

# Robyn & Scott

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## SPEAKERS


Robyn Tasaka, Grace Pregent, Scott Chiu, Nick Buonanni, Sharieka Botex, Nicholas Buonanni, Colton Wansitler

 00:00


 Colton Wansitler 00:09  
My name is Colton Wansitler, and I'm the Assistant Director at the Writing Center at MSU. And I'm also a graduate student there as well.

 Grace Pregent 00:19  
Great. I'm Grace Pregent. I'm the Interim Director of the Writing Center at MSU while Trixie is on leave and sabbatical. And I'm also the PI on this research project with this team. And thank you two, just want to thank you, even as we're beginning for sharing your time and your stories with us.

 Grace Pregent 00:39  
To Nick, let's go over to you.

 Nicholas Buonanni 00:41

Hi, I'm Nicholas Buonanni, or Nick Buonanni, and I am currently one of the Graduate Coordinators at the Writing Center, and I am a doctoral candidate in music, and I am the one who's been emailing you all kinds of stuff to try to get this organized. So I want to thank you both for responding and being so willing to do this with us. It's a lot of fun, and I have the duo personality of the interview is helpful for both of you to bounce ideas off of and remember things. I know Marilee was the one who actually gave us your names and recommended both of you to be part of this project. So we'll be talking to her tomorrow.

 Sharieka Botex 01:29

Good evening, everybody, or good morning to you all, if you're not in our time zone. I'm Sharieka Botex. I'm really excited to do the interview with you all. Hi, I'm a PhD student in the writing rhetoric and American cultures department at MSU, and I'm a Graduate Writing coordinator and a graduate consultant in the Writing Center. So yeah, I'm definitely looking forward to hearing about your time in the Writing Center and your experiences there and hope to learn a lot from you today. So thanks for doing the interview with us.

 Scott Chiu 02:02

Okay, Robin, you want to go first?

 Robyn Tasaka 02:05

Oh, sure. Um, so my name is Robin Tasaka, and I am currently the Tutor Coordinator at the University of Hawaii, West Oahu. So our center it's called the No'eau Center for math, writing, student success, something like that. We always just say No'eau. But yeah, so we have writing tutoring as well as content area tutoring.

 Scott Chiu 02:32

Okay, so my name is Scott Chiu. I am, I direct the Writing Center in my institution, California Lutheran University.

 Scott Chiu 02:42

And I'm also a faculty member in the English department

S

Scott Chiu 02:47

I got my tenure last year I just came back from my sabbatical. Yeah excited about this opportunity to talk about the stories because MSU Writing Center had, you know, was a life changing experience to me and has continued to be a source of my, you know, inspiration and notice positive thinking and professionalization, especially we, you know, working around center, we continue to refer back to MSU. And Trixie and...you know, in everything that you guys are doing there, and we're like, "Ah, we should do that!" But no, we are not MSU. Yeah, so I'm excited by this opportunity. Thank you for having us having me.

C

Colton Wansitler 03:36

Of course, thank you both.

C

Colton Wansitler 03:38

So let's jump into the interview here. We're going to start by collecting like just context for both of you. So we'll start with the first question here, which is when did you work at the center? So what years and who was on the leadership team, so like the directors, associate directors, any fiscal officers if you can recall the...office assistant or anything like that.

C

Colton Wansitler 04:09

And we can start with Scott, is that okay?

S

Scott Chiu 04:12

Sure. Um, I was I was gonna say I will always go after Robin, but I guess I can start. So I joined MSU Writing Center at MSU 2008, and then I worked until 2010. I believe. I'm trying to remember the time because I finished my degree...Yeah, I studied a full time position in WRAC First Year Writing program immediately after I finished so there was the overlap in time...and the Writing Center as a Graduate Writing consultant that was 2008 and 10. Trixie and Dianna were leadership team, Trixie was director Dianna was Associate Director. I think the same Dianna started Yeah. I met her at the Summer Institute. That's how I was I got into the Writing Center. And the people there, you know, I have I was there was a group of, you know, very dynamic group. I mean, you know, the dynamic group continued for a couple of years. But when I started...that's when I met Marilee and

- S** Scott Chiu 05:32  
I worked very closely with Marilee and Elena and Matt Cox, and
- S** Scott Chiu 05:40  
there was, we have this front desk. There was an old lady called Kathy.
- S** Scott Chiu 05:47  
Kathy..is she's still there? Kathy...
- S** Scott Chiu 05:51  
An old lady. I actually became pretty good friend with her at front desk, and yeah, then a bunch of undergraduate consultants. I remember a few names we remain Facebook friends after years.
- S** Scott Chiu 06:11  
Yeah. Do you want me to name those people?
- S** Scott Chiu 06:15  
I don't think I can. Haha.
- S** Scott Chiu 06:20  
I have to go back to my Facebook page to get those contacts.
- G** Grace Pregent 06:25  
if you can, and later in the interview we do ask if there's anyone else you think we should speak with, as well. So yeah,
- S** Scott Chiu 06:32  
okay. And remember this this kid, John Lochner. Is that right, John?

**S** Scott Chiu 06:39  
He's at Georgia now.

**S** Scott Chiu 06:42  
Now, Georgia University of Georgia, I believe. Anyway, I've got a few others. It was very interesting group of people. Yeah. I don't know how do we how we do how we do it. I don't want to keep talking. Good. It can go forever.

