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Rejecting the Business-Model Brand: Problematizing Consultant/Client Terminology in the Writing Center

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> "…words carry with them the places where they have been." —Lester Faigley

> "Students are not customers to be served. They are much more important than that." —David M. Perry

In a recent job advertisement for an English faculty member, the Texas A&M University at Kingsville called first and foremost for a candidate who could "provide excellent customer service." [1] This language is indicative of the business-model thinking that has permeated higher education, especially in recent years. While we may not be surprised to find this terminology in our job calls, one place where we may expect it less is within the university writing center (WC), a place that was founded on pedagogies of collaboration, community, and process. Yet, four recent WCenter listserv conversations have focused on the language used to talk about WC work, WC workers, and student writers who are sometimes called "clients." [2] In these conversations that are mostly dominated by WC administrators, "tutor" is most often associated with student feelings of weakness, lack of skill, and need for help; "consultant" is associated with work that is "important" and supported by the International Writing Center Association Summer Institute; and "client" is used to describe a particular kind of professional, proactive student who seeks a specific type of expert input. Despite the consistent presence of these terms and their definitions, conversations surrounding them continue to pop up. Why do WC practitioners[3] keep posting requests for advice about whether or not to rename themselves, even after a seeming consensus has been reached via an overwhelming preference for the use of "consultant"/ "client"?

While a recurring public conversation surrounding this issue of naming continues, other sources suggest that the use of "consultant" has not actually replaced the use of "tutor." For example, Writing Center Director Clint Gardner created a podcast at the 2011 Rocky Mountain Peer Tutoring Conference at Weber State

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University in which he asked WC practitioners from across the country how they define the work that they do. Use of the term "tutor" outnumbered "consultant" ten to one (Gardner). The following year, Jackie Grutsch McKinney confirmed a similar finding in a more formal research study. She conducted an anonymous survey distributed via the WCenter listserv that asked participants to define "writing center" and the kind of work done there. She found that the words "tutor," "tutors," "tutoring," and "tutorials" were used 186 times and the terms "consultant," "consulting," and "consultation" were used just 36 times. Grutsch McKinney notes this as surprising, since "many seem to assume that 'consultant' is preferable to 'tutor'" (64). Yet, "tutor" was over five times more prevalent in these privately conducted surveys than "consultant." This discrepancy between what WC practitioners publically discuss over the WCenter listserv and what they say about their work when asked individually and privately suggests that a closer investigation into the labels used in the WC is needed.

WC practitioners have been concerned with the ways they name themselves since the inception of WCs. When these conversations show up in our scholarship and research, they tend to focus on the ways that cultural moments determine the labels we use for the spaces in which we work. For example, Peter Carino recognizes how the climate of open admissions in the 1960s-70s led to the use of "clinic" and "lab," both of which, despite best intentions, came to be thought of as remedial ("What" 33). The danger involved whenever we define the work we do is that the larger academic community is always reading such labels as metaphors, created by words that carry much meaning within a larger cultural context over which we don't have control. In these particular "tutor" vs. "consultant" conversations, there seems to be an even greater margin of error because the WC practitioners themselves, when asked individually and privately, label their roles in ways different from those used when WC administrators publically discuss terminology in professional spaces like the WCenter listserv and on WC websites.

What has become evident in these listserv conversations is that we have not engaged in enough critical, self-reflective questioning that considers what the terms "consultant" and "client" mean in our current cultural and economic moment. Scholars have recognized the need for such reflection on the terms we use to describe ourselves as a necessary move towards more fully representing who we are and what we do (Grutsch McKinney; Rendleman), but we have yet to do this work. At a time when the university is strongly influenced by neoliberal ideologies that favor privatization, [4] corporatization, free markets, and individualization over the public, regulatory practices and social welfare (Duggan), we must ask ourselves: who benefits from the use of business-model terminology in the WC? How does the labeling of WC practitioners as "consultants" and student writers as "clients" change the ways that WC practitioners view themselves, the ways that student writers view WC practitioners, and the ways that WC practitioners view student writers and student

writers view themselves? Is the seeming public and scholarly preference for and use of business-model terminology the WC's attempt to professionalize itself in response to the growing pressure faced by universities to corporatize? If our conversations about WC terminology seem to be in a moment of flux, what potential might the WC have for being a place of resistance to the reinforcement of the business-like terminologies and neoliberal ideologies that are already accepted and used across the university?

My purpose in this essay is to critique the use of "consultant" and "client" in WC scholarship, on WC websites, and throughout WCenter listserv conversations.[5] Ultimately, these labels and the effect they have on our work, even if subconscious, have the potential to damage and change the relationship that WC practitioners have with student writers. I begin this critique by analyzing three key articles published in *The Writing Center Journal* in the 90s that reject the use of "tutor" and argue for or seem to accept the use of "consultant" and "client." Next, I consider how "consultant" and "client" are defined within the business context in which they are most prominently used, and I show how the transfer of such terms into the WC is problematic when the influence of neoliberalism and corporatization on the university is strong. Within this framework, I analyze WCenter listserv commentary from WC practitioners across the country who use the terms "consultant" and "client" to describe the nature of their work, and thus may be unintentionally reinforcing neoliberal ideologies that value efficiency, profit, and product in ways that conflict with prominent WC philosophies and pedagogies that emphasize collaboration, community, and the composing process (Clark; Harris "Talking"; Hobson; Lunsford; North). While I primarily see the work of this essay as critique, I conclude with suggestions for future research that attempt to better understand how both local and global analyses of the language we use to define our work in WCs is needed to foster a stronger sense of self-awareness. I also suggest that WCs are places with much potential for resisting, subverting, and critiquing the reinforcement of business-like terminology and neoliberal ideologies that operate within the university at large.

