Learning Institutional Ecologies for Inventive Collaboration in Writing Center/Classroom Collaboration

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This article explores how knowledge of institutional ecologies can help build connections across departments of large universities without direct communication. The authors, an instructor and a writing center tutor, consider "inventive collaboration"—impromptu work mediated by student writing—as a way to improve a multilingual student's writing. This experience serves as a test case to highlight how the rhetorical strategies of inventive collaboration can improve students' rhetorical attunement, awareness of audience, and agency over their writing. While the authors recognize the uniqueness of their indirect collaboration, they also offer an assessment of the institutional and individual components that allowed for this collaboration to take place.

In the spring of 2016, Rachel McCabe and Elizabeth Maffetone developed an unexpected and unplanned collaboration over student work. This collaboration took place at a large public midwestern institution, Indiana University Bloomington (IU), and connected the university's separate writing center and English department, where the writing program is located. Rachel was a graduate instructor of a first year multilingual composition course, and Elizabeth was a graduate student tutor in the university writing center.[1] Building on what William Duffy defines as an interactionist, object-oriented frame for collaboration theory, we outline in this article what we have termed an "inventive collaboration" that allowed us—and our student—to navigate some of the systemic issues of authority between the classroom and the writing center. Inventive collaboration, as we define it here, is a stance towards working together mediated by students and student texts. It takes as its premise that knowledge of institutional ecologies allows students, faculty, and staff to articulate their place in universities in ways that makes their collective work more productive and can better support student writers.

Our collaboration hinged on two factors: our shared composition training, which stressed our location within the university's ecological network, and our mutual investment in putting student learning and agency before personal authority. Our inventive collaboration demonstrates the importance of learning about institutional ecologies, particularly in spaces where direct

collaboration is not accessible. While the congenial relationship between the university's writing program and writing center laid the groundwork for our collaboration, the flexibility of this model demonstrates the potential for inventive collaborations to support Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) and Writing Center Directors (WCDs) within university networks more broadly. Inventive collaboration can bridge the gap between WPAs and WCDs, which more often serve as separate entities than as integrated pieces of the student writing process.

Framing Institutional Structures and Collaborative Models

Despite their shared goals and approaches, collaborations between writing centers and writing programs are not as common or easy as one might hope or assume. Linda S. Bergmann explains that writing centers often make considerable contact with people across campus and divisions—in part because of their reputation for being the "go-to" place for writing help. Despite this reputation, Bergmann explains that writing centers are often marginalized by the larger academic community because their work is, at times, removed from the day-to-day work of academic instructors (no courses, no grading, etc.).[2] We argue that one way such divides might be bridged is through a greater understanding of institutional ecologies—the scope, role, and intersections among different campus entities.

The importance of ecological impacts on student writing has been a subject of composition scholarship for decades. Marilyn Cooper's 1986 article "The Ecology of Writing" examines how student writers and their work "… both determine and are determined by the characteristics of all the other writers and writings in the systems" (Cooper 368). This constant influence from the many members of the larger writing community results in ecologies that are "inherently dynamic; though their structures and contents can be specified at a given moment, in real time they are constantly changing, limited only by parameters that are themselves subject to change over longer spans of time" (Cooper 368). The constant changes of, and within, these learning ecologies highlight how different practices within organizations can have different impacts on individual writers, and why communication within any organization is so vital. In addition, acknowledging the presence of ecologies of writing allows for easier navigation among them. Using universal language and avoiding jargon, acknowledging common goals across different university systems, employing ethnographic thinking, and remaining open-minded to the different practices within other parts of the university are all critical in maintaining unity across different ecologies.[3]

Cooper advocates an ecological model of writing because it moves beyond the individual writer to consider the way "writers interact to form systems"

and, as a result, form and are formed by the writers and writings within these systems (368). Cooper argues that at its most ideal, the ecological model projects "an infinitely extended group of people who interact through writing, who are connected by the various systems that constitute the activity of writing" (372). Although Cooper's emphasis is primarily on the writer within a system, we see Cooper's model providing a useful way to think about ecologies from the institutional perspective as well, because knowledge of writing ecologies can also become more important as institutional—that is, university—size increases. In the case of the collaborative work between writing centers and writing programs, this means emphasizing the ways each of these different contexts allows students glimpses into different "universities" as they invent them.[4] Not only do students need to learn the expectations of these two parts of the larger institution, but they also need to see these differences not as confusing or upsetting—acknowledging these differences as resulting from the different institutional ecologies at play. As we will show, this can help students to think more rhetorically about the writing process.