**S** Scott Chiu 07:02  
Do I just answer one question and then Robin?

**G** Grace Pregent 07:06  
That sounds great. Yeah. And then Robin, the same question to you. When did you work at the center and who was on the leadership team or in the center? I'm curious to see if you know Kathy.

**R** Robyn Tasaka 07:16  
I do not remember Kathy but my memory is also bad. I was like, trying to remember names and you know, certain people got married and changed their names, too. So, that's also a piece, but I think I was like 2007 to 2009. And so, um, so yeah, I also worked with Trixie and with Dianna, but then I was also there before Trixie came when we had Dave Sheridan, um, and then Stephanie, Stephanie Sheffield was a grad student and she was like the, the assistant director or something. I don't know, whatever the title was. Um,

**R** Robyn Tasaka 08:00  
So that's what I remember about leadership and my dates.

**C** Colton Wansitler 08:07  
Scott if it makes you feel any better I briefly remember

**C** Colton Wansitler 08:11  
Kathy.

- C** Colton Wansitler 08:13  
Oh, yeah,
- C** Colton Wansitler 08:13  
yeah. So it's just
- S** Scott Chiu 08:16  
yeah. I wonder is she still alive? You know? I mean,
- C** Colton Wansitler 08:22  
she was in and out of the sector,
- S** Scott Chiu 08:25  
but she wants to be good. He was she was pretty she was old. Anyway. Yeah. All right, shall we? Shall we answer the next question? Like, where was the locations and everything?
- C** Colton Wansitler 08:40  
Absolutely. So
- C** Colton Wansitler 08:43  
while you were working, where were center locations on campus? And if you do recall the spaces at all if you can describe them that would be very helpful.
- S** Scott Chiu 08:51  
I just remember. Okay, so Bessey, right. And then library. And also, you know what this is that student athlete support that it is a...or next you have to get in there and it's a very special place. And also there's also business...how do you call that with that?
- S** Scott Chiu 09:25  
the business, in business, in business somewhere in business in a business building and they were saying that because a different funding source and I never worked at that location

but I know a few people are working in the location. But I have been working at Bessey library and and the student athlete

**S** Scott Chiu 09:47  
Yeah. That place

**S** Scott Chiu 09:51  
thoughts about it. I know you guys have been expanding, but then that was the four places I remember

**G** Grace Pregent 10:00  
Do you remember those same ones, Robin?

**R** Robyn Tasaka 10:02  
Yeah, those are the four I think I worked in the business one. I felt like I did maybe like only like once or twice. I don't know if I was just like subbing for someone or what but...

**S** Scott Chiu 10:12  
yeah.

**S** Scott Chiu 10:14  
That's usually how that happens. Yeah.

**C** Colton Wansitler 10:18  
Great. So we'll just move right along to our next question. So what services did the center offer while you were there? So, for example, writing groups, face-to-face appointments, walk in, etc.

**S** Scott Chiu 10:33  
We have this, I mean, workshops, right classroom presentation workshop, and there are some, yeah, sometimes we have some group that come to campus day, and I remember

there was a nursing program in the summer, and they invited us for a workshop presentation, that kind of, you know, event. We are very mobile and very good at responding to those kind of requests. One particular scene was the online thing at the time which we did a Second Life.

**S** Scott Chiu 11:09  
We use Second Life. Haha.

**S** Scott Chiu 11:11  
Robin, did you do that?

**R** Robyn Tasaka 11:12  
No. No, I remember so much talk about Second Life. But I, I yeah, no, I did not.










**S** Scott Chiu 11:19  
Yeah, you probably escaped that just in time. Haha. Yeah, that was

**N** Nicholas Buonanni 11:26  
did it switch from Second Life to something else? Or was it only Second Life while you were there?


**S** Scott Chiu 11:34  
It get to the point that they decided if you give people different options, no one's going use Second Like. So there was a period of time that we just only Second Life. Everybody has their avatar. And everybody needs to read Dianna's paper about how great Second Life is, and I actually created a video promotional video. Yeah, I think that's something that was pretty that was most memorable, very special. Other than that, I think that the service was very typical. Um, yeah. I mean, you know, offered to the client internally, there's a lot of activities, training opportunities. Yeah.


**R** Robyn Tasaka 12:20  
I remember before, so before Second Life, I know we used to do phone sessions. Um, so is that is that not done anymore? Haha.





-  Robyn Tasaka 12:31  
Oh my gosh.
-  Scott Chiu 12:32  
Is that not an option anymore?
-  Grace Pregent 12:35  
Is not and that's so interesting. Oh,
-  Scott Chiu 12:40  
wow. Haha. Are we that old? Haha.
-  Scott Chiu 12:47  
Cause I did I have a few phone consultations that was very successful.
-  Scott Chiu 12:55  
Yeah, yeah. I help a student finishing his dissertation on the phone and then defense, because he got a job, he started his job in Indiana, and then he needs to finish his final writing and final draft and before he can defend it. And so that was from that point of view was a very special experience for me.
-  Sharieka Botex 13:21  
What was the setup of the phone consultation process? Like like did everybody do it on their own phones? The Writing Center had phone? How was it?
-  Scott Chiu 13:31  
There was this phone you know, you can use.
-  Robyn Tasaka 13:34


Like an office right?


