

Northeast Writing Centers Association
2019 Conference Call for Proposals

Voices of Engagement: The Roles Writing Centers Play in Making Writing Meaningful

Western Connecticut State University
Danbury, CT
March 30-31, 2019

Proposals due by December 1, 2018

Keynote Speakers

Anne Ellen Geller – St. John’s University
Neal Lerner – Northeastern University

On This Year’s Theme

In **The Meaningful Writing Project**, Michele Eodice, Anne Geller, and Neal Lerner present the results of interviews with students about writing projects they felt were meaningful to them during their undergraduate education. Eodice, Geller, and Lerner conclude that meaningful writing projects provide opportunities for “student agency; engagement with instructors, peers, and materials; and learning that connects to previous experiences and passions and to future aspirations and identities.” The occasions for meaningful writing occur within a dynamic between exercising choice and negotiating an assignment’s requirements, allowing writers to “tap into the power of personal connection, see what they’re writing as applicable, relevant...,” and “immerse themselves in what they’re thinking, writing, and researching.” While these claims are derived from research about student writing in relation to assignments, we hope to consider the shapes that the word “meaningful” takes on when it shifts into the writing center context.

Eodice, Geller, and Lerner consider meaningful writing through the concepts of **agency**, **engagement**, and **learning for transfer**. We encourage you to consider writing center work through these themes, from our vantage point of working one-to-one with students across the curriculum. Consider writing centers as sites where the complicated term “meaningful” can help get at the heart of writing center work, can

act as an opportunity to engage with concepts from conversations in writing center studies, composition and rhetoric, as well as other fields, and function as a way to foreground the voices of all those who work in and use (and even those who may never use) our centers. The hyperlinks above may help to deepen your engagement with the conversations referenced by Eodice, Geller, and Lerner.

The following questions may serve as springboards for your proposal.

Tutor Voices

- How do tutors go about creating conversations with depth around a topic in sessions? Are writing centers poised to create *immersion* around the writing process?
- How does the writing process interact with students' engagement with their topics? Can parts of the writing process be meaningful even if the final product isn't?
- How do tutors critically negotiate the dynamics of interpersonal interactions to create meaningful conversations? What do we gain or lose by looking at these interactions through the lens of agency – the writer's or the tutor's?
- How do you help writers connect to assignments that do not feel meaningful to them?
- What tutoring, Writing Center education, or other experiences in the writing center have you as a tutor found most meaningful? What helps you engage and find agency?
- What are you learning through your writing center work that transfers to other experiences in your academic work?
- How do engagement, agency, and transfer relate to scholarship on identities and relations, such as race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, nationality?

Administrator Voices

- What experiences do tutors/writers/administrators find meaningful?
- How do we research what tutors/writers/administrators find meaningful? What if our understanding of what's meaningful conflicts with others' understandings?
- What are some ways for administrators to sustain engagement with their work across sites?
- How can we help our tutors develop agency in their writing center experience? What strategies can we use to further their engagement and personal connection?

- How can tutor education prepare tutors to support engagement, agency, and transfer? How can tutor education prepare tutors to engage writers across social differences as they strive for engagement, agency, and transfer?
- Writing centers have important information about how students engage with and respond to prompts, written feedback, and the classroom experience. How has your center used this information? How have you communicated this information to stakeholders, i.e. Writing Program Administrators, WID/WAC Committees, Department Chairs? Has your center worked with faculty on creating assignments?
- How do your efforts to create a socially equitable writing center relate to engagement, agency, or transfer?

Faculty Voices

- In *The Meaningful Writing Project* Eodice, Geller, and Lerner state that “faculty in our study were easily able to articulate the ways writing worked in their classes, the importance they saw for disciplinary writing, and the challenges and triumphs they faced repeatedly in their work with students.” How can faculty work with writing specialists on campus to develop a vocabulary around writing? How can stakeholders build a campus culture around writing?