Although our work builds heavily from the notion of "institutional ecologies," our practice aligns with a methodological model of thinking described by Michelle LaFrance as institutional ethnography. As she describes it, institutional ethnography offers a model of viewing institutions from one's vantage point within them in order to reveal overlooked everyday experience (4). In practice, this method involves seeing the ways that institutional contexts inflect the work that we do as writers, pedagogues, and workers. LaFrance notes that the field of composition has often theorized the "institutional" as reflecting a greater attention to "broad rhetorical patterns in the field, the university, and higher education *than to the ways individual people actually negotiate those discourses in an everyday sense*" (14). By considering how institutional ecologies directly impacted our relationship to the student in question and how the student interacted with the ecologies in play, we simultaneously investigate the university's ecologies and their impact on individual members of the learning community.

Awareness of Institutional Ecologies: A Reflection on Our Experience

In order to show students the systems in which they are writing, instructors must be aware of those systems. While our training did not explicitly use the terminology LaFrance employs, her discussion of the virtues of institutional ethnography and its ability to help workers within institutions see how those institutions shape individuals' attitudes, was foundational in our training at IU. The success of our collaborative relationship was cultivated primarily by our deep understanding of our roles and positions in larger institutional ecologies. There were a number of unique factors that contributed to this understanding, but foremost was our shared training: we had both been trained

as instructors within the English department, under the supervision of Dana Anderson, the Director of Composition.[5] Our initial programmatic training involved a week-long orientation at the start of the fall semester and a semester-long pedagogical theory course that includes supplemental practical support intended to prepare instructors to teach first year composition.[6]

A key component of this training had been to invite and include members of organizations and departments across the university to introduce themselves and the different resources available to instructors and students. These guests ranged from administrators and experienced instructors within the department to representatives from campus-wide resources such as Title IX and the campus writing center.[7] In addition to these formal presentations, the Director of Composition also devoted a session of the Proseminar[8] to outlining where the first year composition course fits within the larger institutional structure as well as the curricular objectives and where those objectives come from: the state, the university, the department, and the CWPA Outcomes for First Year Writing. By showcasing the many parts of the institution with which the writing program remains in conversation, we were invited to see Rachel's work in the classroom and Elizabeth's work in the writing center, not as isolated spaces of learning, but as one place of many where students work to improve their communication skills. Moreover, the emphasis on the way the different programs work to serve larger institutional, state, and national aims allowed us to articulate the shared goals and objectives of our individual work. As a result, our training helped us recognize the importance and difference of the work within both the classroom and the tutorial space well before our collaboration began.

Case Study

Our paths first crossed in 2016, when Rachel was teaching multilingual composition and Elizabeth was working as a tutor in the university's writing center. At the beginning of the semester, Rachel alerted students to the different resources available to them, including instructor office hours and the tutoring sessions available at the writing center. As the semester progressed, many students attended office hours, and some brought drafts of their work that had clearly received input from the writing center. One student in particular made a point to meet with Rachel at least once a week and informed her that he had a weekly appointment with the writing center as well. The student with whom we worked, like many of his classmates, was very interested in figuring out what his instructor wanted for each writing assignment and was often very frustrated when Rachel asked more questions than she provided answers. A normal meeting consisted of him repeatedly asking if his choices were correct and Rachel asking him about the rhetorical goals of his writing.

