

Wonderful

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SPEAKERS

Grace Pregent, Sharieka Botex, Wonderful Faison, Colton Wansitler, Nick Buonanni

 00:00

 **Colton Wansitler** 00:27
Hello everyone. My name is Colton Wansitler. And I am the Interim Assistant Director for the Writing Center at MSU.

 **Wonderful Faison** 00:38
Oh, I'm Dr. Wonderful Faison when people call me Dr. Wonderful. I am the Chair of the English department at Langston University.

 **Colton Wansitler** 00:52
Grace.

 **Grace Pregent** 00:53
Yeah, I'm Grace pregent Associate Director at the Writing Center at MSU.

- S** Sharieka Botex 01:01
Sharieka Botex. I'm a Graduate Writing consultant and a Graduate Coordinator at the Writing Center at MSU.
- N** Nick Buonanni 01:09
And I am Nicholas Buonanni And I am also a Graduate Coordinator and consultant at the Writing Center at MSU.
- C** Colton Wansitler 01:21
Wonderful.
- W** Wonderful Faison 01:23
Yes. Oh, wait, you're just making the comment. Haha, doesn't happen all the time.
- C** Colton Wansitler 01:31
I'll make sure to use great. I tend to use wonderful a lot. So I'll use great in this context to avoid confusion. So we do have a couple different categories of questions that we want to ask you today. I believe you have received a list of questions correct?
- W** Wonderful Faison 01:48
Yes.
- C** Colton Wansitler 01:48
Okay. Great. So we'll just start at the beginning and start with some context questions. So the first question is: when did you work at the center and who was on the leadership team, when you were there?
- W** Wonderful Faison 02:01
Okay, so I worked there 2014 to 2000... I really worked there all four years. I did the first two because I was on the five year program, even though I got out in four. So, I did the first two to, but I never left. Like I work there over summer, as you know Colton, even when I was teaching or I pulled other hours. So, for four years, I would say 2014 to 2018.

C Colton Wansitler 02:32
Perfect and who was on the leadership team?

W Wonderful Faison 02:35
Was their leadership team? I know how that sounds, but I don't think there was one. I mean, we had things but I don't remember anything specific called the leadership team, where it had things that it had to do. So, I don't actually think that that was in existence. When I was tutoring full time there. I don't remember conversations about it. So maybe there was one and y'all renamed it, but other than that, not to my knowledge.

C Colton Wansitler 03:10
I guess I can also ask like who were the Directors and Associate Directors.

W Wonderful Faison 03:16
Ah, okay. Now I can answer. Yeah, okay, so. Yeah. Yeah. So Trixie, I mean I thought you talk about stuff with grad students because we did a lot as grad students, you know. So I was like graduate student leadership thing. Um, so, Trixie, obviously in her current capacity. Diana Baldwin, before she moved on, for the first couple years. Then Jill came in for a year. Yeah, for like the first three years it was just Trixie and Diana, and then like Joe came in during that like last year because I remember I was I was ABD at the time. So that's who was there?

C Colton Wansitler 04:10
Perfect. So when you're at the center, what locations were on campuses? Which ones did you work in? What were their locations, like the spaces?

W Wonderful Faison 04:27
Yeah. I worked in Bessey Hall, obviously. I worked in South Neighborhood, I was the Graduate Coordinator for South neighborhood. So I got big ups for South Neighborhood. And then I did that weird thing with Lyman Briggs for like one semester and decided that that was not for me. So that was,

G Grace Pregent 04:52

What was that thing? That doesn't exist.

W

Wonderful Faison 04:54

I'll tell you what that thing was. That thing was Lyman Briggs needs to come up with its own tutors and its own Writing Program. That's what that was. And they were like, "Hey, writing center people come and get them to write." Like I had to meet with these highly intelligent students – because when you're in Lyman Briggs, you're like these special students or something. I had to meet with these special students in their dorm area and they were all cantankerous and ornery and over it. And I was cantankerous and ornery and over it with them, because they had to write about like, nuclear weapons and technology. So it was like, technology and writing and they had to write things... It was just it was problematic, like Trixie will tell you that there's a reason that she pulled me out of that space. I told her she had to, so there were two things: I told her no Lyman Briggs and no whatever that summer thing is that we do over the summer, when they're like controlling you and you can't leave, you got to stay here, you always got a smile – I'm not that type of person. Haha. So yeah, but those were the spaces.

G

Grace Pregent 06:09

Okay, I know the Lyman Briggs pilot was a thing and happened and it no longer exists.

W

Wonderful Faison 06:17

Oh, thank God it no longer exists.

C

Colton Wansitler 06:20

Oh, it's gone.

G

Grace Pregent 06:23

I don't know how long it was there for or not

C

Colton Wansitler 06:25

It left shortly after you did, Wonderful.

- W** Wonderful Faison 06:30
Oh, it's my fault, well I'm happy to...
- C** Colton Wansitler 06:33
It was not your fault. It was because of you. So thank you.
- W** Wonderful Faison 06:37
You know, I did good.
- N** Nick Buonanni 06:41
That was a positive change that you helped initiate.
- C** Colton Wansitler 06:44
Ok, and then, so you worked in Bessey, did Lyman Briggs for a minute, Holden. What were the other neighborhoods at that time?
- W** Wonderful Faison 06:44
Positive! That I helped initiate. Ah, that's a good question.
- C** Colton Wansitler 07:08
Whatever you can remember.
- W** Wonderful Faison 07:10
Yeah and it's been so long, also considering where where I was too. You know, for some reason, and I think it's because I simply didn't work there, I have no clue. I mean, I know a lot of them were at the dorms, you know what I mean? So I know a lot of them were in those dorm neighborhoods, but I never really got out of South.
- C** Colton Wansitler 07:34
That is a-okay. Again, just trying to grab some context, you know?

W Wonderful Faison 07:38
Yeah.

C Colton Wansitler 07:39
All right, and so the last question in the context category is: what services did the Writing Center offer while you were there?