The Move from "Tutor" to "Consultant" in Writing Center Literature

Although it has not received recent attention in our scholarship, the use of terminology to describe what tutors/consultants do in the WC has been explored over the past several decades. One of the first texts to reconsider the roles WC tutors play was Muriel Harris' "The Roles a Tutor Plays: Effective Tutoring Techniques," in which she argues that in order to be successful, tutors must be able to "change hats mid-sentence" from coach, to commentator, to counselor (63). Harris focuses most on the role of "tutor as coach," because of its non-directive, yet collaborative nature. However, the term "coach" never really did replace "tutor." More than ten years later, Lex Runciman, in "Defining Ourselves: Do We Really Want to Use the Word Tutor?," questions the WC's use of the term "tutor" by tracing the history of the term through its original use in the tutorial system of Oxford and Cambridge to Stephen North's use of the term in "The

Idea of a Writing Center." Yet, Runciman notes that the use of "tutor" in America's education system has not taken on the respectable British meaning but has instead been associated with remedial instruction (30). Thus, Runciman is perhaps right to call for a change in terminology that distances WC tutors from an association with remediation. He offers several alternatives to "tutor," including "writing assistant," "writing fellow," and "writing consultant."

The term that gets forwarded after Runciman's publication is "consultant." The acceptance of this term is made explicit in William McCall's "Writing Centers and the Idea of Consultancy," where he establishes this move by arguing for the use of the term "consultant" because it more accurately conveys the work "actually done in the writing center" (167). McCall tells his own story of stepping into a WC as a new director and preferring the term "tutor" to "consultant" because to him, "*consultant* was pretentious, more appropriate in the business world than in educational settings" (63). He then conducted his own research with the intention of discovering the ways in which faculty and students at his institution understood the terms "tutor" and "consultant," which encouraged him to "reassess [his] alliance to tutor" (164). Throughout McCall's discussion, he makes some curious claims about the relationship between what he calls the "tutor/tutee" and the "consultant/client" relationship. According to McCall, the use of "consultant" suggests an exchange between equals while "tutor" implies a hierarchical interchange between unequals.

Simply put, McCall argues that "tutors are for failures and consultants are for those who want to improve," even though he recognizes that those who usually identify as "consultants" in a business context, "seem colder, [and] more interested in problems clients are experiencing or trying to avoid than in the people or person who face the problems" (167). In his article, McCall moves the conversation about "tutors as consultants," a model in which the student writer is primarily defined by his/her writing problems, far away from Harris' concept of tutor as a coach, commentator, and counselor.

Although McCall's article received no direct critique, some scholars acknowledged the danger in adopting the "client/consultant" terminology in the WC. For instance, in "Clients Who Frequent Madam Barnett's Emporium," Scott Russell provides one way that the use of these terms has changed his own perceptions of the work he does as a tutor by comparing tutoring to the business of prostitution. By equating tutors to sex workers on the grounds that they face similar kinds of "clients," Russell claims that tutors and prostitutes both "have to deal with multiple clients, often strangers, for purposes that are ostensibly for the client's gratification… [and they must also] deal with aspects of the client's performance that are intimate in nature and involve the client ego" (62). From Hoigard and Finstad's 1992 book *Backstreets: Prostitution, Money, and Love*, Russell borrows three major client types: "the occasional client," "the habitual client," and "the compulsive client" (62), and satirically adds some of his own client types, including "the brutal drop-in," "the punctuation

fetishist," "the red pen request," and "the moral imperative." In his conclusion, Russell does recognize the dilemma faced by those who work in WCs as either having to change the "ancient arrangement of provider and client [or] re-invent it in new venues" (71). He also claims that in any place where people are intimately arranged in such a way that one is in the position of professional (as suggested by the term "consultant") and one is in the position of client, collaboration becomes difficult. Thus, the move to use "consultant/client" can and did, at least for Russell, problematically influence his perception of the roles tutors play in the WC.

What strikes me as odd about this tutor/consultant conversation in our scholarship is that no one really spent much time responding to or questioning Runciman, McCall, or Russell. I'm surprised that the comparison between tutors and prostitutes did not receive at least some critique, since I would think that such a comparison would make us uncomfortable. In his article, Russell does not question the idea of student as client, but rather seems to accept it. At the same time, Russell writes not about tutors/students, but instead focuses on the assumptions and possible connections that can occur because of the use of the "client/consultant" model used in other businesses outside of the WC. What Russell doesn't explore is why this similarity between WCs and the business of prostitution may be problematic and how the work in these two places is actually rather different. For example, when clients frequent sex workers, they are no longer trying to learn a skill, but rather seeking out temporary and immediate pleasure. In the WC, clients are trying to develop as writers (at least we hope), a challenging and somewhat slow process, yet one that also has a longer lasting influence. Russell, as well as most participants on the WCenter listserv, seems more concerned with justifying and explaining our work in WCs than with critically reflecting on the ways in which we describe and talk about it. In order to understand the cultural implications embedded in the use of "client/consultant" and what those terms mean when used in a university setting, we need to move outside of the WC and its scholarship.