Elizabeth's relationship with the student began when he brought his first assignment, a summary, into the writing center to be tutored. The student's goals for the tutorial were focused on grades and grammar, an approach we might expect given Carol Severino's work on student perceptions of tutoring. However, it quickly became clear that his first assignment had been inadvertently plagiarized. Elizabeth asked the student to explain his choices and why they were appropriate for his audience; however, the student insisted he had included those points and passages because "they are there." When Elizabeth asked the student to show her "where" exactly "there" was, the student pulled up a webpage with a summary of the text in question and she realized that the student had copy-pasted the summary into theirs. Through this discovery, Elizabeth shifted into a more directive tutoring style, explaining that copying a summary from the internet constituted plagiarism. The student was daunted by the prospect of having to rewrite the paper and, in response, Elizabeth leveraged the student's focus on his grade and awareness of the instructor as audience. She explained that if he did not rewrite the paper, he would fail the assignment; she explained that Rachel would certainly give the student a "Zero-F." To avoid such possible consequences, Elizabeth encouraged the student to begin his draft anew. During the remainder of the tutorial, the student and Elizabeth worked through the text to be summarized, and she helped him build a summary in his own words. While the student was concerned with what he perceived as the inelegance of his language, Elizabeth consistently underscored that ownership of his work was what mattered most. When he attributed the positive result of his first paper to his tutor, she reminded him that *he* wrote the paper and it was *his words* that earned him the high grade; she had merely caught an error before it became unfixable.

Meanwhile, in office hours, Rachel continually asked the student what direction *he* wanted to take his writing, since there was no "right answer" to each assignment. When he brought up ideas Elizabeth had suggested, particularly when they may have conflicted with advice Rachel was providing, she reiterated that while multiple successful avenues were possible, the student needed to choose which option he felt was most conducive to his rhetorical goal. The student's recognition of the rhetorical attunement Elizabeth developed as a tutor meant that he was inclined to share the comments he had received from Rachel in office, partly because he wanted her input on how to address them. Both tutor and instructor saw their role as helping the student navigate the expectations of different academic audiences in order to best support the argument he wanted to make.

Though the student had brought feedback from Rachel (the things he wanted to "fix") into the tutorial, Elizabeth emphasized these comments as suggestions and jumping-off points to help the student arrive at his own

ideas. When the student expressed anxiety about comments that he felt were not addressed in the tutorial or were in conflict with one another, Elizabeth encouraged him to go to office hours, to show Rachel his draft, and to discuss further steps for revision; Elizabeth also encouraged him to explain to Rachel why he took a different tack to his paper. Meanwhile, as Rachel's meetings with the student continued, he began articulating his learning in tutorial and similarly questioning if suggestions were right or if he was on the right track. He was particularly concerned when the tutor and instructor input differed, and Rachel's word choice in these situations was very specific: she explained that there were multiple ways to execute the different goals of his writing, and that it was up to him to choose which option was most successful based on *his* goals. In moments where the student might question a comment Rachel made if it conflicted with Elizabeth's, Elizabeth would reinforce Rachel's authority and expertise, noting that Rachel, as the instructor, may have different priorities than Elizabeth did, and that the best course of action would be to speak further with her about such conflicts. Similarly, Rachel did not use office hours as a space to dismiss or reject Elizabeth's feedback as a tutor. Instead, she regularly explained to the student that what he perceived as conflicts were really multiple approaches to the same goal and placed the decision-making authority onto the student: as the writer, it was up to him to choose the approach that would be most fruitful based on his own priorities and goals for his work.

This became the norm of our working relationship: we would dialogue individually with the student, acting as sounding-boards for ideas and providing suggestions where appropriate. The student's shared notes would then become a shared text across meetings. Through this exchange, we came to develop a deeply collaborative relationship with each other through this student. As the semester progressed and the student became more confident in his writing and language skills, our tutorials moved toward collaboration.