W Wonderful Faison 07:48
Okay. Yeah, so we have the tutoring, we had three specific time slots. We had twenty-five, you had an hour, and then you had two hours. Now, I don't believe in the neighborhoods, because of the shortness that we had, I don't believe that a two hour option was an option. I think that that was just the Bessey thing. So, but we have that, we brought down our little bucket of toys, you know? What is that Tupperware? You know, the Tupperware box of toys that you go down with the markers and stuff, and we have the computer thing out there and the little vest with the key that they give us, you know, that type of stuff. So a few little trinkets and whatnot and people would come in. You either wouldn't have appointments or someone would make one. You know, and just like with anything, you had your busy times and you had your times that were kind of in a low.

C Colton Wansitler 08:51
Great. Did you participate in writing groups or anything like that while you were at MSU?

W Wonderful Faison 09:00
Oh right, we did have writing groups. That occurred. Um, no, I did not. I did not well, I take that back. I did not until I was working on the perspectives for my dissertation.

C Colton Wansitler 09:20
Gotcha.

W Wonderful Faison 09:21
Then the writing groups became highly beneficial.



Colton Wansitler 09:25

Yeah. I feel like they're beneficial to both parties at that point.



Wonderful Faison 09:30

Yeah, , they are. So yeah.



Nick Buonanni 09:34

Perfect.



Colton Wansitler 09:36

Well, thank you for that section. And we'll go on to the gathering story part.



Grace Pregent 09:46

I'm happy to do this section if you would like. So, under this section, we have a few different questions. The first one is when, and we went broad we went big: when you think of the Writing Center at MSU's History, what comes to mind?



Wonderful Faison 10:06

When I think of the Writing Center at MSU's history, what comes to mind?



Grace Pregent 10:12

If it helps, we had some follow up questions under that some examples.



Wonderful Faison 10:16

Yeah, well, I think I have something that came to mind. And I would say, a dogged pursuit in service of students. Even though, very flawed. So I would say that that's the the history of it, is that it really does work towards serving the students, but that approach at times can be flawed. If you don't know who you're not considering.



Grace Pregent 10:58

I was going to ask the follow up Question, flawed how, but I think we're responding to it

there. If you don't know who your kids are,

W

Wonderful Faison 11:05

Well, in my time there, as Colton may know. Haha. In my time there I was big on let's find out how we respond to students who are being/we're using racist or racial rhetoric or undertones in their writing. I'm not sure we've ever actually gotten to how one, a tutor, is supposed to respond to that. I'm still interested in that and still look for that. So that was one of the things, pushing towards having a language or linguistic diversity statement to push it towards changing mindsets about whom we accept, and why and treat and why and why we don't. You know, because I was like, no matter what the Writing Center is in the institution, which is racist, and sexist, and classist, and homophobic, and it's situated within that. So there are going to be aspects of that within the Writing Center, no matter what. So this is what I mean, but sometimes it's hard to hear, from these particular voices, that it's still not quite right. I mean, I think as humans, we seek for perfection. You know, well I have the Best Writing Center, one that did not have any problems. And I think that at times might have been hard to hear. You know, from everybody involved, it was hard for me to say. Right, so...

G

Grace Pregent 12:44

I struggle in our interviews, I want them to turn into just this dialogue. And I want to talk about the language statement and these things and like "Grace, you're conducting an interview," and we have questions that we got to focus on and thank you. Thank you for your answers, Wonderful. They've been they've been great so far.

W

Wonderful Faison 13:01

No problem.

G

Grace Pregent 13:03

Can you recall any outreach programs or significant events the center had created or was involved in during this time? I know you were alluding to the language statement rollout.

W

Wonderful Faison 13:18

The Language Statement thing came at the end, and I was kind of out of it and I was kind of upset with the conversation. Uh, and, you know, I was in my own place, you know where you are when you're in that place. Haha. Because some of you have been there before

heading to that place now. But those conversations didn't start off right and they started off wrong because they started off with "Why are we doing this?" And there was nothing more upsetting to me in that moment. Well, you know, like, "Are you kidding me?" So, on that one. On the other thing, we did have an outreach coordinator. At the time, who was to do outreach with.. and you come up with your ideas of what does outreach in the community do? What does the Writing Center look like in a community aspect? So we did have an outreach coordinator at the time. I'm not sure how much I remember doing outreach stuff. Now over the summer, when we had the grandparents university, that rocked that was pretty cool. Because I think once again, it's in service to the community. However, of course, Wonderful being Wonderful pointed out serious, obvious, visible issues with race and class that were occurring. Like everybody was old, well everyone was white. Okay, all except one person. Right? I was like, and I know that there were grants and stuff like this. I'm like, but this is what I kept pointing out to them all the time. Why does this one racial color just seem to be the one that always shows up. There's something. Something's going on. So, but that was a great thing over summer – like it was beneficial. That's why I wanted more racial diversity because we were actually really beneficial to those kids. They had fun, they made a lot of things, you got to see where they were really talented. Like, it was great fun, which is why I kind of wanted more students to experience that.

N

Nick Buonanni 15:31

I was going to ask, do you think? I'm not sure if you said this? Was it an approach in the advertising that you felt could have been changed, to perhaps improve the reach of where the program was?

W

Wonderful Faison 15:46

So let me be honest, we have never been good, well, at least the time that I was there MSU was really bad. Like we would do a lot of stuff, but I'm not sure we ever advertise it right. Like there was just all of a sudden be this thing that we were doing. And it was like, "Oh." But it would be this great thing that we were doing. Like even Trixie had her like, Queer like queer WRAC or something conference, which, you know, I always connect Trixie into the Writing Center. So something she does I'm like "so the writing center did," right. But it was almost like, I feel like I heard this by word of mouth, but not because I saw it somewhere. I remember Trixie telling us about it when she was teaching us in a class, right? Like, I didn't see it, necessarily somewhere or the flyers came too late. Even when I was sending out, you know, invitations for people to apply for the writing project thing. Like, the numbers were wrong. I thought I had to do 200 flyers I had to 2000, you know, and I was up there on a Saturday for eight hours because I committed. You know, I took it.