The Cultural Location of the Writing Center, Consultant/Client Terminology, and the Corporate University

Although writing scholars have attempted to redefine "consultant/client" for their use within the WC, they haven't spent enough time considering the other kinds of meaning that the terms carry. Not only must we consider "consultant" and "client" from within the business-like world in which they are most commonly used, but we also have to consider what these terms mean in the context of the larger university and its political climate. These observations will reveal not only why "consultant/client" terminology often isn't suitable for the WC, [6] but also the potential for the WC to be a place of resistance to the reinforcement of business-like terminology within the university.

As recognized by both McCall and Russell, the terms "consultant" and "client" have a rich history of use in the business world, and the terms carry problematic

connotations with them when they are transferred to the WC and used to redefine the tutor/student relationship. For instance, scholarship in business has acknowledged that the consultant/client relationship is hierarchical; the consultant does the "knowledge work" that consists of identifying/diagnosing the client's problem, supplying ideas, creating and developing solutions or alternatives, and evaluating those alternatives from an expert standpoint, while the client is passive (see Fincham; Ford; Nikolova, Reihlen, and Schlapfner). Thus, there is very little actual collaboration or conversation that takes place, and once the client has sought help, his/her role is to receive the information from the consultant. Within the context of the WC, this kind of relationship suggests that the student's main action is making the appointment and getting his/herself to the WC, and once the session starts, the consultant takes over while the student writer simply listens.

While I am arguing that "consultant" and "client" may not be the most accurate terms to use in WCs today, before moving forward I want to acknowledge that in the mid-90s, there was perhaps an important reason for moving away from "tutor" and towards "consultant," in hopes of shedding the often marginalized term "tutor" for the seemingly more professional term, "consultant." For example, in *Universities in the Marketplace*, Derek Bok recognizes how the university can benefit from operating according to a business-like model. He argues that since there is always a need for money, universities (and WCs as well) can indeed benefit from applying business strategies that emphasize money saving techniques, strive to improve the quality of what we do, and focus on quicker adaptation.

However, as Bok warns, we must be careful about the ways in which such attempts may conflict with the educational values of teaching, research, and community. This move that occurred in the 90s toward the seemingly more professional use of the term "consultant" risked changing our WC identities, a move that was also challenged by William Macauley and Nicholas Mauriello in *Marginal Words, Marginal Work?*. Through their collection, these authors argue that we need to re-imagine the margin as something we should "work from/in/of…without that [exclusively pejorative] judgment, as outside the text of the academy, as a practical location rather than a judgment" (xiv). Thus, they suggest that we may perhaps be losing a valuable part of our identity if we attempt to cleanse ourselves from seemingly negative marginalized terms, such as tutor. Here, Macauley and Mauriello remind us of the value in understanding our position and how to empower ourselves from within it, rather than attempting to recreate ourselves via a new label that ignores the context that has defined us since our beginnings.

While the move to consultant was understandable in the cultural context of the mid-90s, under closer inspection, it undermines the goals of the academy and is not suitable for WCs in universities facing the pressure to corporatize (Bosenberg; Bok; Giroux; Rose; Slaughter and Rhoades). In *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy*, Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades offer a theory of academic capitalism that

focuses on university actors as participants in "networks" that "link situations as well as faculty, administrators, academic professionals, and students to the new economy" (15). These actors work to link universities to one another, to corporations, and to various state agencies and "initiate academic capitalism," rather than existing solely as "players being 'corporatized'" (12). Thus, it is through these capitalist market relationships that organizations within institutions are forced to understand their own identity and function.

Furthermore, Slaughter and Rhoades argue that universities practice market behavior not only in terms of making connections outside the ivory towers but also within themselves. This in turn makes students into players themselves because universities practice internal business relations, in addition to building relationships with corporations and the neoliberal state. Slaughter and Rhoades explain that, in addition to being associated with marketing and advertising, market-like behaviors often "cut across colleges and universities, attaching a price to things that were once free or charging more for items or services that were once subsidized or provided at cost" (26). Thus, external monies are generated and used by these "profit centers" that can then be used "to cross-subsidize other institutional activities" (4). Moreover, knowledge in the corporate university becomes something private (as opposed to public or collaboratively generated), and thus students are valued not as students but as "intellectual workers" that "make them market actors" (30). As a way of functioning successfully within the academic capitalist economy described by Slaughter and Rhoades, WCs would benefit in terms of their relationship with the greater institution by acting as for-profit centers that treat students like customers (or clients) who become part of the market networks.

This academic capitalism that influences universities stems primarily from the pressure of neoliberalism described most clearly by Lisa Duggan in *The Twilight of Equality?* as a late 20th century manifestation that privileges the private, corporate, and individual without acknowledging the needs of the public.[7] For the university, this means functioning more like a for-profit business, rather than as a public means of support for students. When this kind of framework is imposed on the university and felt by a place like the WC, our usual emphasis on helping student writers through collaboration and process is threatened by the need for efficiency and production.