This resulted in two important outcomes: first, the tutorial developed into a semester-long relationship, not just between the student and Elizabeth, but between the tutor and instructor (despite not knowing one another or contacting one another directly), mediated by student writing; second, the student began to focus and develop his own rhetorical agency over his own writing. For example, in one instance when he and Rachel discussed the rationale for Elizabeth's suggestion, he noted, "This is my paper, so I'll think about it and decide." This moment showed us that this student had finally gained the confidence to prioritize what we had throughout our work with him: his own voice. This was the crux of our inventive collaboration across institutional ecologies.

Our inventive collaboration also helped ameliorate many traditional expectations associated with top-down program and placement models. As Candace Spigelman reminds us "Composition theory makes us aware that

literacy practices are never ideologically neutral" (39). In particular, the labels used within the institution can have a significant impact on student understanding of their place in the university. Spigelman explains, "Beyond the conflict of student power relations, beyond the possibility that students can ever be 'written' as something more or less than 'student' is the question of how labels like 'basic writer' and 'peer group leader' construct student identities" (Spigelman 39). Much like the "basic" label, multilingual students are often labeled as "other" to the university's writing programming. This othering can lead many to assume that they are in need of remedial help. For this reason, "tutorial" services are often interpreted as remedial support for students who need additional help with their writing.

This is part of the reason that a knowledge of institutional ecologies can be particularly fruitful for tutors and instructors working with multilingual students. It allows instructors to view writing centers, and the work they do, not as remedial but as an important part of a larger ecology; as a result, this knowledge may mitigate the "othering" multilingual students may feel in approaching writing centers for assistance. In the case of our student, these ideas about writing centers as remedial were deeply ingrained. Although Rachel had stressed the importance of the writing center to writers of all skill levels, he nonetheless entered the writing center with a fix-it approach to the work that the center did, as well as a sense that he had been sent there for language-based remediation.

However, through the rigorous work he encountered in the center, the exchanges among the three of us, and our consistent reference and attention to larger institutional ecologies, the student came to understand the different roles and goals of the classroom, office hours, and writing center. The student came to see all these spaces as part of a larger ecology working to develop him as a writer, and he began to view himself as a kind of "insider" rather than outsider. He came to realize the ways in which writing is rarely done in isolation; it is often a conversation and, more than that, it is often collaborative. The student continued to come to the writing center long after he had mastered the skills he had initially sought to learn from us. This was largely due to his increased sense of himself as writing for, and with, other writers in an institutional ecology.

Analysis of Our Inventive Collaboration

In our analysis of this case study, we have concluded that our awareness of the university's ecologies had a twofold effect. First, it encouraged both of us to err on the side of trust and generosity. Although we were both already inclined towards trust and generosity, our program's emphasis on the ways larger institutional ecologies speak to one another allowed us to leverage this

trust into a transformative collaborative relationship. In addition, Elizabeth's work (and earlier training) within the English Department and Rachel's understanding of the writing center's responsibilities and values allowed for a deepening of our trust and respect: we both knew that we were operating from a shared mission and, importantly, understood the ways our work was both distinct from each other and integral to developing student writers. This not only paved the way for productive work with the student, but it also highlighted for the student how his work could function as both product and process in these larger institutional ecologies.

While many of the collaborations explored in Alice Johnson Myatt and Lynée Lewis Gaillet's *Writing Program and Writing Center Collaborations* stress strategies developed directly between WCD and WPA, the size and structure of IU, in addition to the strict privacy requirements of IU's Writing Center, meant that direct collaboration (except under very specific circumstances) was difficult or prohibited.[9] Instead, knowledge of the different parts of student writing support came from training: the early introduction between new writing instructors and the university's WCD, as well as reminders of the university's resources during Proseminar.