 Scott Chiu 13:36  
Yeah.


 Scott Chiu 13:39  
Yeah.


 Robyn Tasaka 13:41  
Yeah. I think if we didn't do it often, right? Because I only did it like once maybe. I don't know. Yeah.

 Scott Chiu 13:47  
I yeah, it's not very often most people don't know if they have different options. They, they don't do phone but for some people, it's just more convenient. Just pick up the phone and talk. Yeah.

 Grace Pregent 14:00  
So face to face was probably still the most prevalent modality for you then.

 Scott Chiu 14:06  
Yeah.

 Grace Pregent 14:07  
This is except you are the first person to mention phone sessions. So that's great. I know. I love it. We've got a big note now.

 Sharieka Botex 14:14  
If you can help somebody through a dissertation on the phone, I feel like we can do any form of consulting on the phone. Maybe this is a way forward. So...

- R** Robyn Tasaka 14:24  
Yeah, this is before Google Drive too because at my current center, right, that's what we use when we do phone. But this is before, I guess. Did they email the draft?
- S** Scott Chiu 14:34  
Email, yeah.
- S** Scott Chiu 14:34  
Yeah. Yeah. It's just email and email and then open the document and talk on the phone.
- G** Grace Pregent 14:42  
It's great because we're now like revisiting some of these options during these times, right and different ways that we can connect with community members, both on campus but also in our Community Writing Center. And so I'm having conversations now about phone sessions, and it's been a decade later, right? Maybe we are perhaps cycling back to, you know, technology that we had used not to not to distract us from the interview. But it's interesting to see those cycles, right?
- G** Grace Pregent 15:10  
Well, great. Well, that is the first section. Those are our kind of context category questions. In the next section, and I will, I'll facilitate here, this is the gathering stories questions. And so the first one, and Robin, if you'd like to answer first that would be great. When you think of the Writing Center at MSU's history, what comes to mind? For example, do you what do you think like significant moments or achievements or any outreach programs or I'll just back up. When you think of the Writing Center at MSU and its history what comes to your mind?
- R** Robyn Tasaka 15:48  
I think for me, like one of the big pieces that I still think about, I guess is like the digital, you know, like working with students on you know, not just like traditional writing, on a page, right? But working with students on like, on, you know, like presentations or videos or whatever they were making, I feel like that was a really big...that was a really, I feel like that was unusual when we were doing it, and I feel like with my tutors now I'm still like, "Come on guys, you can do it" and like try to get them, you know, comfortable with it and

trying to get other, you know, get students to understand like, yes, you know, we can help with these sorts of things, too. And so I think that's one piece.

R

Robyn Tasaka 16:33

The other piece that I always think about that, again, that I'm like, "why can't we did this at my school too?" is like, working with faculty. You know, faculty seeing that the Writing Center, you know, really, really like, we all need feedback on writing, you know, and, I mean, I remember as a grad student, a faculty member came in and asked for feedback on like, I don't know what it was, but I was like, terrified, um, you know, but he was very, you know, he was you know, he was a good person to work with and it was it was really helpful and so that's another piece that I always think of is like I want to make that happen on my campus too.

G

Grace Pregent 17:14

Thank you. Yeah and Scott to you, what do you think of? When you think of the Writing Center at MSU's history, what what comes to mind?

S

Scott Chiu 17:25

Um, you know, it's kind of hard to...the major event, I mean, when we think about history, how we'll be thinking about some sort of major event, but I couldn't really remember any sort of major, big event or anything, but so it's not like historic or anything that I would remember but impressions of the...Writing Center...

S

Scott Chiu 17:58

...Since you said MSU okay. So MSU Writing Center...the impression is that it's a very, it's a powerhouse, you know, generating very excellent tutors and graduate students, undergraduate students, and well represented in the field at conferences, and I feel the impression about MSU's Writing Center is it has this kind of leadership role in the field and when people talk about MSU Writing Center they are always impressed. "Oh, what, you're from MSU?" And they want to know this and that, they want to know if you know this person, that person, they want to know how that project was started. That kind of over impressions in...

S

Scott Chiu 18:51

I was thinking about what Robyn was saying about working with faculty. And I remember,

you know, the idea of creating a culture of writing and campus that we kind of took, took it for granted at MSU. We kind of...of course, that's what we do at a writing center. That's part of our responsibility. We continue to initiate new ideas and create different kind of opportunity of engagement for students to see themselves as writers and so...for people to think about writing differently, that entire culture of writing and how you can actually get faculty members to the Writing Center and feel comfortable getting feedback from peer tutors, not their peer tutors, but you know, student peer tutors. So it's not something that you can easily achieve anywhere else. Haha.

S

Scott Chiu 19:46

And so I just feel that MSU Writing Center just continue to inspire over the years, not just to a school, you know, are associated with the school, but also the people in the field. I, well, you know, even for the Second Life project, I remember that time, it was really just, you know, we kind of just see ourselves as leader in technology in Writing Center field. So, it's a very brave...role...and people wouldn't do that, but MSU could do it. So that's, that's kind of my impression, but if you think about history, I feel that kind of mentorship, mentoring relationship across kind of generation. That is something I admire a lot. The continuation of the shared philosophy, shared ambition. Yeah. That's, yeah, other than that, yeah, you know, this next question you have the favorite MSU Writing Center story...