I'm the one that got the number wrong, even though y'all told me 200, but that's okay. Haha... So I think there are ways of promoting things, at least in the four years that I was there, I've always thought we could probably do a better job. So I'm sure that that was part of it. And then there's this community promoting. So when you have to tell people, people who are impoverished have to be told sooner, so they have the time to save up the money. Right. So if you normally start the advertisement six months before, if you're going to reach out to an impoverished community, they probably need to know about a year out and continue to be bombarded and reminded. That's just the way poverty works. You know.

N

Nick Buonanni 17:49

Thank you because I think that that's... it's something good for us to hear. And, you know, even as a center as we try to do better and try to improve upon things. Like just even hearing this kind of critique from someone who's been there and who has thought about these things can help us improve that. So that way we know in the future how to better work on our advertising and stuff to get everybody involved. That should be.

W

Wonderful Faison 18:22

Yeah. Because I'll be honest, I always thought, now that I'm at the institution that I'm at now, and when I tell you, the culture shock in the lack of resources. Like there's lack of resources, and then there's lack of resources, right, the culture shock and lack of resources, and how that stymies the mind. I try to tell people I'm still in the conversation with some of the people about... we're actually having conversations about how much grammar should be gone over when they come to the tutors, because this is the demographic that we're working with. This was not a conversation that we held at MSU. How much grammar should we go over? Like, I mean, literally in our training modules, "here are sentence fragments this..." right. Like, we would say that's anti Writing Center pedagogy come to my writing center, though, and it's not. This severe lack of resources that we have to accommodate students and I've always felt like you all have so , much resources, sometimes too much, right? That I'm not sure they're all being used as effectively as they could be. Because you all have access to so... I've seen it before. There's so much stuff that they'll get that sometimes it's like, "what we're gonna do this?" "I don't know put it over there." Like there's like that atmosphere the Writing Center, right, like has excess. So yeah, that's what I would say. Look at how you all are doing that, cause Grandparents University is really cool and a lot of children should be able to experience that.

G

Grace Pregent 20:05

Thank you. That image of excess, I think, really resonates with me. Then the next question is, what is your, and we've worded it, what is your favorite MSU Writing Center story? Do you have a story, what do you think of the center, that comes to mind?

W

Wonderful Faison 20:29

You know, I mean, I don't know if it's a favorite story or it's more about the story about the stories that I would hear in the Writing Center. I think the best would be the things that we would laugh about, the things at times that you would be told, you know, or you would hear about, you'd be like, wait a minute, what's going on in the writing center? Right like, it was fun. I mean, for me, it was the stories about the stories. I mean, Colton you were there it was all kinds of, I mean, all kinds of drama, and angst, right that was going on. But now that I'm outside of it, I'm like God, drama and angsty, filled place. But it was exciting and it was exuberant and people were close and there were cliques and there were people who love each other, and they were people who hated each other. And it just made me think this is very much like what a community is. You know, so when I think of the MSU Writing Center, I'm like, it is very much a community and not in that like nice, Rosy sugar coated way, the community and family but in that very raw way. We could come together when we had to come together, but we fought, we had our differences. There are people that are glad they'll never see one another again. Haha... But if I got to talk about the Writing Center, it's a community it's a neighborhood within its own self.

G

Grace Pregent 22:03

The stories about the stories. I like that.

S

Sharieka Botex 22:06

I think that's definitely important to mention and note, your sense of community and I noticed is not in the context questions we have, but we read your piece and Anna Trevino "The Race Retention Language and Literacy: The Hidden Curriculum on the Writing Center." And I begin there you guys talk about that some of the ideas are attached to what you're saying, in my opinion, to what you're saying now, but the idea of home and the Writing Center and the different feelings in a way the like cultural identity and race tie into that. So I'm just wondering, like, how did you find yourself communicating those types of messages in a way that transcended out beyond MSU's Writing Center, I guess, like what did you take from those experiences that you're talking about now, to kind of morph that out into something that I think people in different Writing Center spaces are looking at, and how did you process that? Were you working at the Writing Center at the time?

I mean, I was. It's really weird because I never thought I'd be a scholar about race. Yeah, I just wanted to teach kids how to write. Haha... You know, I've never thought I'd be a scholar about race. And so, you know, a lot of my research at that time, and publishings at that time, came from my experiences in that Writing Center. Whether they were good, or really, really bad, and I won't lie that I had some really bad experiences in that Writing Center, self inflicted and other people inflicted, just to be honest. Right? So a lot of my research comes out of that. I tell people all the time, I write best when I'm angry. Everything you've ever, if you've ever read anything from me, I was angry. You know, and I was upset at the injustice of something, something as I saw as a true injustice. And what I think one of the most... Honestly, it's very inhumane is to simplify really complex things like family, like home, right? Like commute, like simplify these things into loving things, when we know that people have abusive families, or we know the complex dynamics, you know, that can happen if you just have multiple siblings because every parent has a favorite. They lie and say they don't, but we all know they do. Right? We all know they do. I say that too. I'm the favorite. Right? So that's what it was to me is that everything to me at that time seemed like they were being so simple. And I thought that they were doing it to be obstructionists. I thought it was an obstructionist tactic. I was like, You can't believe it's that simple. Well, the Writing Center is different than an institution because it's like home. Home as an institution, right, like I would be frustrated by the oversimplification, and I read it as obstructionist, like rhetoric. And I don't actually think it was obstructionist. I think it's a human need to make things simple, to make complicated things very, very simple. Right? And we're in a field where you have to define what's different about yourself to be able to be considered valid and a thing. If the institution's racist, how is it the Writing Center race, right? Well, you know, because we do things with home and family and community, like all three of these spots aren't racist, or can't harbor that. So that's what it was. It's matured now, because I realized that my lens was narrow. I realized that the majority of work about writing centers is about predominantly white institutions. Now question, why in the world, no one's listening to what HBCUs, or Hispanic serving institutions are saying and how that will change the discourse around what we do actually, when we tutor. Because when I say we are really looking at grammar and this that and the other and we're doing common midterms with grammar and this... that's because of our demographic. I didn't come here with that type of ideology. I thought it was useless until you recognize that there are some populations that fundamentally haven't been given the tools. They've been failed. And if we don't recognize that as tutors, or instructors wherever you are, then we'll fail them more by not giving them the tools because we're like, "well, you're supposed to have them and now I'm not going to teach it to you, and so I'll continue this classist, racist oppression of you." So what do you do when there's someone who comes to your writing center that needs those tools? You'll be like, "well, you know, we care about higher order concerns." Like sometimes that's how a lot of