Our knowledge of institutional ecologies not only structured our collaborative endeavor, influencing the collective work we were doing with the student, but it also made the process more egalitarian in general. In "Tutoring and Teaching: Continuum, Dichotomy, or Dialectic?" Helon Howell Raines explores the possible missteps that can occur when the classroom and writing center are "points on a continuum" which makes both spaces so similar they ultimately begin to compete—or are dichotomous—which makes writing centers subservient to the classroom (Raines 153). Instead of these, she proposes "a dialectical view, more specifically the Hegelian dialectical process, in which opposing forces conflict, but in their meeting they also mix, each altering the other until ultimately both transcend the interaction to become something new" (Raines 153). This dialectic avoids some of the identity issues with the top-down model in place when the classroom dictates the work done in tutorial (Carino 112). Raines also suggests that this model more naturally mimics the reality of the classroom/tutorial relationship and it therefore "reflects a desirable process that avoids privileging any particular position except in the situational context. The expectation of interplay between the activities should encourage difference without seeking domination" (157). According to Raines, however, this requires difficult work: "more productive conversation could result when teachers and tutors have clearer concepts of what each does, why, where their roles overlap, converge, or blend, and how they can more positively reinforce one another" (150). Our example demonstrates the ecological approach to doing such work: inventive collaboration organically developed as our student

utilized both of us as resources, an especially important dialectic at larger institutions where these departments often remain separate or separated.

Subversive Measures toward Inventive Collaboration: Metaphors and Mediated Conversation

As we have emphasized, our shared knowledge of institutional ecologies was a large influence in the development of this collaboration. However, our knowledge of ecologies does not fully explain the success of this inventive collaboration for the student, nor does it fully account for its dynamics. Collaboration, in Andrea Lunsford's words, is "damnably difficult," blossoming, as it sometimes does, against "The students', tutors', and teachers' prior experiences; … the school day and term; and the drop-in nature of many centers" (6). Raines's and Lunsford's arguments highlight that true collaboration is often elusive, even when all parties approach the process with the best of intentions.

In addition, work in composition tends to collapse collaboration and "conversation," the latter often described as a back-and-forth exchange between its interlocutors. One primary site for this collapsing is the "Burkean Parlor" metaphor, a model of student writing that suggests writing center work is intended to help students think about their place in the conversation about writing: a conversation is already occurring, and they enter into it, adding their voice and guiding it in such a way that multiple perspectives are heard, to produce a nuanced conversation. Lunsford calls for the writing center to adopt this Burkean Parlor method to stress the collaboration of multiple voices, and recent scholarship has continued to express interest in this model and call for an expansion of its definition (Walsh et al.).

Although some scholars have pushed back against the connections of conversation and collaboration (Duffy), what undergirds normative definitions of conversation and collaboration are assumptions of space, place, and time. During an interview, Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford quip about finding collaborators through a "Collaborative Writing Dating Service" (12). Their statement underscores, even in jest, the assumption that collaboration is an intimate activity that includes—if not demands—direct contact (see also: Myatt). However, during the entire semester that we collaboratively worked with this student, we never spoke directly and, in fact, did not really know one another. Rather, our collaboration occurred in a third space: the student's writing.[10] Not only did the student vocalize the ideas of each of us to the other, but we also had a loose transcript of the events in each person's meeting because we were both helping the student draft an action plan for future work in each meeting. This distance, contrary to popular belief, seemed to actually help rather than hinder our collaboration. Because of the writing center's strict confidentiality

policy, all contact between us was filtered through the student. As a rule, this meant that the student needed to choose whether and what about our meetings he would convey to the other. This also meant that our work was, by necessity, focused on the student's aims and goals as he framed our (limited) interactions with one another. In this case, our lack of direct communication placed the student at the center of the collaboration and ensured valuing of his voice.

So, although composition and writing center scholarship often uses "conversation" as both metaphor and practice, inventive collaboration of the kind we experienced does not require direct exchange between interlocutors. Indeed, it does not require collaborators to be in contact at all. Instead, inventive collaboration promotes a working together through shared senses of institutional ecology in a way mediated by student texts and motivated by a shared openness toward supporting student writers.