Yet, because of its lack of stable identity within the university, the WC can actually be a valuable site of resistance to neoliberalism. When we consider the WC's history, we find that its rich flexibility (Harris "What's"), somewhat chaotic nature (Clark), peripheral institutional location (Hemmeter; Macauley and Mauriello), and attention to local contexts (Mauriello, Macauley, and Koch) make it a valuable cite for countering neoliberal ideologies. For instance, in "'Our Little Secret': A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions," Elizabeth Boquet recognizes the seemingly dual role of the writing center when she acknowledges two of its possible histories of origin: growing out of the early conference method, which suggests that

WCs were created to "sustain hegemonic institutional discourses" (466), or as an extracurricular entity, "attempt[ing] to wrest authority out of the hands of the institution and place it in the hands of the students" (466). We can perhaps best see the influence of both histories on the WC today when we think of the chaos that occurs within, recognized by Irene Clark as a "willingness to entertain multiple perspectives on critical issues, an ability to tolerate contradictions and contraries" (82). Thus, WCs should continually investigate the presence of neoliberalism in ways that are "diverse, contingent, [and] flexible," as Duggan notes, and offer resistance while attempting to understand neoliberal pressures "*in relation to* coexisting, conflicting, shifting relations of power along multiple lines of difference and hierarchy" (Duggan 70).

But to function as sites of resistance, we must realize that when it comes to understanding our named identities or roles, we should be ready to change them to reflect our local contexts in ways that defy rather than reinforce institutional hierarchies regulated by neoliberal ideologies. In this particular moment, we need to rethink our identities, not by accepting "tutors" or "consultants," but through looking for something different from both. We need to investigate how the consultant/client terminology might change the relationship between tutors and students in three particular contexts: first, on WC websites, where WCs have used the labels "consultant" and "client" in their marketing techniques; second, in business literature, where the connotations associated with "client" should lead us to question which students are valued through the use of this term and which students are made less visible; and third, on the WCenter listserv, where WC professionals talk about the appeal of rebranding themselves with consultant/client, which they inaccurately judge as less full of baggage in comparison to tutor. If we look closely at these contexts, we can begin to move toward more collaborative approaches to labeling WC practitioners, which provides an important opportunity for WCs to resist the business-model approach to education.

Selling Ourselves to the University and Beyond: The Use of Consultant/Client as Marketing Technique

In order to think through the marketing of the WC to the larger community and the university itself, we must first consider why that marketing relationship is complicated based on the WC's lack of a common, physical location. The WC has long been a place with a "history as not a place but a method" (Boquet 466) and as "a gap in the university structure" (Hemmeter 42). This is significant since, as Carol Haviland, Carmen Fye, and Richard Colby point out, "location is political because it is an organizational choice that creates visibility or invisibility, access to resources, and associations that define the meanings, uses, and users of designated spaces" (85). Such locations are usually influenced by the WC's proximity to certain departments, the English department or writing programs, campus-wide tutoring centers, student service organizations, second-

language learner programs, residence halls, and libraries. Because of their lack of locatedness, WCs must establish themselves via networking across departments and within various student services. While building such relationships isn't necessarily a bad thing and can indeed be very beneficial (see Macauley and Mauriello), the larger institutional valuing of academic capitalism makes it difficult to sustain such relationships in ways that support students rather than neoliberal ideologies.

Since WCs can exist in various locations and often employ WC practitioners who come from a variety of backgrounds and levels of education (Bromley, Northway, and Schonberg), the need for using local, context-specific terminology to define the role of WC practitioners makes sense. However, because WCs do not often have a concrete, generalizable, and stable location within the institution, they may feel pressure to participate in academic capitalism in order to establish the kinds of networks Slaughter and Rhoades deem necessary to the functioning of academic capitalism.

One example of how WCs attempt to build these relationships is via their websites. Through an approach to marketing that builds on the concept of student-as-customer, most WCs are using the terms "consultant" and "client," both as a way of attracting new employees, as well as advertising to students and faculty across, and sometimes beyond, campus. While the use of such terminology by for-profit universities, such as Kaplan, University of Phoenix, and DeVry University, might not surprise us, the fact that public universities, such as Purdue, Penn State, University of Texas at Austin, University of Nebraska Lincoln, University of Wisconsin Madison, the University of Louisville, and the University of Houston, to name a few, are also using "consultant" and "client" on their WC websites perhaps invites more questions.

Some public university WCs, such as my own, are even offering corporate services to businesses, with "diagnostic writing assessments" and the option of meeting "off campus at any time, including nights and weekends" (University of Houston Writing Center, N.d.).[8] This particular WC website offers options on the left hand of the screen, which include "student services," "faculty services," and "corporate services," while a list of the WC's partnerships is across the screen forming a right hand column. Thus, "student services" seem to be one of the many services offered by the WC, and the webpage appears to be written for many audiences beyond the student writer.

The WC then, within the context of a corporatized university, can establish itself through participating in the business of academic capitalism. Gaining such capital can be valuable in that it could lead to more monetary support much needed by underfunded WCs. For example, at my current institution, we have partnerships with various departments across campus, some of which pay the WC monetary fees for services. This setup is valuable in that it supports context-based and course-specific relationships, but limiting because students whose instructors haven't partnered with the WC or don't have funds to pay the WC have fewer opportunities to benefit from

services. While this has led to our ability to grow and prosper as a WC in many ways, it also makes our "service" of tutoring/consulting something that must meet departmental-customer expectations. Thus, the titles and names we use to refer to ourselves in this kind of neoliberal relationship do carry important meanings. When we use "consultant" and "client" in such settings, our work begins to resemble a business exchange far from what our work has been in non-profit, student-staffed WCs.