S

Scott Chiu 21:04

What's your favorite story, Robin?

R

Robyn Tasaka 21:07

I don't know. Haha.

R

Robyn Tasaka 21:12

I don't...I mean just I guess other things I remember is coffee, and I remember we invent or like what we used to drink was like, it was like our budget mocha, so it was like you know the Writing Center coffee with the with the hot cocoa mix, and I even remember dumping the coffee at the end of the day in the toilet these are the things I remember. Haha. My favorite story.

G

Grace Pregent 21:36

Was it a budget latte?

R

Robyn Tasaka 21:38

Yeah or mocha? Yes. CAuse the hot cocoa you know the Swiss Miss packet or whatever. Yeah. Haha.

S

Scott Chiu 21:50

Yeah, this and the close, doing the closing at the end of the shift, in the last shift you need to do the closing and you need to do clean up. Yeah, no, I remember cause I, when I was there they were saying Trixie did not...like didn't let the janitor come into the center to do the cleaning. So we kind of locked the door, and we don't want other people to come in and so our staff need to do the cleaning ourselves on the daily base so but other than that other you know, other classrooms in the building the janitor will take care of that, but not the Writing Center. I try to remember any sort of story.

S

Scott Chiu 22:42

I will say more about personal experience going to conference. Those are a lot good memory and experience, but in terms of writing center, yeah I remember, I don't know, it's just an interesting experience, but I don't even know how that would, no, be some sort of my favorite story. I remember I was, Marilee, he was coordinating a Graduate Writing group. And, you know, she is very conscientious. And she's like, she is not very patient if you are not doing your job and but people have different perception about how job is being done or how you do your job. So there was some sort of disagreement. And this guy...he was also from linguistics. And Walt is the guy he just kind of Marilee would prepare all the procedure and protocol and detail and Walt with just, okay, I got it. And then he would just go on a tangent and do it his own and then they finally get to a point that they just Marilee couldn't take it anymore so they just begin..they Marilee confront Walt and they kind of just, so what Trixie did was she put both of them in her office and closed the door and they were like just yelling at each other, and we can all kind of hear that...we are doing our consultation but we can hear those two people are going crazy inside and that's what Trixie did kind of just figure out your, you know, you two, and they just kind of they kind of let it all out and mostly just Marilee...And but you know, after that we just continue to work on that project and at that time, she was in charge of developing this Graduate Writing group program. She kind of want to formalize it and so and she's, yeah. And so that's something that I keep on remembering whenever I have some sort of not that much, but some, a little bit of conflict between, you know, my staff mostly our undergrad student I will remember that, you know, sometimes just let it all out and then and I still believe that I you know, they can continue on. I don't know. I there's so many things that so many other things at the Center at MSU that I remember that just continue to go back to me when I have some similar experience.

**S** Scott Chiu 25:44  
I don't know. What else do you have, Robin?

**G** Grace Pregent 25:47  
Yeah, that's that's great and more stories will come up as as we go, I'm sure. The next question and the last question for this part, during your time at the center did any significant world, political, cultural, or university events occur, right? We're trying to think about our writing center's history not in a vacuum, but very much as part of these social, cultural, economic structures within which we are implicated. So I any significant events, social, cultural, political, university, come to mind?

**R** Robyn Tasaka 26:29  
I was trying to think, I mean, I think Hurricane Katrina happened while I was working there and Virginia Tech, and then Obama was elected also the order of that is probably wrong. I'm not sure, but I don't remember. Um, I mean, I don't remember you know, if it was, you know, like if we talked about things or anything like that at the center. I don't know if I just wasn't paying attention or what.

**S** Scott Chiu 27:05  
Well, for me, I cannot think of any, you know, significant world events or university wise, campus wise. I mean, there's always some, you know, big thing that happened at MSU. But in a center, just, I don't remember anything particular we responded in a particular way. There might be something but I just cannot remember tight now. Hopefully we'll come back when we talk more...

**G** Grace Pregent 27:44  
That's okay. Thank you. Okay. The next section is on organizational culture. Sharieka, do you want to facilitate this?

**S** Sharieka Botex 27:54  
For sure. I'm already learning so much. So I'm excited to hear what I'll learn in this segment here. The next set of questions like Grace said is organizational culture. The first question

is what was one key value or practice that has been or was a constant at the Writing Center? Like one key value of practice that was constant.

R

Robyn Tasaka 28:25

I had notes for the other part, and then I think I didn't get down to this part, these questions. Haha.

S

Sharieka Botex 28:32

Do you want to leave it...

S

Scott Chiu 28:33

I would say I would say, mentorship and professional development for staff. I feel, yeah, if there's one key value or practice, I feel it has been very obvious, at least to me, that the leadership, know at that time Trixie and Dinah, they were very genuinely, they believe in our tutors, our consultants. And they want us to be successful not just being, you know, competent consultant but also thinking you know, farther down the line professional development, career, and that mentorship has been very supportive, positive, yeah, and that trickles down to how everybody treats each other like graduate student and undergrad student, more senior grad student treat new graduate student and stem, you know, undergraduate student and stuff you know, mentor younger junior consultants, that just, that would be the key value. Yeah. Yeah.