writing center theory came off to me. We care about your elbow, like things like that. Haha... People that I respect, I love writing certain scholars, these are my friends. Right? These are people that I know. But they also know that this is how I feel about it. Stop making it all roses, and you know, tell us about what we did well, that you did it well, that here you do this well, but here are all these other things. You have to work on that.

S

Sharieka Botex 27:47

Thank you for that response.

W

Wonderful Faison 27:49

Did that answer your question?

S

Sharieka Botex 27:51

No, most definitely. Yes. Yep.

G

Grace Pregent 27:57

The next question I have is: during your your time at the center, did any significant world political, social, cultural, or university events occur?

W

Wonderful Faison 28:11

Yes! My entire life changed the minute Donald Trump was elected. And when I saved my life, I mean, my physical psychology. Those last two years fundamentally changed. I didn't know how to see people, I certainly didn't know how to see my white, "liberal friends." You know, I was just annoyed at what everyone was saying. And this isn't about me, I just... When that happened, I probably went to being the gayest I've ever been, I hadn't been to like a club in you know, 10, 15 years. You know, I was like, you know, 48 at the time, I had to go to a club and dance and do what gay people do, because I was so worried about this guy. Right? But that changed my outlook on everything. And then the Larry Nasser stuff is going down here. So, those things altered your perception of a lot of things, right? A lot of my perceptions got changed, which I thank MSU for and sometimes I, you know, wish it hadn't occurred. My perceptions of the North changed. You know, being. I was born and raised below the Mason Dixon line, Washington DC and all my experiences really from the South never really been way up north. That, you know... what's the word I want to use? I thought y'all were better with the race thing. What I found out is that it's bubble wrapped. You know, in this really weird best way, I can describe it is... taking a cab to MSU... taxi

drivers like "Where you going?" "Going to MSU." "Oh! You're the cook?" The cook.... OF MSU. Haha... So that kind of stuff, but you know that... Honestly that was the oddest... I would have never got that in the South. Believe it or not. Like I would have never gotten that but I got that here and that was odd to me. You can't see a black person... you know, not only as like... you couldn't not... only could you not see me as an instructor, you couldn't even see me as a student. That's what that comment read to me like. Even though I'm walking in there with a backpack, with books, all these other visual markers... So, yeah, but wait, what was the question? I want to make sure I hit it. Felt like I didn't.

G

Grace Pregent 31:08

You did? No, you did. Any significant world, political...

N

Nick Buonanni 31:13

Yeah, there you go.

G

Grace Pregent 31:15

You got it. Nassar, I mean... We were trying to ask here, you know, we don't want to think of the writing center's history or story in isolation, right. It's much more complex than that. We are like deeply implicated in social and political and cultural structures. So we're trying to think out those moments and the second part of this question was, if you can remember how did the center like respond to those events, react to those events? if they did?

W

Wonderful Faison 31:46

Well, for a couple days, you know... I'll speak with them separately because the reaction was separate. So after the presidential election for a couple days, it's like ain't nobody really know what to do. And it was felt. Like, at least for me, in that entire building where the writing center is, it's like, did nobody know what to do? Of course, no offense anyone on the panel, but I feel like all the white people were like, "what are the black people want to do?" I felt like they were all like, "Oh God!" You know? I had white people hug me it was very weird. Right? Are you okay? And so there was this weird reaction that was happening by everyone. Where everyone was trying to figure out... It's like everyone was trying to reposition themselves because it's like ain't nobody knows who they were, or who they thought they were. So it was this weird... Because you wanted to know did you vote for this dude? Cuz Michigan went red, right? But American culture you don't ask nobody who they voted... like that's rude, you don't do that. You started, you could sense people doing that, you could sense people looking around. And you would sense people start to really want

to listen to the whispers in the hallways being heard. Faculty members whispering about this other faculty member that they knew had voted for him. And this is why that faculty member took down Facebook, you're just hearing about all of these things and people like, "I'm getting rid of like all these racist people on my facebook." Haha... Right. And so all of that happening, that couraging led to a lot of silence in the writing center. And it's weird, because looking back on it, it felt like people kind of started to huddle up with people that they just knew and trusted. And I think it actually... I think it had a negative impact on the writing center. Like we still did our jobs, but something seemed different for a little bit, after the immediacy of his election. Something seemed very, very different after that occurred, with just how people will react and so you had to deal with it. And then after that, ain't nobody talks about it, which was an institutional problem. I even asked my students in class. "Y'all understand what's going on with the world? Do y'all even understand how this works? Do you have any... no clue? No clue. It like nobody talked about people dealt with it internally, and then nobody talks about it. But you could trust nobody to talk about it because you talk to the wrong person, somebody is mad. I know I was mad. So I understand if nobody wanted to talk to me about it. But I put that out there because I know how upset I was and I had to go to school the next day. You know, but then we didn't do anything about it, which was a failing. And the response was, "well, why don't you create something?" That's always the response, "Why don't you do this thing?" Oh, put the burden on me. Like, that's how you... Put the burden on me to find a solution to how you all should respond to the fact that you have some really damaged... that there are some very vulnerable populations right now in the Writing Center who are scared and two have them run it. Right, Diana and Trixie. That was that was hard. That was hard. With Larry Nasser, people were... That Larry Nasser thing came with the Me Too thing and so then that became really weird, because then it was about advocacy, and let's advocate. And how can we reach out to people who need to be heard. And I was all about that, except something felt really fraudulent about it. I know how that sounds, something felt really faddish about it. Like, I couldn't believe these people. I remember one time I had actually spoken at The Green Door, which is a bar in East Lansing. You know, because all these people they're like, "This is a safe place." And you know, how about we wear this or whatever? And I was like, "I just don't believe y'all." I don't believe you're that upset. Haha... Right? I don't believe, it just doesn't ring true to me and that's my personal experience, but it felt faddish? Because I don't know if any actual real things changed. You all can tell me, because I left shortly after. Thank God, I was graduating, but I'm not sure fundamental things change. I mean, I still talk to a couple people who go there. I'm very close with Floyd Pouncil, and whatnot. So I just wonder at times, If things have changed up there in response to that. Because people were scared and nobody did nothing. Nobody did nothing for the people who were really scared, you know?