In addition, our inventive collaboration depended on mutual openness toward the other party's influence on the student's writing. In the process, our teamwork challenged traditional ideas about our roles as instructor and tutor. As defined by Lunsford and Ede in a 1991 interview, the collaborative model of writing challenges the traditional classroom model. According to Lunsford, "collaboration is subversive because it challenges notions of individual authorship and responsibility for an autonomous text. We know also that it challenges our whole system of testing, measurement, and evaluation and that it questions the way we, as teachers, respond to and assess our students" (*Writing on the Edge* 18). In our inventive collaborative model, this subversion was clear in both office hours and tutorial sessions: the student was encouraged to consider the ways both support systems shaped his writing while deciding which suggestions were important to his writing and which were not. His mediation of the inventive collaboration made it such that both Rachel's and Elizabeth's commitment to the student's writing process took precedence over any individual investment. Instead, the student's understanding of each contributor was the constant focus.

In addition to the respect instilled by the Proseminar we both attended, mutual generosity was also key to the success of this inventive collaboration. In our experience, during both office hours and tutorial sessions, students occasionally juxtapose the feedback from their instructor or tutor when they see a discrepancy between the two types of input they're receiving. We have both found that these moments are more often a result of the student learning to process feedback and recalibrate throughout the writing process than they are an attempt to undermine the authority or input of their instructors or tutors. In these cases generally, and this case study specifically, our generosity toward the suggestions of instructor and tutor, along with flexibility in understanding

as the student mediated our input, led to a stance of conversational openness that allowed for the success of this model.

Despite the challenges to organic collaboration, the progress our student made during the course of the semester seems to be indicative of what inventive collaboration between the writing center and the first year writing classroom can achieve. This collaboration brought to the fore what these spaces purport to do at their best: giving students the tools they need to succeed in college-level writing. Elizabeth Busekru explains that "as the student develops a writing voice and explores more than one angle on a topic and/or within a discipline, this student takes a side regarding what to believe" (12). The kairotic potential of a composing moment, as Busekrus points out, brings more options than a "conversation" might initially suggest, and as a result, "[t]his collaborative environment signifies resistance because other perspectives are brought to attention" (12). In effect, then, inventive collaboration stages the "resistance … of other perspectives" by 1) emerging from knowledge about institutional ecologies toward 2) a somewhat subversive approach to both collaboration and conversation via the mediation of student texts, and 3) undergirding that subversion through openness to multiple perspectives and a disposition of respect and generosity toward those perspectives. The success of such inventive collaboration, of course, rests on the response of the student to the tension between perspectives, and the student's willingness to enact agency and exercise authority over their text.

Collaboration's Impact for Student Learners: Student Agency and Rhetorical Attunement

For multilingual students in particular, the different levels of institutional authority can be challenging to navigate, particularly between the classroom and writing center. As Spigelman explains regarding student/teacher power relations, "problems of hierarchy and power cannot be attributed merely to students' predilections or even to their academic insecurity. Power relations are a significant and inevitable feature of every teacher-student engagement, even for those of us who would have it be otherwise" (Spigelman 43). Neither are power dynamics between teacher and student wholly interpersonal: institutional ecologies influence how each views the other. These difficulties are further complicated when students have multicultural understandings of their own writing and learning processes.

In our experience, multilingual students often have a complex relationship to the model of authority present in the writing center. Some students see the writing center as a punishment; others see tutors as employees whose job it is to improve student grammar. Many multilingual students approach the writing center with a particular kind of rhetorical attunement, "an emergent

sensitivity to language and borrows from these tuning metaphors the honed quality of multilingual sensibilities, as isolated literate moments are situated in the context of changing global conditions" (Leonard 230). Thus, multilingual students are often hyper-aware of the need for language to fit a particular audience or context, and they seek out assistance in meeting this goal. In the case of our student, this manifested itself in two ways: 1) the initial reason the student reached out to us in the first place, and 2) the student's anxiety over negotiating our expectations, especially conflicting feedback.