Proposal Guidelines

Successful presentations are dynamic exchanges between audience members (peer tutors, graduate students, and other writing center professionals and faculty). We welcome presentations (and poster presentations – see guidelines below) of original scholarship and research that fosters dialogue with conference participants. In order to include more voices and perspectives in our ongoing discussions, we especially encourage tutors and first-time presenters to send in proposals, as well as writing center workers from community college and high school writing centers.

Please prepare a 250- to 500-word proposal and a maximum 75-word abstract for an individual presentation, group panel, poster presentation, roundtable discussion, interactive workshop, or special interest group (SIG).

Definitions:

Individual Presentation: 15-20 minute presentation. Individuals will be formed into a panel of 3 to 4 presentations.

Panel Presentation: 3 to 4 presentations of 15-20 minutes each on a specific theme or question. Panels should plan to reserve 15 minutes for questions at the end of the session.

Poster Presentation: NEWCA’s poster session is an opportunity for you to get feedback on a work-in-progress or to share research that lends itself to a visual/poster

presentation. Generally speaking, posters consist of both images and text in order to share the reason for the study/research, current findings, future directions, and—if you're still planning future stages for your research—what you'd like feedback or ideas on. Submissions for individual or group poster sessions are welcome.

Roundtable Discussion: 15 minutes of introductory framing by the leaders on a specific theme or question, followed by a facilitated discussion among attendees.

Workshop Session: 75-minute interactive sessions that teach and engage participants through discussion, collaborative work, group activities, and/or other methods of involvement.

Special Interest Group: Special Interest Groups (**SIGs**) will be offered during 75-minute meeting times and will be scheduled throughout the day. SIGs are typically informal conversations with colleagues and peers who have similar interests institutional settings, or roles. *We also encourage SIGs to address conversations started in the previous conference.* Proposals should include a brief description and overview of how participants will be involved.

Please include the following information in your proposal:

1. **Title** of presentation, a 250- to 500-word **proposal**, and a maximum 75-word **abstract** for inclusion in the conference program. For poster presentations, submit a 250-word proposal that includes a description of your project/research and justification for why the poster session is the best fit for your project.
2. **Type of session** (individual, group, poster, roundtable, workshop, SIG)
3. Specific **audiovisual and technical requests** (NOTE: Presenters should plan to bring their own laptop computers)
4. **Plans for encouraging interaction** and involving the audience.
5. Indication of one or more of the following **keywords** connected to your proposal: Qualitative research, Quantitative research, Faculty, Administrators, Tutors, Writers, Agency, Learning for transfer, Engagement, WAC/WID, Tutor education, Beyond the writing center, Other (supply keyword)

Note: Please do not include any personal or identifying information within the body of the proposal as the committee would prefer to read each submission blind in the interest of fairness. Including the type of institution (community college, high school, small liberal arts college (SLAC), university, etc.) you are representing is appropriate.

Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of relevance to the conference theme and application to a broad audience of writing center tutors and administrators. Submissions will also be reviewed on the basis of originality (novel perspectives,

approaches, and methods), interactivity (audience participation vs. oral delivery of an essay), and clarity.

Submitting Proposals for Presentations and Poster Sessions

All proposals should be submitted via www.newcamembers.org. If this is your first time submitting a proposal, you will be asked to create an account. If you have submitted a proposal using this system before, you will need to log in using the email address and password you associated with the account.

If you have any questions about the submission process, please email **Susan DeRosa** or **Stefan Spezio**, co-chairs of the **NEWCA Proposal Reading Committee**, at derosas@easternct.edu or sspezio@qcc.cuny.edu.

For More Information

For more information about the conference, registration, or scholarship opportunities, including the 2019 NEWACC meeting held at the conference, visit NEWCA ONLINE at <https://newcaconference.org/>. For other questions related to the conference, email the **NEWCA Chair, Michael Turner** at newcaconference@gmail.com.