Grace Pregent 37:16

I don't know if anyone here wants to respond to Wonderful on that last one. I know, Colton and Nick, you've been here longer than Sharieka and I, are new this past year, but I don't know if you if you want to? Or if Sharieka or anyone wants to respond to Wonderful, we are at the end of this section and we're about to move into the to the next one... Leave the question out there, has anything changed?



Colton Wansitler 37:43

Um, you know, I think a couple things have changed. Without getting too much into your interview, you know, I remember something just last year happening, you know where... was it last year, maybe the year before? Sometime shortly after I remember you leaving, that there was there was a speaker coming to campus and there were like these protests. And there was an email sent out on behalf of the Writing Center to all of our staff that was like, you know, if you want to protest, you won't lose pay for it. Like, we're still gonna support you financially for you to go to this protest. And so I felt like, that was something that was needed, you know, that was prompted based on these events that we had experienced. And I felt like it was the right step in the right direction.



Wonderful Faison 38:43

Yeah.



Colton Wansitler 38:44

Yeah.



Wonderful Faison 38:45

Well, that's great to hear, quite honestly. That's great to hear.



Colton Wansitler 38:50

That's what I got. You know, that's what I connected to what you were saying. But I agree, like, the whole Trump thing... It was weird. You know, we were in the space, we were together, but we were separate.



Wonderful Faison 39:00

Yeah, we were because we just didn't know how to... I'm glad that time and distance can heal some things, you know, because I left in such a furor that I didn't know if I'd ever recover. Like literally, I didn't know if I ever recovered. So I'm glad that time and space and we were in a moment... we still are, I mean, I think people are still upset. I'm still upset. For those of us that are still upset, but it's not the rawness that was there. It's not raw.

N

Nick Buonanni 39:33

Yeah, I was gonna say, I think, from my perspective, I remember just being shell shocked and not understanding how that could happen and then having a loss of trust for others. Because as you said, you can ask people, but you don't really know that they didn't vote for him. And so I think that's why so many people just got quiet.

W

Wonderful Faison 40:04

Mm hmm.

N

Nick Buonanni 40:05

Because there was just such like this like, What the hell's gonna happen?

W

Wonderful Faison 40:11

Yeah.

N

Nick Buonanni 40:12

And now of course we were watching it all happen and it's disgusting and horrible and hopefully, and I think a lot more people have been able to refine their voice to, to speak up against these things, but I know immediately following it. I love that you said I had to go to a gay bar and just do gay things. Just lean into the stuff that he was not for. Lean into it.

G

Grace Pregent 40:49

Love that. I love that. That might be a high point of all the interviews. We're about to move into the next section here, which is on organizational culture. And Nick or Sharieka, do either one of you want to sort of take the lead on this section?

- N** Nick Buonanni 41:05
Sharieka, If you'd like to?
- S** Sharieka Botex 41:07
Nick, I'll let you take this one and then I'll help you teamwork it.
- G** Grace Pregent 41:12
Sounds good.
- N** Nick Buonanni 41:13
Okay, so why don't you go with number one?
- S** Sharieka Botex 41:19
Thing that happens in class when you get bumped, the reader bumps to you and it's your turn and your up and you have to find out exactly where you're at. So we're moving out of the organizational culture, you're saying Grace?
- N** Nick Buonanni 41:30
No, we're in that one.
- S** Sharieka Botex 41:31
I was gonna say. Okay. So we're asking now, what was one key value or practice that has been or was a constant at the Writing Center?
- W** Wonderful Faison 41:41
Value or practice? I think a key value. Is making sure... was making sure that a student's paper said what they said, what they wanted it to say, not what you wanted it to say. And I think that that's still a key value there and ensuring that students papers are good, but that they give the message that the student wanted, you know, intended all along. Yeah.
- N** Nick Buonanni 42:11

I'm just gonna hop back really quick because I know that that's something I've always struggled with. And when you said, when a student has racist or supremacists style, like rhetoric in their writing, and it's like that line of... how do you change that, but not like change the voice of it? Like how do you balance that line?

W

Wonderful Faison 42:37

I found sometimes it starts with a very simple question. "Are you intending to be racist?" I need to know where you're coming from. Because if you're intending to be racist one, I'm not gonna help you write this paper, you can find another tutor who's willing to do it because we have the ability to do that, or at least at MSU we did – that's another thing that I valued about them. If you're not gonna comfortable working with a client, you wern't gonna work with that client. Right? So that's another thing that I'm very... the industry is very conscious of that and so I'm very happy about that, but it starts with that first question. And we don't ask it because we're actually afraid of the answer. Yeah, the answer may not be no. Haha... Like, that's the truth. Maybe they are intending to be racist, and insidious, or an incendiary. That's what I mean, racist or incendiary, or classes or sexist. Maybe they're trying to do that. So that's the first question and then you have to go from there. Because if it's no, then the other stuff comes easy. Okay, well, because it reads this way to me because blah, blah, blah. If it's Yes, harder decisions have to be made.

