student examples of finished videos on YouTube. As writing center consultants “are trained to distinguish the difference from the ideas articulated by the student writer and the quality of the writing,” so “new media tutors should be able to identify how effectively the storyboard itself represents a visualization of key scenes that direct viewers’ experiences” (51). For these tutorials, access to technology is not as important as helping students understand the rhetorical purpose of their project. Lee, Alfano, and Carpenter write, “In this way, consultants can help students produce effective new media texts by retaining focus on many of the same fundamentals that govern tutoring sessions for more traditional texts” (52).

Another example of this rhetorical approach to consultations, from David Sheridan (2006), demonstrates that familiar “minimalist” or “nondirective” tutoring approaches “can be translated into a multiliteracy consulting session” (“Words” 346). Sheridan describes an example “multiliteracy consulting session” where a tutor asks a student to “sketch” his ideas for the homepage of his online digital portfolio on a piece of oversized paper (345). Even though computer workstations are available, the consultant and the student writer sit at a

normal consulting table and the consultant starts by asking familiar questions: “Is this an assignment? Are there any guidelines? Who are the target audiences? What are the primary rhetorical purposes?” The consultant and the students move from one mode to another while working on the project—just like any other tutorial: brainstorming ideas out loud, reading the text the author wants to include in the portfolio, and drawing design options. Even when the student and the consultant later moved to a computer station, Sheridan describes the tutor sitting “slightly off to the side” without “control of the keyboard.” After any change on the computer, the student and the consultant “discuss the rhetorical implications,” because the student needs rhetorical help as much as he or she needs technical help scanning images or moving text boxes (346).

As Sheridan’s example of “sketching” a website home page demonstrates, tutorials centered on digital multimodal assignments do not have to differ substantially from tutorials centered on alphabetical text. In fact, writing center administrators do not even need to change the name or mission of the center to become a multiliteracy center. At Ball State’s writing center, Grutsch McKinney “trained tutors to address multimodality; equipped the center with hardware, peripherals, and software to facilitate multimodal work; and . . . advertised formally and informally our ability to work with students on multimodal work,” yet she did not change the name of her center because she was concerned that students would believe traditional writing assignments were no longer welcome (Balester et al.). A similar argument for supporting multimodal composing without changing the center name is that multiliteracy centers are already writing centers, and writing centers already account for students’ multiple literacies. As Allison Hitt (2012) states, “I use writing center and multiliteracy center almost interchangeably. . . [because] all writing centers support

multiliterate practices.” Considering tutoring methods as part of the multiliteracy center opens up the idea of the center to include current writing center practices, and rebuts concerns that moving from a writing center model to a multiliteracy center would necessarily involve massive change. Or, to use Sheridan’s phrasing, “Writing centers might productively travel a little farther down a road that they have been on for some time” (“Introduction” 8).

As reviewed in previous chapters, many scholars and administrators are concerned that limiting the scope of the writing center mission could potentially also limit the purpose and value of the writing center (Jackie Grutsch McKinney, 2009; Gardner, 2012). The implication of overworked administrators ignoring a need for multimodal consulting is that both the writing center and students will be negatively affected. I agree that the importance of technology and digital writing assignments will only continue to grow on college campuses, and the writing center will need to respond to these changes to stay relevant; however, broadening the definition of multimodal texts and tutoring practices is a first step for writing centers that will eventually lead to more computer integration. Ideally, all writing centers would be able to afford the technology they need to support students as they compose for digital or networked environments, but those without sufficient resources can still develop students’ multiple literacies through the one-on-one attention they are known for.

Reconsidering the definition of multimodal projects and the role of multimodal pedagogy in common tutoring practices is a good entry point to multiliteracy center work—and could lead the multiliteracy center to not only welcome new students, but also become an agent of change within their institutions.

Avenues for Future Research

In addition to expanding the definition of multimodal composing to bring writing centers and multiliteracy centers closer together, I have considered two additional avenues for future research:

1. Explore further the connections between community service, collaboration, multimodal composing, and multiliteracy centers.
2. Research the drawbacks of multiliteracy center practice. When studying existing centers, it is natural for subjects to not want to put their center or their work in a bad light. Perhaps another anonymous survey, now that I know much more about multiliteracy centers, would provide a more complete view for future research.