S

Sharieka Botex 29:46

And that's definitely still I think actively present in the center now for sure. So that's something I can relate to you with on, Scott. Robin for you, maybe if not one key value or practice from the center is there any one kind key value or practice you felt you maintained as a consultant that was kind of supportive for you or that you were able to have while in the space?

R

Robyn Tasaka 30:10

You know, I was just thinking, I think, I'm not sure when exactly Trixie started, but I think that shift from Dave to Trixie, I think that was hard for a lot of people. You know, I mean, just as different, you know, because I feel like I faced the same thing when I started as Tutor Coordinator. You know, you it's hard to work with the people who were there before. And then and then after a while, I'm like, "Hey, good, I have all these new people." Haha.



So I think, I don't know, I guess I feel like, you know, there were certain things that like I didn't see like, in the way that that Scott did, I guess, because it was like when Trixie was new and just kind of getting things started off.

G

Grace Pregent 30:56

That's a very particular like, vantage point, right? So many people we've spoken to our before Trixie, "Pre Trixie" or after Trixie, right? So, you were there, right during that transition for us from Dave Sheridan was the intern, right? And then...

R

Robyn Tasaka 31:13

Was he? I don't know, I don't. I think when I when I guess when I started, he was like, maybe he was on his way out, but he would just hang out or Trixie had started, I don't know, but it was just I just remember you know, I mean, students were just used to How Dave did things, so they're like, "Wait, what? It's different now? Who's this new person?" Yeah.

S

Sharieka Botex 31:41

So considering that you you both have some different perspectives around that, what would you describe, I guess, is the quality of or spirit of the center?

R

Robyn Tasaka 31:52

I just saw you know, I mean, I just remember it being very, very open. Like, I guess, or maybe I just remember a lot of like, the social stuff, you know. I remember us hanging around in the little snack table and, you know, people just sharing about what they were learning in class or whatever. And, you know, and people just giving each other a hard time and playing around and I don't know that's the stuff I remember, I guess.

S

Sharieka Botex 32:28

Did you have anything to add on to that, Scott?

S

Scott Chiu 32:34

I mean, that like quality and spirit.?

S

Scott Chiu 32:38

Well, that I think that what Robin was talking about, you know how pre Trixie, and I did, I do remember the difference. I did remember I have conversation with Dianna because I started at a different time than the same year Dianna started...we have some conversations about how how that transition was not easy. And then, and I remember Dianna was saying, "What can we do? Do we just fire everybody and start over?" Haha. And at that time, I didn't really know what that meant, but now I know, okay, yeah, so that transition was hard. And so I feel they begin they kind of have the...they kind of build a ground, you know, have a grounding, kind of built for more active work on maybe just about the time Robyn left because I remember my last year, you know, 2009-2010 that was the year that they had a lot of new idea, new initiatives, and I was the one who benefit from that. So I for me, I just feel the quality and the spirit of center during my time I begin feeling that it's another inspiration. Just make you feel this exciting to be to be to work here. Yeah.

S

Sharieka Botex 34:05

Yeah. Alright. So I think you'll both maybe have something for this based on what you shared already about transitions. But can you talk a little bit about the center's approach to hiring and or onboarding and training?

S

Scott Chiu 34:27

You must talk about it, Robin. Hah.

R

Robyn Tasaka 34:30

Okay. So for me, like I, um, I mean, I had has a little bit of tutoring experience in like undergrad, and when I was at my masters, and so when I started my PhD program at at Michigan State, right, it was kind of like, I guess the default was that you, you know, you'd be a TA and you teach like, um, you know, the WRAC 1004 or whatever. And so I was like, okay, great. Like I'm comfortable with tutoring. I'm comfortable doing the one on one and so I'm gonna do the classroom stuff and, you know, kind of get... And then and then one one year, the residential college and the arts and humanities open, and they had like this other opportunity. I think it was like some kind of fellow thing or whatever. So like, I applied for that and I got in, I was like, okay, great. I'm going to do this instead of doing the TA, and then I found out that was like, only quarter time, so I was like, "Oh, my gosh," I had already told them, I don't need my assistantship. Haha. So then I was like, "Oh, my gosh, like, what am I gonna do?" And so luckily, I was able to pick up the...so that's how I

ended up in the Writing Center. I was able to pick that up. And I was so grateful. And so but I don't know, like, if there was a more traditional hiring and onboarding and training process, because the mine was I think was kind of like emergency and last minute. Um, I do remember I do remember the training. I think we used to do meetings on like Friday afternoons. I remember a lot of stuff being led by students, which sometimes works better than others...

**G** Grace Pregent 36:07  
Still true!

**R** Robyn Tasaka 36:09  
Yes. And I remember um I think I remember the undergraduates being on a class you know, a training class but I didn't know too much about that. I just kind of knew it was going on.