N

Nick Buonanni 43:49

Yeah.

W

Wonderful Faison 43:49

How you go about making those decisions, harder decision if somebody says, "Yeah, completely and totally, I mean to be racist. I really actually believe that minorities have a problem with America." You know? Now you might want to encourage them to read some research, right? But we all are smart enough to know research, we know that there's enough research on both sides, that have actually been published in credible journals or this that any other. Right, like, and I think that's why we don't do it. But if you ask me, what's the first step? "Do you know, you're being sexist? Do you mean to do that?" I just want to know, if you do, you know, I'm going to say that's fine, in the sense that, you know, that's what you intend to do. Not saying that it's fine because I'm not sure you know the impact of what these words will do, if your teacher is not white and male and heterosexual and also believes what you believe. You're banking on a lot. That's a lot of variables to bank on because I don't think every white heterosexual male I see is racist. Right. So, but I'm still interested in that and I would like to say that I hope that there's a tutor who's

brave enough, a writing center that's brave enough. I can honestly say we don't get that here. Not the racist stuff. Now the chauvinistic stuff. We'll get that I mean, HBCUs are still pretty homophobic, and they're still pretty heterosexist Okay, but the racist thing that just doesn't occur here. You know, but it still comes with asking, you know, why are you being homophobic? Why are you being transphobic? Why are you... And it takes courage. So I guess what I'm saying is, I hope the MSU Writing Center tutors have the courage to ask that question, and I hope that the directors have the fortitude to support them. Come what may, because we know what happens when you start accusing certain people of being racist. Right. You know, so that's my hope.

N

Nick Buonanni 45:03

Yep. Thank you. So the next question, and I think you've kind of talked about this a little bit, but how would you describe the quality or the spirit of the center? I know you said it's like a community but like a family like they're gonna fight sometimes, but they're there for each other...

W

Wonderful Faison 46:50

Yeah, they're there enriching. You know, I'm mean, vibrancy is the best word that I can come up with, even though I don't know if there's something of vibrant quality. I don't even know if that's a thing. But that's that's what I tend to think of. I mean, but when you think of communities that are living and thriving and sustaining and growing and moving forward, it's because they're vibrant, right? And I think that that's what I think of with the Writing Center. You know, it's vibrant. I'll tell anybody who has ever wanted to work there. You'll never lack for something to do. They'll always be interesting conversations. The tediousness will always be the back to back to back to back appointments, as we know. You know, if you could just breathe but it's very vibrant there and it's growing and people are doing things and they're trying to change things and that's fun. You know, at the end of the day, that's really fun. It's not a stagnant place and you have directors, who by and large, will support what you're doing even if they don't necessarily agree that what you're doing is occurring in the Writing Center. You know, I support Trixie to the end because she let me do my research. Never believing that there was any racism going on, you know, I'm not even sure she fully supported like, you know that this could happen. But she said, "You need to do this, and I'm going to support you in your need to do this." Because at the end of the day, it is still teaching me something about the Writing Center. So, I would say that you know, that people are supportive of the things that you want to do. And it's always vibrant and it's always fun. And I think that that's why people are there. I think that's why when people have a break between class they don't go home to go to Bessey. I guess it's fun. Haha... ...was fun. It was a fun time

S

Sharieka Botex 49:14

Yeah, I agree. I agree with that and thinking about like Nick said, you had already responded to some elements in this question, but I guess now that your inner your inner professional career you moved on to the next phase in your academic life, what would you say are things about the quality of the Writing Center at MSU, or about that sense of the community that you talked about that you use to transfer over to the next phase of your academic career that have impacted you or influenced there?

W

Wonderful Faison 49:45

Well, you know, some of it came from people and some of it came from the skills I've picked up, right. So obviously, a lot of the work that I did and some of you all do, as graduate coordinators, as a neighborhood coordinators, leaders of something like that. So it gave me a lot of skills in terms of what I needed to prepare me for an administration position. If I chose to go after one. I didn't think I'd choose to go after one this early, but it certainly prepared me for those things. In terms of experiences, I'll say this from a student perspective. It's always very interesting when you get on the job market, right? And go to work in an entirely different place where you don't know nobody, right because that's where it is. And somebody reminds you of that somebody in grad school, who you couldn't navigate back then, but you learned something and now you know how to navigate this person... Because of.. and I've learned a lot about how to navigate people at MSU. Some of my navigation was really good, some of it was horrific. Haha... Some of it was really, really bad. But when you start to see that again, you've learned from that and you're like, "wait, okay, I've done this. I've been here before I've done that I can approach this differently now," because it's not a new experience. And that's first happening. Right? I'm more prepared for this. And so it prepared me for those things that you face, like even as a teacher. It prepares you for those things. We have very interesting students at Langston University, in the sense of, you know, they're survivors. They've spent their entire lives like surviving and hustling and having to do that, and that's the skill that they've picked up. Okay. It's a horrible skill for the academy though. Right? And learning how to articulate to people, how they have to go about being successful in the academy. What skills they can and can't use and why is something that I actually learned from the Writing Center. You know, how do you be successful in the academy? How do you learn to speak to power? How do you learn about the processes that you need to get the things that you ultimately want out of your academic and professional career, and I really learned a lot of that at the Writing Center by watching how the writing center worked and attempted to make deals and everything.