The mediated conversation employed by our inventive collaboration was particularly successful because it allowed both of us to draw on and develop the student's pre-existing rhetorical awareness. Despite the student's initial focus on grades and his relationship to a "right answer," we mutually reinforced that he was the author of his writing and that no single choice would lead to a better grade. In response, the student re-tuned his sensitivity to focus on how choices worked well for the goal he articulated for his essays. This reattunement moved the student writer toward what Canagarajah expresses as the two central goals for multilingual writing practice: 1) awareness that difference does not necessarily equate to error, and 2) the writing process is a performance and should not be confined to "text production" (603). This shift was critical for our multilingual writer because many of the assumptions he made about his work came from a binary understanding of rhetorical choices: they are either right or wrong. Our inventive collaboration helped him see that he had choices and control over his writing and the potential results of his choices. This "context-transforming" work, as Canagarajah explains, helps student writers understand that "Texts are not simply context-bound or context-sensitive" and that "students should not treat rules and conventions as given or pre-defined for specific texts and contexts." (603). Inventive collaboration, then, shows that instructors and tutors are "developing not only competent writers, but also critical writers" (Canagarajah 603). Through our mutual reinforcement of the student's autonomy in his writing choices, we helped the student build his already strong rhetorical awareness into his writing.

In addition, rhetorical attunement can support multilingual students in drawing connections regarding the power of language, as it "highlights the rhetorical in multilingualism: its instability and contingency, its political weight and contextual embeddedness. In fact, calling attunement rhetorical serves to underline these elements—materiality, contingency, emergence, resistance" (Leonard 230). This rhetorical attunement, then, can be potentially beneficial. It can allow the student flexibility and awareness of their audience. More, it can lead the student to reflect on their grade merely as feedback from their audience, since they are attuned to the ways in which the rhetorical situation changes depending on the instructor's choices for the assignment. Remember:

the student and Elizabeth's relationship developed because she managed to catch his plagiarism. The outcome of that interaction demonstrates how the recognition and strategic awareness of audience can set the stage for collaborative work between tutors and students. Elizabeth relied on her rhetorical proficiency as a tutor and instructor to tell the student exactly what needed to be done (rewrite the paper) and to position herself as "a nonjudgmental, non-evaluative helper" (Harris 376).

Elizabeth and Rachel also both routinely conferred authority over the student's writing back to the student. During this semester-long process, the student listened to the guidance provided by the instructor and tutor, ultimately choosing which options were most effective for him based on his own rhetorical understanding of his writing process. We did not view our authority as being in competition with one another; rather, we loaned our authority to the student and to each other. Our collaboration hinged on recognizing our positions of authority and using them to help the student build confidence in his authorial voice; we moved the student's focus on finding "right" answers to finding the most accurate way *he* wanted to express his ideas.

Rhetorical attunement and agency were the primary aims and outcomes of our collaboration with each other and this student. As we emphasized our own roles in the larger institutional ecologies, and our shared values, the student came to view his work as being a part of that larger ecology. That is, while neither of us shirked the responsibility of our institutional positions, we also reminded the student that there was not necessarily a "right" or "wrong" approach, but rather that different audiences have different expectations and that every writer must navigate those expectations. Over time, the student's voice became the most dominant one in his writing.

Conclusion

Our example stresses the need for, and potential success of, a more inventive model of collaboration built from knowledge of institutional ecologies. We worked together for the benefit of the student, placing his sense of agency and developing voice at the forefront of our common goal. While we understand that this is always the expectation, that instructors and tutors are always supposed to be working to support student writers, we also acknowledge the limitations set in place by institutional hierarchies, personal investment in program models, and the lack of resources (particularly time) available for developing direct lines of collaboration. That said, training that stresses knowledge of ecologies helps facilitate the potential for these inventive collaborations. Because Indiana University's training introduced writing instructors to their location within a network of student writing support, Rachel was aware of the benefits of the writing center and encouraged students to

visit as a resource. Similarly, Elizabeth's awareness (as both instructor and tutor) of the mission and values of the university's first year writing program helped facilitate continuity of feedback in her work with students. When this background was combined with our mutual investment in student agency and voice, the organic dialogue that developed within, and on, his writing, we produced an inventive collaboration. In turn, this collaboration produced student-centered instruction. In particular, our collaboration shows the ways in which an awareness of larger campus offices—especially their institutional role and purpose—might facilitate moments of inventive collaboration.