**S** Sharieka Botex 36:26  
Thank you.

**S** Scott Chiu 36:26  
Yeah, I can, I can say tell more about those process. So my experience is also different. I did not, my field was not, I was not in the Rhet Comp program. I was in linguistics. I focused on second language writing. And I, so I went to the way...I'm trying to describe how I get into writing center. I was interested in different kind of pedagogy. So and I, somehow I ended up, you know, having this opportunity to go to the Summer Institute 2008 at Wisconsin Madison. And before I went there, I only, my only one experiences I went to the Writing Center to have a consultation. And I remember, the I still remember the tutor, consultant, Sally, she worked with me. And I thought I just feel that what's interesting. And then I went to the Summer Institute, I came back and then Dianna invited me. I met Dianna there, and she invited me to work at writing center. At that time, I had my assistantship from second language acquisition, a second way studies program. And so, so I only work part time, but I was international students so you can really work part time, so they just work out some sort of project time for me to work in the center and then to that I came to the point that I really wanted to spend more time in the writing center and I talked to Trixie Trixie told me that there's no assistantship available. But and but the next semester she offered me an assistantship and so.

S

Scott Chiu 38:15

And one other reason I remember I had the conversation I had with them they were saying they would like to recruit more diverse group of tutors, consultant they have so international student, non-native speaker, you know, Asian this all something they welcome, and I have that experience with Dianna at Summer Institute, so she was she kind of so she had, she felt more comfortable just inviting me over. And I remember that was the time 2008 I think that was when Marilee and Elena they started, the year they started, and they were they immediately started with the assistantship at the writing center as graduate consultant because they all have like very they all have the writing center experience earlier on before. So I we have this orientation on Saturday. So she asked me if I will go okay, I sure, I can go and then Saturday and she said okay, we will meet at noon. I said I thought you'd say, you know, she said nine o'clock? No, Saturday and nine. I saw she says Saturday and noon. So I was like, Okay, I can make it. No, no, that would be that would be okay. They'll be okay for me. I can make it to noon but and then I see the email you say nine and I never get up, you know, at nine before...for Saturday. And Trixie has this kind of Southern accent, I guess. That's why I say noon and it turned out to be nine but that orientation was the time I met Trixie, uh Marilee and Elena, and we kind of just have this very positive experience, and together to begin with. And so and then that same year, they also recruited another international student. And so that's kind of my point that they were, to me, you know, and that they made it very clear to me that they want to diverse their staff, diversify their staff.

S

Scott Chiu 40:32

For undergraduate students, so graduates that they don't really have a lot of training, they don't have time for training. It's their orientation and some sort of weekly staff meeting by for undergraduate student, and there was a class 395, WRA 396, and Trixie was teaching that class and then Trixie and then Diana was teaching the class and then Dianna invited me to co-teach that class when she was teaching the class for a second time. And then when we were co-teaching Dinah when...she was very sick for the entire semester, and she had to go through operation and stay home for like three month. So basically, I was teaching that class.

S

Scott Chiu 41:23

But I had a lot of support. And that was a very strong group of undergrad students. So that was not difficult. And then after that, and after that, Trixie, let me teach that class. So that process for me was very significant. And I was able to see the entire curriculum and how they prepare, how they recruit students, and prepare them and what kind of scholarship are included in the curriculum. And then after me, I think Marilee teach that

class as well. So I just feel, that's why I was saying, you know, in the year when they have when everything seems to fall into place for their structure, they began doing a lot of very systematic kind of training and recruitment. And then they expanded quickly from there. So yeah, I thought that was very intentional, and they make it very clear at the recruitment, at staff meeting, the value of diversity in the center was very clear. Yeah.

R

Robyn Tasaka 42:43

That's cool. I'm so glad to hear there was those efforts to hire international students as consultants, because I remember like that we used to work with a lot of international students, and sometimes they would ask, I specifically remember one of them asking, you know, one of the undergraduate consultants like, you know, how can she expand her vocabulary or something and and then you know some of the, I felt like some of the, you know, some tutors are the strong students, sometimes that are a little bit cocky, and you know and so just the way that he responded and I was like, that sticks in my head as my I was like, that's not gonna help her and like, you don't even know what you're talking about. Haha

S

Scott Chiu 43:26

Yeah.

S

Scott Chiu 43:30

I know, I know what you're saying. And I have that, you know, in a Center at MSU center we use a big space open space so we can all kind of hear what, how other people are, you know, they're like, "Oh, don't say that."

S

Scott Chiu 43:43

But I think this part of the...I can see the value just...it goes back to how, what I describe, you know, that their, I feel their philosophy is they really just let you do it sometimes at the expense of, you know, not very successful or very effective outcomes, but that kind of actually doing it and then getting feedback. That's something I found very, very essential, very critical. And being a supervisor you know, allowed, you know, being able to allow your staff to just be themselves and try and do it and then and provide more relevant feedback. That is important. Yeah, but sometimes just...yeah painful to watch.



Scott Chiu 44:45

Okay.



Sharieka Botex 44:46

yeah, thank you both I should have started with asking if you want to go by Doctors Chiu and Tasaka, but I used your first name, so sorry about that.



Scott Chiu 44:54

Oh, no.



Sharieka Botex 44:54

I think there's only 10 minutes left in the interview session. So I wanted to check in with everybody and see where you all might be with this, and if there's questions you didn't get to answer that you wanted to answer, or things you want to share, and then let Nick go into his section of the questions. So are there things that we didn't get to that you wanted to answer? I know, Robin, you said you had a sheet of some responses.



Robyn Tasaka 45:19

Haha. No, I'm good, I'm good.