"Clients" in the Writing Center: Where Do All the Students Go?

While the move to use "consultant" as a way of establishing the professionalism and value of WC work within the larger academic economy, though problematic, may indeed reap some benefits, referring to students as "clients" is much more likely to detrimentally harm our relationships with students. To better understand the lineage of this term, I would like to turn once again to business literature. In "Client-Consultant Relationships: An Analysis of the Client Role From the Client's Perspective," Lars Jesperson argues that three images of the client are present in business/management literature: the customer, the client, and the victim.

Of the three images, none of them suggest that an equally collaborative relationship between client and "consultant," like the one McCall argues for, is possible. The first distinction of "client as customer" suggests a brief encounter without the establishment of a relationship. In the WC, this kind of attitude would lead us to simply meet student-client expectations without attempting to understand them as writers. The second distinction of "client as client" reinforces the consultant-as-expert hierarchy in which the consultant is sought when the client's job becomes too difficult and he/she must turn to the consultant in order to solve or "fix" the problem. This kind of scenario clashes strongly with the concept of peer tutoring which emphasizes the student as active in WC session, [9] and has been called for by WC scholars such as Irene Clark, Muriel Harris, and Eric Hobson.

Finally, the third depiction of "client as victim" is perhaps the most troubling because it suggests a naïve client who feels pressure from his/her manager, and thus becomes dependent on the consultant. Yet, this scenario is also the most reminiscent of a particular kind of student we often see in the WC: one who has been sent there by someone who holds a position of power (often a professor), and thus becomes dependent on the consultant to help him/her meet the expectations of the instructor. Robin Fincham also recognizes this power dynamic in "The Consultant-Client Relationship: Critical Perspectives on the Management of Organizational Change." She argues that from the manager's perspective, consultants are external and "live off it [the corporation] as a kind of benign parasite" (340). Operating from this kind of model, both the student-client and the consultant are victimized, which prevents the consultant from being able to help empower the student. Thus in the context of the WC, the "client as victim" model is dangerous because it reinforces the problematic

triangular relationship recognized in writing center literature by both Nancy Grimm and Thomas Hemmeter as one in which the professor/teacher holds power over both the tutor and the student, despite the teacher's absence.

Although within the WC context using the word "client" to represent students may not be intended to evoke the role of customer, client, and victim as explained by Jesperson, we can and should use his work to understand how clients in the business world conceive of their relationships with consultants. If WCs are attempting to create "consultant/client" relationships, they should be aware of how these terms have been constructed in their most prominent context. I do not mean to suggest that using "consultant" results in intentional endangerment or victimization of clients, but rather that adopting such terms may have a degree of these unintended effects. Unfortunately, we can begin to see the enactment of these roles in one WC professional's response to a December 2012 WCenter listserv post titled "Tutor or Consultant." In it, she writes:

> We embrace the way the term consultant professionalizes the relationship between consultant and client, and we sincerely hope that the term projects the image of a student-client who comes to the writing center seeking a specific type of expert input. However, we don't see that as serving the interests of the corporate university. Instead, we see it as an acknowledgment of agency on the part of our student-clients and as a way of asserting our recognition of clients' ownership of their writing goals, their academic and personal identity, and their internal locus of control… Our goal is to create a context in which students can seek expert support for their writing in a way that privileges the student as the goal-setter in the relationship and that makes the very act of the coming to the writing center an expression of agency and self-efficacy on the part of the client.

Here, the term "consultant" means a professional expert with whom the student has more agency and ownership over his/her writing. What seems especially interesting to me in this response is the way that the "student-client" is defined as someone who is privileged as the goal-setter and a professional who seeks a specific type of expert input and acts with agency, while simultaneously asserting ownership over writing goals, academic and personal identity, and internal locus of control. However, to what extent is student agency recognized when it's operating within a hierarchal power structure in which the consultant holds the expert knowledge/power?

Furthermore, we should read into this discussion of the student-client the findings of Pam Bromley, Kara Northway, and Eliana Schonberg's "How Important Is the Local, Really? A Cross-Institutional Quantitative Assessment of Frequently Asked Questions in Writing Center Exit Surveys," which suggests that, across a large public land-grant institution, a mid-sized private university, and a small private liberal arts college, the top five reasons for why students visit the WC include: to improve

writing, to improve grades, to satisfy an instructor's recommendation, to receive assistance with challenging assignments, and to determine whether or not they're on the right track (24). While these results do indeed leave room for student-clients to visit because of their own personal goals, they suggest that students are mostly motivated by external forces (grades and instructors), which may create a context in which acting with agency is difficult.

Furthermore, the model promoted in the listserv post above seems to envision a particular kind of pro-active, student-client who recognizes his/her own agency, while ignoring other kinds of students who often frequent WCs, including students whose teachers require them to go, students who are failing and need help, writers who are resistant, and insecure writers who don't have particular goals but feel stuck. We must be careful about the terms we use to talk about students, and recognize the ways in which labels can influence who feels comfortable visiting the WC. Should we be excluding the kinds of students who may indeed need our help the most?