This dissertation provides an opportunity for the writing center to take a vital role in writing instruction as the definition of writing expands, without fundamentally changing its emphasis on assisting students with traditional writing assignments. As Joddy Murray writes about multimodal assignments, the “challenge. . . is not one of substitution, rather one of addition” (8). Even though this “addition” will require more of the writing center’s already scant resources, supporting multimodal composing will allow writing centers to provide the valuable help they are known for to more students. This dissertation has presented one potential future for writing centers—as a leader in multimodal composing on college campuses—but this vision fulfills the deeply-held beliefs of many writing center scholars that the writing center can have a wide-ranging impact on a campus and on a community.

APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

Demographics of Survey Participant

1. What is the official title of your position within the writing center?

- Director
- Assistant Director
- Professional Writing Tutor/Consultant
- Student Writing Tutor/Consultant
- Other, Explain:

2. What is your current employment status?

- Full time administrator or staff member
- Part time administrator or staff member
- Full time instructor or lecturer with renewable contract
- Part time instructor or adjunct
- Assistant professor
- Associate professor
- Professor
- Endowed Chair or Named Professor
- Graduate Student
- Volunteer
- Other, Explain:

3. How would you describe the institution where you currently work?

- Two-year college
- Public Four-year college
- Private Four-year college
- MA-granting
- PhD-granting
- Other, Explain:

7. How long have you worked as a writing center administrator at your current institution?

- less than one year
- one to three years
- four to six years
- seven to ten years
- more than ten years

8. How long have you worked in a writing center at any institution?

- less than one year
- one to three years
- four to six years
- seven to ten years
- more than ten years

Demographics of Writing Center

9. Is your writing center:

- part of the English Department
- outside of the English Department

if outside, in what college or department is your writing center located (or who do you report to)?

16. Who tutors in the writing center where you work? (check all that apply)

- full time administrators
- part time administrators
- undergraduate students
- graduate students
- full time faculty
- part time faculty
- full time staff
- part time staff
- volunteers
- other, explain:

Multimodal composing in your center

10. Do students ask for help with multimodal projects in your writing center (compositions that use a combination of words, images, sounds, movements, etc.)?

- yes
- no (please skip to question #20)
- other, explain:

If yes, what percentage of tutorials in your center (per year) centers on multimodal assignments? (please estimate)

- less than 5%
- 6-15%
- 16-25%
- 26-50%
- 51-74%
- more than 75%
- I'm not sure

11. How would you describe the types of multimodal assignments you have seen at your center? (check all that apply)

- video
- website
- blog
- slide presentation (such as PowerPoint, Prezi, or a similar program)
- podcast
- infographic (or other computer-based map, graph, or drawing)
- oral presentation
- map, graph, or drawing (non-digital)
- poster
- brochure
- other digital (computer-based) project, explain:
- other non-digital project, explain:
- none

12. Which courses assign the majority of multimodal assignments that students bring to your writing center? (check all that apply)

- first year composition
- other composition or English courses
- Communication courses
- General education or core courses
- WAC courses
- courses in the students' major (not writing-intensive)
- other, explain:

21. What have you found to be the biggest challenge in helping students with multimodal projects? (please pick one)

purchasing new equipment

organizing the physical space of the center

training tutors in technology

hiring tutors with previous experience in technology

training tutors to respond to both multimodal and word-based texts

justifying the value of responding to multimodal texts (inside or outside the university)

Other, Explain:

27. In order to better understand the prevalence of multimodal assignments brought to writing centers, what is the name and/or the geographic region of your center? (your response is optional)

Training Tutors to respond to Multimodal Composing

18. Are the tutors at your center trained to respond differently to a multimodal text (as opposed to an essay or word-based text)?

yes

no

other, explain:

If yes, how does their approach differ? If no, how are tutors trained to approach student texts?

19. Are tutors trained to use specific equipment or software (such as photo editing software, web design software, or slide presentation software) in order to respond to multimodal texts?

yes

no

other, explain:

we primarily hire tutors already experienced with equipment or software

Multiliteracy Centers

20. How important do you believe it is for writing centers to help students with multimodal writing projects?

- Very Important
- Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

Please explain your answer:

21. Do you consider yourself familiar with the conversation about multiliteracy centers in writing center research?

- yes
- no
- other, explain:

22. What is your definition or understanding of a multiliteracy center?

23. Do you consider your writing center to be a multiliteracy center?

- yes
- no
- other, explain:

Opportunities for Collaboration

24. Do you believe that the writing center should collaborate with composition programs in supporting multimodal writing on campus?

- yes
- no
- other, explain:

If yes, how could collaboration with composition benefit the writing center?