Sharieka Botex 45:23

I'll send it to Nick then.



Nick Buonanni 45:28

All right. So just to...I guess I can wrap up some of these in a little bit of a quicker fashion. So I know we kind of talked about this, about consultations and stuff, but when you worked in the Writing Center, how did you like schedule appointments? Was a WOnline at that time or?



Robyn Tasaka 45:48

Yes.

**N** Nicholas Buonanni 45:49  
Okay. And do you remember receiving or ever being directed to a handbook when you were hired?

**R** Robyn Tasaka 46:00  
I don't think so...

**G** Grace Pregent 46:03  
They think this is a trick question.

**S** Scott Chiu 46:08  
Haha.

**R** Robyn Tasaka 46:08  
Haha.

**N** Nicholas Buonanni 46:08  
To clarify, this whole project came from a realization we had last summer with a small group of our graduate coordinators at our retreat that the handbook situation at our writing center was severely lacking. Although we had some versions of it, they were not clear or well organized or even distributed to the people in the writing center. And so this project of interviewing people was born from our revamping of the handbook. So that's why that's in there, and it's good to know that what hopefully we're going to be having published in August will be the first printed MSU Writing Center handbook.

**N** Nicholas Buonanni 46:56  
So I'm not sure the next one is as important So in our last couple minutes I want to ask is there anything else that you wanted to share about the history of the Writing Center? Anything at all that you remember, another story, positive, negative? Anything about someone else that you've worked with that you remember. We're not trying to sugarcoat our history.

S

Scott Chiu 47:31

Well, I can respond to that question about a handbook. I did not remember I have any sort of handbook. Interestingly, well, but because...Okay, what my...so I work as a writing center graduate consultant in my last two years in my PhD...and then after I started teaching at WRA first year writing program. And so I continue to interact with Trixie about teaching, about, you know, writing center work. And so I got all this different kind of documents and everything. But I don't recall, there was a time we were handed a handbook, but you know, but we do have some different documents. And I never seen a handbook MSU writing center handbook until when I started my position, and I was thinking, "hey, do we have some sort of handbook?" So I made a handbook to know how to run a writing center. And then ask Trixie, as she was like, "We do have a handbook." And she sent me a file. And it was like it's a real handbook. And like, "Where was this before?" What it just created after I left, because I left in 2010, and I started my Writing Center directorship in 2013, so maybe over the three years, something happened. I don't know. Um, yeah, just that. So it's about those kind of logistic protocol questions though. I did, you know, refer back to them and ask for a lot of materials from then. I don't know when exactly they were created, but when I was there, there wasn't that it was not that that organized.

S

Scott Chiu 49:27

But sometimes you have you come across a very organized graduate student. I remember at the time this girl Tiffany, she was a business major. I remember, she was super organized. And if you need to do a print, if you get assigned to do a presentation tomorrow, you have the entire packet in your mailbox the night before. So that was my impression. I thought, "wow, people at writing center it's just amazing." But that's not really the case all the time. Yeah, the schedule I remember nobody wanted to do a schedule, you know. And it was just...Hahah...Alright, it just painful to try to do this, and I remember there was a grad student who was assigned to do that, and remember it's still just he was looking at this entire spreadsheet, and he kind of printed out it, tape it together and this long, and he kept kind of mumbling to himself. He's saying, "I believe this is going to be some sort of skills I can use later in my career." Haha...and Dianna didn't want to do it Trixie didn't want to talk about, Dianna don't want to do it, and they just assigned to some graduate student for for their professional development opportunity. So yeah.

N

Nicholas Buonanni 50:55

Really quick on that, Robin, do you know was it WOnline your first year there, or did it show up when Trixie showed up? We're just trying to make sure.



- R** Robyn Tasaka 51:07  
No, I think it was there. I think it was there the whole time as far as I know.
- S** Scott Chiu 51:16  
Yeah. When I started it was there. And I remember they were complaining about the company not being very responsive, but over the year they improved so much. Yeah.
- G** Grace Pregent 51:27  
I did want to demystify that the handbook emergence...I have been told Elena created the first handbook. I think, I think that's the first that we can trace to Elena. So that is one of our questions for her so might very well have just emerged right after you.
- S** Scott Chiu 51:48  
During that year. Yeah, no, makes sense. Yeah. Haha.
- G** Grace Pregent 51:55  
Well, is there anything else that you'd like to share? I love this story about the schedule. Nick has been our scheduler for a long time. So we made our last schedule, our last full scale schedule he and I made together over it seems like about 400 hours, but it is time intensive.
- S** Sharieka Botex 52:13  
I'm very grateful for your work.
- S** Scott Chiu 52:19  
it's going to be a very special skills that you can use in your career.
- N** Nick Buonanni 52:23  
Yeah, it's quite a feat when you do it for this writing center when it has, you know, all the different locations and the online and everything like that. And I will say that for summer or when we switched over to just online due to the pandemic, it was a weird transition at first, but then it was like oh, well this is just one schedule now. I'm not trying to have to

figure out how people fit across 10 different locations, but yeah, I can commiserate with the printing it and looking at everything although I've never printed it I just do it on my computer.

S

Sharieka Botex 52:58

What is the one piece advice your "now self" would give your "then writing center self" for working in the space?