- S** Sharieka Botex 52:53
Hey, thank you. See Nick, I asked that question. We didn't have it on the chart, but now I'll put it back to you because there was a Good response. So I don't know the next one back to you.
- N** Nick Buonanni 53:03
They've all been good response.
- S** Sharieka Botex 53:04
Yeah.
- N** Nick Buonanni 53:07
Okay, so just for the sake of time, I think we have... I... like just looking at our list of questions. I think there's a couple that really don't pertain and a couple that we obviously might know like when you work with the Writing Center, we used WC online. So I don't think we need to question that, but I would love to ask the about organizational number three, please describe the writing centers approach to hiring and our onboarding and training. And were there any intentional efforts to recruit staff across the disciplines like Did you see anything?
- W** Wonderful Faison 53:40
Okay, so hiring, then there was their staff across disciplines, and was there one more?
- N** Nick Buonanni 53:47
Yeah, like onboarding and training? Like, any thoughts about that or Okay, yeah, remember?
- W** Wonderful Faison 53:53
Um, yeah, I mean, I was on the hiring committee, when we when we actually had hired Joe, who was the associate director right before the two new ones that are in there now. I did some minor snooping to see who's in the writing center. And so, I was on that committee and I mean, it was very interesting. Hiring committees are odd. You know, it was very interesting, because I'll never forget that there was this one comment that was

made. And I was like, "wait, why is this bothering me?" And we had a set of candidates and we looked and we were like, "Oh, no, we can't do this. All these candidates are white." You know, HR will kill us, right? Affirmative Action will kill us. And I just remember thinking, "oh my god, how, how odd that is. That... candidates that everyone that you say are the top candidates, but there's something wrong with with with the pool. Right? The pool is all, you know, white men or something like that there's just a general lack of diversity there. And so you have to put it there and it just felt weird to me. Hearing that comment and knowing that, well these are the intricacies that you have to go through. I mean, when I'm on the Langston hiring committees here, they're like, "Yep, you know, we'd love for us to get some more of like black scholars." Of course you can't say that right in the job call, because it violates affirmative action. So some very weird things, right, that I thought were happening on the hiring committee. You know, I wanted to look at the job call, right, because there are ways to write job calls that are actually going to attract minority candidates, right? So, when I was there, I questioned how we're crafting our job calls. Right? Which I think one should always ask "how are we crafting the job call to get the kind of candidates that we want?" For the the second part was that onboarding or...

N

Nick Buonanni 56:23

When you were hired, like what type of training or materials. Like, did you get a handbook? Things like that?

W

Wonderful Faison 56:32

Yeah, I mean we got what is what is that? What is that handbook that's always used Norton guide for tutors or something. Is that Norton? Bedford! Bedford! Thank you Bedford book for tutors or something like that. So when we got that, I'll tell you the truth, I've never paid one bit of attention to it. I'm not even gonna lie, just got it and put it down. Because I have been tutoring for two years prior, although... you know at the Masters thing. It wasn't I know everything, but it was like I'm just not. Right. So then we had to come in, I think two weeks before the fall semester started, Monday through Friday? No, Monday through Thursday. It was like nine the three. And Fridays It was like 9 to 12. It was ghastly. Um, and so that's that's what we had... I'm glad that there was training. I'm just saying it was ghastly. That's a lot of hours. I mean, we're students we want to keep the vacation all the way to the day before. Right. So coming back two weeks prior was just really annoying. But that was the training and we went over different things. I seem to remember remember us doing a lot of community building exercises, and not a lot of like, you know, mock situations or like practical type of stuff. I felt like... Lord, forgive me Trixie... I felt like... I always felt like I was a child when I entered the Writing Center. Not that it was trying to infantilize me, but all the colors and the crayons and the crafts, you know, and

I'm not that kind of girl, like, I'm not craft woman. And so all of these things, obviously.. I feel like I'm twelve, you know. I was like, "Why? What is this weird relationship building that we're doing?" This is a grown person, I'm a grown person. We don't get to like each other. We just got to work well, like this is something adults know. Like, it just felt kitty to me. That being said, I'm still happy we have training. I wouldn't say we didn't need it. I think we needed more practical things. And I think at times we focused on these abstract understandings of things. I understood. I mean, we're all smart. Trixie wants the Writing Center to be seen as a community type space, as a home like space. So she would do community building exercises. That's what she wants her space to be seen as. I'm just saying personally, I felt like I was 12 years old for like 14 days before the semester. So that was that one. Was there another one? I felt like there was a third one but no? Or... I feel like there was a third one.

N

Nick Buonanni 59:43

Oh, I had jumbled into that was Do you remember if the if the the Writing Center really reached out to other disciplines at the university to hire people

W

Wonderful Faison 59:56

Cross disciplines... Ah, well, yeah. I mean, my God. When when we had 100 tutors you're still running at a low, you know. You don't have 100 people in English, you don't have 100 people in WRAC like that, you know, at the graduate level. I mean, you actually have only a couple of WRAC people that you give the Writing Center thing to. So we depend on undergrads more so than we... we depend and we don't have the time to cherry pick disciplines you know. Send in your applications, as long as... I think what's the main thing, as long as you've completed your basic Gen Ed, I think, and you've gone through the tutor training course you're guaranteed the spot. So yeah, we always work across disciplines have to. And how great that was, oh my god, that was great. Yes, best part of the Writing Center, working with all those different disciplines and hearing how everybody talks. Everybody talks so different and smart and crazy, but like the English people over here talking about like... not the English people, the WRAC people talking about rhetoric and race and words, and the English people talking about books and literature, and music people are talking about stuff... like all this stuff... you do not understand that at all, right. But it's all interesting, you know that it's like all smart stuff being said. So yeah, cross discipline, that's the best thing after working in a writing center with nothing writing people... I love it... but man, we're kind of ornery. We're a little bit ornery, and cantankerous. And that's a lot of ornery, cantankery people in one room. So I know I worked with him. So yeah, that was the best thing about MSU's Writing Center.

- N** Nick Buonanni 1:02:03
Awesome and I just want to clarify, you said you did not receive a handbook.
- W** Wonderful Faison 1:02:08
No, I received it. I didn't do anything with it. I couldn't tell you where that handbook went after it was placed in my hand.
- N** Nick Buonanni 1:02:15
But it was like, was it like a writing center handbook? Or was it just like...?
- W** Wonderful Faison 1:02:21
It was just a Bedford, Yeah.
- N** Nick Buonanni 1:02:25
Yeah.
- C** Colton Wansitler 1:02:26
Well, we're actually... side note... we're actually working at a writing center specific handbook right now.
- W** Wonderful Faison 1:02:31
This is good. I think that's smart. Yeah. I think that's smart.
- C** Colton Wansitler 1:02:36
We're very excited about it/
- N** Nick Buonanni 1:02:39
That's actually where this whole interview process came from, was the handbook committee and developing that and wanting to have our story, in addition to other things, be a part of the handbook. So that way when someone gets hired, they can see these things and understand the diversity of the Writing Center itself and you know, hear all of

the previous people who have worked there, their voices and then you know, see logistics like how to log into things and all that kind of stuff. But... yeah, no, I totally get it.