This experience shaped our time as assistant directors of first year writing, a role we would both accept two years after our inventive collaboration. During this work we realized the impact of our early exchange and were able to continue to stress the importance of the ecologies of the university to new composition instructors. This experience also helped us make changes to the relationship between the writing center and first year writing programs. In our training process for new instructors, we expanded and reframed the role of the writing center; rather than offering a brief presentation and overview, the writing center offered a tutoring demo, which we paired with readings about office hours and tutorial philosophy. As a result, instructors were offered more than a glimpse into what the writing center had to offer; instructors also saw the tutors in the writing center as experts at conferencing with and developing student writers.

Additionally, our teaching stressed the value of flexibility and generosity to new instructors. In describing the benefits of our inventive collaboration to them, we showcased the possible benefits of openness toward other aspects of the university's support system for students. On many occasions, we were able to reframe communication from other instructors and administrators in terms of their investment and concern for student well-being, which is often at the heart of so many moments of communication across departments. While we don't expect that every composition instructor will have an experience as directly influential on student writing as ours, openness to the possibility models the ways future instructors and tutors can make room for inventive collaboration as a way to support multilingual student writers.

Notes

1. FYC and the WC at Indiana University Bloomington exist in different parts of the university and each program had a separate training process. As a result, both parts of the university were able to acknowledge the importance of one another, but there was little cross-over in personnel.

2. Concerns about marginalization are echoed in Anne Ellen Geller and Harry Denny's "Of Ladybugs, Low Status, and Loving the Job: Writing Center Profession-

als Navigating Their Careers." In their study of Writing Center Professionals, they noted that while WCPs tend to be satisfied with their work some expressed feeling like oddities in their institutions or home departments and others noted the difficulty having their writing center work counted towards tenure (106-107).

3. In *Institutional Ethnography: A Theory of Practice for Writing Studies* Michelle LaFrance discusses how ethnographic thinking, and its use within writing programs, can be used to better understand the ways individuals operate within institutions.

4. While David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University" stresses the difficulty of learning the expectations of different types of writing within the university, we stress the importance of acknowledging these different "universities" within the larger writing experience and the benefits of being open to these differences.

5. Anderson was director of Composition from 2010 through 2018. In addition to training us both as graduate students, we also worked with him as Assistant Directors of the Composition Program from 2017-2019.

6. This course acted, in some ways, as what LaFrance might term a "boss text"; that is, a way of creating ideals of accountability and professionalization (43). As she notes, these "boss texts" are not just sources of information but "shapers of thinking and practice" (43).

7. More, the Director of Composition also leads a session for the writing centers' training that generally takes the form of a larger conversation about the related, but distinct, roles both WTS and FYW play in developing student writers. When we became Assistant Directors, these were aspects of the program that we expanded, including a formal tutorial demonstration that coincided with the pedagogical theory course's discussion of conferencing with students.

8. Proseminar was the semester-long course required for all first-time instructors of Composition within IU's English Department. The course included pedagogy workshops, readings on the teaching of college writing, and instructor demonstrations on core concepts of first year writing. The writing program, and the instructor support mechanisms within it, were awarded the 2019 CCCC certificate of excellence.

9. A lack of communication between writing centers and writing programs at large universities is not inevitable. Miley and Downs describe WPAs and WCDs can develop relationships and their programs side by side. For an overview of debates on student privacy and disclosure in writing centers, see: Pemberton; Cogie; and Cordaro.

10. This is not the evaluative third space described by Alyssa-Rae Hug, nor was it (primarily) a conversation between instructor and tutor, rather it was a conversation mediated by the student about his purpose, audience, and authority.

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