One particular kind of student writer who may feel especially alienated from business-model terminology in the WC is the "basic writer" (BW).[10] While this label is limiting, I use the term here because the history and political contexts it evokes need to be acknowledged (DeGenaro; Soliday). In particular, WCs have tried to minimize their connection with BWs (Carino "What"; Grimm "Rearticulating"; Lerner),[11] even though WCs could play a valuable role in aiding them (Shaughnessy; Robinson). The relationship between WCs and BWs is a complicated one, especially because BWs may not see the WC as having an important enough role in helping them to succeed in college (Robinson) and because WCs often see their mission both philosophically and pedagogically in conflict with that which many BWs need. For example, WC philosophies often promote a focus on higher order concerns via a mostly non-directive approach, while BWs often prefer and excel when practitioners who work with them take a more directive approach to both higher and lower order concerns, as Marc Scott, Jacklyn Hockenberry, and Elizabeth Miller suggest. Because of this conflict in approach and need, some BWs exist as "invisible minorities" that may be unseen by the WC (Scott, Hockenberry, and Miller 50).

Finally, we know from William Burns's valuable article about the location of the Open-Admissions Writing Center that BWs visit for reasons that go beyond just wanting to use a computer or being tutored. Furthermore, Burns notes that when WCs try to turn student texts into "absolute, decontextualized spaces," they further "alienate writers who already feel the academic culture is silencing them" (63).[12] BWs are also especially vulnerable in a business-model WC because of the ways in which they've often been left out, silenced, or separated from composition, both when composition has been concerned with professionalizing itself (DeGenaro), and when universities turn their attention to greater institutional needs related to profit, enrollment management, and good public relations (Soliday). Thus, these student writers in behavior and need may conflict with a business-model WC agenda, meaning that,

when WCs focus on efficiency, profit, and production, BWs and their needs are at risk of being left out.

Thus, in addition to reconsidering how we name ourselves in the WC, we also need to think more carefully about the way that we label student writers in the Center. Jennifer Beech recognizes this in her book chapter, "Fronting Our Desired Identities: The Role of Writing Center Documents in Institutional Underlife." While her work focuses more on the ways in which we label ourselves and students in WC documents, she also argues that we should refer to students as "writers" (199). If WCs can make this important change in the way they talk about student visitors to the WC, then students (and their instructors) may begin to see themselves as "writers".

The Appeal of a New Brand: Writing Centers Attempting to Get Rid of Their Baggage

In this article, I have looked at how the consultant/client terminology problematically transfers business-model meanings to the relationship between practitioners and students in the university WC. I have also considered how those meanings are further perpetuated given the current cultural context of the university as strongly influenced by neoliberal ideologies and the pressure to corporatize. Then, I looked at how the WC's lack of locatedness within the institution makes it especially vulnerable to building relationships across campuses via academic capitalism, at how "consultant" and "client" are used as a university-wide marketing technique, and at how these terms privilege a particular kind of student-client that reinforces a hierarchal relationship with an expert consultant.

Yet, it is equally important to look internally to better understand how and why WC professionals feel drawn toward rebranding themselves with consultant/client labels. Neal Lerner articulates the value that brands hold in "Rejecting the Remedial Brand: The Rise and Fall of the Dartmouth Writing Clinic." He turns to higher education by referring to '"branding expert"' Dr. Robert A. Sevier, who writes, '"This is the era of the brand. Study after study indicate that institutions with a strong, valued brand enjoy opportunities that other less-branded institutions do not"' (qtd. in Lerner 13). While his article focuses on Dartmouth's elimination of its Writing Clinic in 1961 because of the remedial brand its writing students projected, I refer to Lerner's article for two primary reasons: first, to offer a similar cautionary tale about how poor branding in the WC can hurt its relationship with the institution; and second, to show the power writing programs have to shape institutions by "fight[ing] the brand" or "shaping institutional identities in ways consistent with our values" (30). Furthermore, Lerner's article suggests that the way we brand or label ourselves in WCs *does* matter, in terms of our own understandings of ourselves and our relationships with students, but also because of its impact on the university brand at large. This ability has also been recognized by Boquet who argues that WCs "remain one of the most powerful mechanisms whereby institutions can mark bodies" (465).

Thus, when we brand ourselves as WCs we are both representing the university and the students who visit us.

When we consider the concept of branding within neoliberal ideologies and the corporate university, the pressure to brand WCs as professionals who are seen as active participants in the market of academic capitalism seems valid, and the decision to define practitioners as "consultants" who work with "student-clients" is in some ways understandable. Yet, another way to think about our desire to be seen this way can perhaps be explained by the affective identification associated with branding. In *Branded Bodies, Rhetoric, and the Neoliberal Nation-State,* Jennifer Wingard discusses the ways in which branding and affective meaning-making work under neoliberalism. Wingard defines affective identification as something that "works as a backdrop of feeling that resonates with histories, rhetorics, and images that are not evoked directly but that circulate to connect our memories and bodies" (9). Thus, branding relies on *pathos* because "brands serve to create emotions through identification with images and symbols, and those emotions circulate, gaining value depending on their context and intelligibility" (9).