25. Does your writing center collaborate with your university's composition program in supporting multimodal composing?

- yes
- no
- other, explain:

26. If yes, how? (check all that apply)

Writing center and composition program develop assignments together

Composition instructors share assignments and objectives with writing center

Composition instructors also work in the writing center

Writing center sponsors workshops for instructors or students

Writing center personnel participate in workshops sponsored by the composition program or the English Department

other, explain:

27. How else could writing centers and composition programs collaborate in supporting multimodal composing on campus?

28. Has your writing center encountered any barriers when attempting to collaborate with composition (not necessarily in supporting multimodal composing)?

Yes

No

Other

Not applicable

Please explain:

29. If applicable, how could these barriers potentially impact supporting multimodal composing on campus in the future?

Thank you for completing my survey. I greatly appreciate any feedback on the organization of this survey, or on any of the questions. Please also leave additional comments about multiliteracy centers, collaboration between composition programs and writing centers, or multimodal assignments in the writing center:

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. What kinds of multimodal assignments do you see at your center?
2. How long have students brought multimodal texts to your center? Have you noticed a change in the number of multimodal assignments brought to the center over time, or a change in the kinds of multimodal assignments brought to the center?
3. How do you collaborate with writing courses to support multimodal composing? Do core writing classes in the English Department send students to your center with multimodal assignments?
4. How else can writing programs and writing centers collaborate in supporting multimodal composing?
5. What are the biggest challenges associated with running a multiliteracy center (as opposed to a center that does not help students with multimodal texts)?
6. How do you train consultants to respond to multimodal texts?
7. What do you think is the future of multiliteracy centers?
8. Why is the conversation about multiliteracy centers important?

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Meghan McGehee Roe was born November 28, 1982 in Shawnee, Oklahoma. She is the daughter of Martin and Lisa McGehee. She graduated in 2001 from Kickapoo High School in Springfield, Missouri and she received a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English from Missouri State University in 2005. From 2005 until 2007, Roe worked at the Discovery Center of Springfield, an interactive children's museum.

In August of 2007, Roe enrolled in the Master of Arts program at Texas Christian University. While working on her M.A. in English, she held a Teaching Assistantship in 2007-2008 and worked as a Graduate Writing Consultant in the William L. Adams Center for Writing.

After receiving her Master of Arts degree in 2009, Roe continued in the Ph.D. program for Rhetoric & Composition at TCU. She held a Graduate Instructorship from 2009-2013, a Departmental Assistantship from 2013-2014, and continued to work in the William L. Adams Center for Writing. Since August, 2014, Roe has been an Instructor of Writing and Director of the Writing Center at Briar Cliff University in Sioux City, Iowa. She is a member of the International Writing Centers Association.

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ABSTRACT

MULTIMODAL COMPOSING, MULTILITERACY CENTERS, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

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In the past decade, writing centers have grappled with the increased attention to multimodal composing on college campuses, such as projects composed using a combination of words, images, sounds, and movements. John Trimbur (2000) was the first to forecast the redevelopment of the writing center as a multiliteracy center to respond to this trend—a reference to the New London Group’s (1996) call to expand education beyond word-based definitions of literacy. This dissertation takes advantage of the increasingly important conversation about multiliteracy centers (and the related conversation about multimodal composing in composition studies) to conduct a qualitative study of current practice in multiliteracy centers. Primarily, this project examines the role a multiliteracy center can play in supporting and promoting multimodal composing by analyzing three forms of data: a nationwide online survey of writing center professionals, interviews with six administrators of established multiliteracy centers, and site visits to two newly-established multiliteracy centers.

Survey data presents a broad view of the state of multimodal composing in writing centers, and also indicates that participants in the survey believe multimodal composing is important both for the future of writing centers and because of the educational value these projects provide to students. Interviews with multiliteracy center administrators identify common successful practices and common challenges for established multiliteracy centers, and these interviews also suggest that the multiliteracy center can be a leader on campus on this issue through using writing center resources and collaborating with institutional partners. Observations and interviews at two newly-established multiliteracy centers demonstrate that multiliteracy centers can provide support to student populations most writing centers already serve but also to less familiar populations, such as students preparing posters and presentations in the hard sciences or engineering. Additionally, the multiliteracy center can help students with multimodal projects that benefit organizations outside of the university. Ultimately, this dissertation concludes that an expanded definition of multiliteracy center work can benefit students and faculty in composition and across disciplines, as well as members of the larger community.