G Grace Pregent 1:03:13
Well, I just wanted to ask our closing questions here.

W Wonderful Faison 1:03:18
Okay.

G Grace Pregent 1:03:19
Wonderful, is there anything else that that you'd like to share? We're going to end with that big... you start broad, end broad, right? Is there anything else that you would like to share about the history of the center or anyone else that we should talk with?

W Wonderful Faison 1:03:36
Well, right, well about the history of the center or the center itself. I mean, I will simply say, there's no space that I learned more about the learning how to be a teacher and learning how to work with students and understand how they see writing, than the writing Center. It's one of the most generative spaces. And I give all credit to Trixie and formerly Diana Baldwin, for where they carry the Writing Center from to where it is now. And this is why I remain adamant supporters of them, not just because they're my friends and my mentors, but because I believe in what they do. I believe in the Writing Center and what it does, no matter any of its problems. That's what I want to say is that I believe in the Writing Center and what it does and that what it's doing, is trying to be better for students.

G Grace Pregent 1:04:52
Thank you.

W Wonderful Faison 1:04:53
Yep.

G Grace Pregent 1:04:53
And can you think of anyone else who worked at the writing center that we should reach

out to or speak with? And this could be writing center or affiliated with the Writing Center when you were there. So, clients, faculty, anybody else you think we should reach out and talk to?

W

Wonderful Faison 1:05:13

Yeah. Well, I don't well, so don't know who you talked to. But in terms of across discipline, I have one name from you outside of WRAC. Her name is Esmee Murdoch. She's on my Facebook. God knows I do not know how to... But Trixie should still have her somewhere in the listserv. Trixie knows who Esmee is. She was there for a few years. She's now a professor out there in California. So she would be someone who'd be good to talk to about it as they remember it and also, his name is Blair Proctor. Colton, you're on my Facebook because you can like Facebook steal these people and contact them. I can give you Blair's contact number if you just reach out to me, Colton, at least with your with your email. But yeah Blair Proctor he was from AAAS and I'm giving these people because I think that they will speak to you honestly and give you an honest perspective of what they they saw going on and the history of things. Yeah

G

Grace Pregent 1:06:38

Great. Wonderful.

C

Colton Wansitler 1:06:41

Wonderful. Yes.

W

Wonderful Faison 1:06:44

Probably Yeah. But yeah could you have my email right. If you email me, I will get you Blair's information. He's working at Syracuse. You might be able to Google his email.

C

Colton Wansitler 1:06:57

Oh, ok.

W

Wonderful Faison 1:06:57

But either way, I just don't know the spool that resumes out otherwise I'd be like just Google that right? Um, but if you atleast email I can get you some information that gets

you in contact with them.



Colton Wansitler 1:07:10

And like you said, we're friends on Facebook so I can I should be able to find them on your friends list.



Nick Buonanni 1:07:14

There you go. There you go.



Colton Wansitler 1:07:17

Thank you so much! this was, I mean, this was awesome.



Wonderful Faison 1:07:20

Thank you. It was good to see you all again. It was good to meet you. I'm glad you're where you want to be Sharieka.



Sharieka Botex 1:07:28

Yeah, I'm grateful. I'm grateful for that. I feel like you had the ECU and MSU path or at least background to some degree. So it feels good, like you said, to be now with with Trixie and after being with my ECU community and being in this writing center community, so I'm definitely blessed. I guess you dropped a lot of knowledge on us. I only had one final question like, what...? Especially because of all the knowledge you shared and you have moved on like but you're still a part of this community. Like you said, What is one piece of advice you would give your then writing center itself, you're working in that space now that you've made it to this point, what is the one piece of advice you would give to yourself? I guess...



Wonderful Faison 1:08:10

Chill the fuck out. I know how that sounds... Well like I was really on that race stuff you know, and I'm an advocate, but like there are some times I just need chill man. Like and ain't nobody ever tell me "Wonderful, chill." I recognize I might've seem like a bull in a china shop so I understand that people didn't want to be like "Wonderful, chill." I get it right, but I needed to chill the fuck out. Like literally and you can put that. Quote that if you wanted to.



Grace Pregent 1:08:42

Right.



Wonderful Faison 1:08:43

Because like I said it goes back to me saying how much drama and angst and whatnot is in the Writing Center. Because... except for... let's see, let's except for Trixie and now you Grace and the other Associate Director I cannot remember her name.



Colton Wansitler 1:09:03

Karen.



Wonderful Faison 1:09:03

Nobody in there is stable. We all worried about whether or not we don't get a job that creates angst. We've been doing this for years, you get this degree and you come out with no job. Right? Like all that is drama and angsty and everyone's competing even if you don't want to compete and so yeah, a lot of us just needed to be told "chill out." You know, just chill out so that's what I would tell you know myself then chill out, pick the fight you want to fight. Like don't stop fighting the racism and things like that. But you know, breathe. It's okay to say, "I'm not going to do that today." Because I tried to fight it every day and and it was it wore on me. And it made me... It changed my mental state and it made me very, very, very angry. And like I said, it's taken me two years to get past it. And I shouldn't have done that to myself. Yeah. Yeah.



Sharieka Botex 1:10:05

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you guys. Thanks everybody for letting me be a part of this. And thank you for all the knowledge you shared in the great questions and stuff, everybody.



Wonderful Faison 1:10:12

Thank you. Let me know if I can ever help in anything else. I'll be happy to, okay. All right.