Within the university, branding can occur through language and titles. When we change our name from "tutor" to "consultant," we are in a sense (and as one WC administrator will say in a WCenter listserv conversation) attempting to "rebrand" ourselves for affective reasons; we prefer "consultant" because it makes us more confident about the work we do and about ourselves, while also locating us within the circulation of affect associated with professionalization, business, power, independence, profit, and freedom.

By choosing "consultant/client," I wonder to what extent is the WC—a place that does not usually root itself in the sciences or business—[13] acting based on affective identification? To what extent is our acceptance of business rhetoric in places where it wouldn't normally be found based on a visceral, gut-like feeling that "consultant/client" is a more valid way to talk about our work in WCs? When we rebrand "tutors" and "students" as "consultants" and "clients," we are attempting to separate ourselves from a shared painful history that associates us with remediation. Thus, we are perhaps acting from a need we feel to justify ourselves for our own well-being, in hopes of being respected by the university, and thus ensuring our continuance as an essential player in the corporate university.

However, renaming ourselves via affective meaning making isn't necessarily a bad move.[14] For example, one WC director decided to rebrand her WC in hopes of moving away from a marginal identity and toward a more context-specific one. She explains that in her center, they use "peer tutor," but that they're "considering rebranding to Undergrad Specialists because it fits an acronym [they] want to use." Although this director doesn't explain further what this acronym means to her and the undergraduate specialists themselves, the "US" acronym doesn't carry the business-model connotations that consultant and client do, and instead evokes a feeling of "us"-

ness, one of collectiveness, community, inclusion, and collaboration.

Unfortunately, it seems as though the majority of WC professionals prefer the consultant brand. For example, one respondent writes strongly in favor of the term "consultant":

> [I prefer] consultant. It matters. Tutor carries baggage both in a hierarchy and a remediation sense. People will argue, but it's true for those outside our unique discourse community. We strongly discourage tutor language in our Center. We are collaborators and peers and fellow writers.

While this respondent associates "tutor" with remediation, weakness, and hierarchy, she also associates collaboration, peers, and writers with the term "consultant." What's interesting here is that she ignores the ways in which these qualities of collaboration and peers have previously been directly associated with the meaning of tutor/tutoring within the WC. Furthermore, this respondent asserts that "tutor" has damaging baggage outside of "our unique [Writing Center] discourse community," which suggests that for audiences outside of the WC, the name change is an important way to establish the WC as no longer remedial and instead professional.

Still, the above respondent seems to consider "consultant" to be a neutral term when applied to WCs. Another listserv participant makes a similar move, explaining that, "the shift in terminology [from tutor to consultant] is an important part of the new identity we're crafting on campus." This "newness" associated with the term "consultant" is contrasted with the term "tutor" as one that "seems to carry undeserved baggage." Using the word "baggage" associated with "tutor" and not with "consultant" seems odd to me, as if these WC professionals are suggesting that consultant is somehow ahistorical and acontextual. This affectively appealing move seems to suggest that we are getting a fresh start and a new identity when we use the term "consultant." Yet, we aren't thinking affectively about the other contexts and ways that "consultant" is used, especially in the business world.

Despite our affective desire to re-brand ourselves, Wingard also points out that brands do not necessarily represent identities.[15] She argues instead that brands are assembled based on "possible subjecthood" and that emotions are engaged in a way that seems logical (20-22). Thus, perhaps our use of consultant/client terminology comes from an attempt to brand ourselves in a particular affective way that makes us feel somehow more legitimate and makes us feel as though our work has value and meaning in the greater institution and beyond. We must consider the reasons and assumptions behind the use of either tutor or consultant/client so that we can begin to understand why the change is being made, why it continues to be part of our conversations, and why, perhaps, there is some kind of discomfort with both using "tutor" and also with changing our name to "consultant." If there was no concern about whether or not the move toward "consultant" is right in the WC community, we wouldn't continue to solicit advice about whether or not to change our names.

Toward a Collaborative Renaming

While I have been rather critical of the WC community's move away from using the term "tutor" in favor of the seemingly less loaded term "consultant," I do think we've made progress and that we're right to sense a need to change the way we talk about the work we do in WCs. As Bok points out, the corporatization of the university can lead to a few benefits. For example, some WCs may have built partnerships across campus and increased their funds, which lead them to be able to offer better services to students, faculty, and staff. Instead of being underfunded and understaffed, WCs then have the opportunity to afford more. And perhaps, considering this move, "consultant/client" terminology better fits the relationships WCs are moving toward within universities. However, we need to stop, take a step back, and recognize how these labels are reforming and rebranding our relationships with student writers. As Macauley and Mauriello, and also Lerner suggest, perhaps we shouldn't be attempting to abandon our history as marginalized tutors whom we have most often understood as collaborative, community-focused, and process- (rather than product-) driven, in favor of a more professionalized and hierarchal relationship embedded in the use of "consultant/client" terminology. Although some of those who use "consultant/client" want it to mean something more collaborative and empowering for both students and tutors, I worry that these terms do indeed carry more "baggage" than we're willing to recognize.

Instead, WCs might think about ways that they can resist and/or subvert the business-model approach to education. As Burns and DeGenaro have both noted, WCs can be places where we recognize that the WC "is not an autonomous, 'student-owned' space" (Burns 69), but rather can be a space where we can critique hierarchal relationships that exist within the institution. One way that we can begin to do this kind of work is by rethinking how we talk about the work we do in WCs and how we conceive of the role and value of the student writer.

While there are no general, overarching solutions for how we should label WC practitioners and student writers, much could be gained by moving towards more localized, context-specific ways of describing our work. We might ask: what term for WC practitioners might make students most comfortable? How would WC practitioners themselves prefer to identify? How would students themselves like to identify within the space of the WC? As some members on the WCenter listserv have suggested, we might consider terms like advisor, coach, undergraduate teaching assistants, mentors, peer writers, and writing fellows as possibilities. These terms also carry baggage worth investigating in future research. Yet most importantly, decisions about what to call WC practitioners and student writers should not be made solely by directors and administrators based on their own visions, but rather in collaboration with WC practitioners, and even student writers, themselves.

As Harris put it in response to the February 2013 WCenter listserv conversations, "they [WC practitioners] should have some voice in the decision." Thus, we must do more research similar to Gardner's and Grutsch McKinney's that

asks WC practitioners how they identify their work in WCs and what kind of title they want to hold. This work needs to be done at both the local-institutional level and also later at a more global level. Based on Gardner's and also on Grutsch McKinney's findings, this process may consist of acknowledging that many WC practitioners still identify as "tutors." Thus, before rejecting the term completely and accepting "consultant" instead, we need to spend more time talking with those who identify as "tutors" and asking them why they identify that way.

Notes

[1] For a more in-depth discussion of this ad and its implications, see "Faculty Members Are Not Cashiers" by David M. Perry in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

[2] These WCenter listserv conversations include the January 2012 thread "Tutor vs. consultant," the December 2012 thread "Tutor or consultant," the February 2013 thread "titles for tutors/writing consultants," the March 2014 thread "what do you call the people you work with."

[3] Instead of using "tutor" or "consultant," I use the term "writing center practitioner" to mean those who work in the writing center with student writers on student writing. Like all labels, this one too is limited. Writing center practitioners are not just practitioners but are often also scholars, researchers, teachers, directors, administrators, peers-tutors, students, professionals, etc.

[4] Like Nancy Grimm, I use the term ideology "as a way to call attention to a system of intertwined ideas, beliefs, and values designed to maintain the status quo" ("Retheorizing" 80) and to refer to the manufacturing of an unconscious consent that begins to feel "naturalized through discourses that suggest the obvious ways that 'normal' people are supposed to think, write, act, speak, and believe" (81).

[5] In their valuable edited collection *Writing Centers and the New Racism: A Call for Sustainable Dialogue and Change*, Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan justify the use of quotations and references from the WCenter listserv. They justify their decision to use the WCenter listserv in the following way:

> The citation of listserv posts remains contentious in the writing center field. To be sure, a person's informal comments in a mass e-mail are not intended to constitute a person's formal scholarly position on an issue. A listserv does, however, represent a significant discursive space in which ideas about language, practice, and–implicitly—ethics, circulate. Our decision to bring in quotations from and references to the listserv is therefore meant to demonstrate the kinds of ideas about race pervasive in the public sphere, not to single out an individual person for her or his views. For that reason, we have chosen not to cite the individual writer by name (1).
>
> I use WCenter listserv conversations for the same reasons, but instead of attempting to understand ideas about race pervasive in the public sphere, I am interested in understanding ideas about how we label

> and/or feel we should label writing center work(ers) and student writers. I too have chosen not to cite individual writer names. The full archives are available at http://lyris.ttu.edu/read/?forum=wcenter.

[6] I realize that the consultant/client terminology may be suitable for WCs at some particular universities. That being said, the decision to use such labels should be made after careful deliberation, not simply as the default.

[7] For a more in depth analysis of the corporate university and the influence of neoliberalism in higher education, see Boesenberg , Lynch-Biniek, and "Reforming Academic Labor, Resisting Imposition, K12 and Higher Education," the 25th Issue of *Workplace: a journal for academic labor*.

[8] This organization reflects the UHWC website pre-November 2015, as it has since been updated to be more mobile-friendly.

[9] I acknowledge that peer tutoring is just one tutoring model and that other kinds exist, like graduate student tutoring and professional tutoring. Peer tutoring is also one of the most, if not the most, common models and was/is the model around which much writing center research and scholarship has been and continues to be established.

[10] Robinson carefully defines "basic writer" as "non-traditional students," including both native speakers of non-standard varieties of English and students with different language backgrounds like ESL, who are often underprepared for mainstream academic discourse.

[11] This history is also reflected in a more recent study of university writing centers across the country, very few of which acknowledge their work with "remedial" populations (see Salem).

[12] In addition, Scott et al. found that basic writers may not feel comfortable when made the "primary agent" because they may already be anxious about visiting the WC (54).

[13] The sciences and business are the disciplines that Bok and Slaughter and Rhoades identify as ones that seem most likely to align themselves with neoliberal ideologies.

[14] Here, I mean to distinguish between "renaming" and "rebranding." The word "brand" comes from the act of burning flesh (human and animal) with a hot iron to mark and signify ownership. In contrast, to name comes from the act if identifying, distinguishing, or describing a thing.

[15] And, according to the origin of the word "brand," are often imposed by someone in a position of power.

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