S

Scott Chiu 53:10

Robyn, go ahead.

R

Robyn Tasaka 53:12

I was gonna say I think, um, I mean, especially from hearing what Scott said, but I think this is something that's been bubbling up for me for a while like I think, um, you know, I think I should have made myself available for more of those mentorship opportunities like, like, I don't know, did we have graduate coordinators when...? Haha/

S

Scott Chiu 53:33

No, it was created. Yeah, it was kind of slowly, it was slowly initiated, created.

R

Robyn Tasaka 53:40

Okay, yeah, I feel like I just, yeah, I think there was, you know, there was more I could have learned and from working more closely with folks and like that.

S

Scott Chiu 53:50

Yeah, I feel I was very lucky. I have different kind of situation when I joined the writing center because I had my own struggle with my, you know, linguistic faculty and writing center began a place that I found all the love and support. And the people were just interesting, you know, you have this very interesting bunch of people there. I remember I only saw you, Robyn at that, you know, that roundtable when you guys were you know. And I only saw you there, and I don't even remember if we ever really had any sort of conversation, but to me as an international student, and that was a very eye opening, you know, in many aspect and just for me to connect to get to know people, undergrad student, graduate student, and they are not judgmental, like linguistics, you know, jerks,

and I just feel so supported and all the opportunity provided to me was amazing. That's why I changed my topic. I did write in a research. I kind of focused. And...what by the tight market, I got a lot of support, amazing support from the people there, all the practice, interview, all these kind of document and the application material, all the support letters of recommendation. Yeah, that was I keep on remembering. I kept holding on to my own experience there. So I try to replicate the experience for my students in my own center now. But again, it's not easy. It's not something easy that you can recreate into somewhere else. It takes a whole team or maybe that history or whatever, to make that happen. Yeah, so I did tell Trixie that I finally realized that my MSU Writing Center was actually a source of frustration to me. Because I wanted to be them, I want to be you know, I wanted to do something that you guys are doing and the more I want to do that, the more I feel inspired to do that, the more I feel frustrated by the reality I have here and outside MSU so yeah, so yeah.

**G** Grace Pregent 56:32  
That's interesting. Thank you.

**G** Grace Pregent 56:35  
Anyone any suggestions of someone else we should reach out to or talk to?

**S** Scott Chiu 56:40  
I think Robin want to say something?

**G** Grace Pregent 56:42  
Yeah. Robin, did you have a follow up on on Scott's comment?

**S** Scott Chiu 56:46  
...say something?

**R** Robyn Tasaka 56:48  
Oh, no, I just think that's sad. But I mean, I totally know what you mean that, you know, MSU...but I mean, but I don't know if it's also like, you know, it's grad school, like magical. I mean, when you look back it's magical and wonderful. Haha.

- S** Scott Chiu 57:04  
Right. Yeah, yeah...every day it was extremely busy and there's always some sort of conflict...I cannot imagine how you can manage, you can direct, a center that big. I just couldn't imagine. My center is like seven students. And I was like, you know, yeah, and how can you like have like 100 and plus consultants across the campus and I don't know. And I'm not trying to do that. No.
- G** Grace Pregent 57:39  
That might be why are the consults that coordinator model came to be right? And the 12 to 14 coordinators we have now do so much for the center. I don't think it could operate with its 10 plus locations and over 100 consultants if we didn't have those, those coordinators in place. Yeah. And three of them are here.
- R** Robyn Tasaka 58:11  
I was trying to think of names I don't know. Are you folks, you folks are talking to undergraduates and grad students or..?
- R** Robyn Tasaka 58:18  
Yeah.
- R** Robyn Tasaka 58:20  
Yeah. You folks already have Latoya Faulk?
- S** Scott Chiu 58:26  
Latoya? Yeah.
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 58:32  
I don't know if I'm muted. Do you know how to spell her last name?
- R** Robyn Tasaka 58:35  
It's, it's F-A-U-L-K. Here I can put it in the chat.

G Grace Pregent 58:45  
That's great, thank you.

S Scott Chiu 58:52  
Have you because I remember one of the most interesting guys I remember from the time I was there with this undergraduate student, John Lockner. Have you heard that... this name on your list?

S Scott Chiu 59:09  
He would be a very interesting person to speak to. He invented this game night, staff game night. And so we kind of expected together and play ball games and stuff and and he was very involved.

S Scott Chiu 59:29  
John, John Lockner. If I...

G Grace Pregent 59:34  
I'm making a note about game night, to ask him about game night.

S Scott Chiu 59:38  
Yeah, I was...but he was he was popular among undergraduate student. Yeah. And they bring in, you know, popcorn, poppers and stuff. Yeah.

R Robyn Tasaka 59:50  
Remember that Greek guy? Cuesta? Remeber that guy? You guys have him?

R Robyn Tasaka 59:55  
You guys have him? I don't know what his last name is though. I don't know if that's even his I think there's a nickname Do you know him know, no, Scott?

S Scott Chiu 1:00:03

No.

**R** Robyn Tasaka 1:00:05  
He was like a digital, he did digital stuff, I think.

**S** Scott Chiu 1:00:09  
Wait

**R** Robyn Tasaka 1:00:10  
Costa like this or like this? I don't know. I don't know. Haha

**G** Grace Pregent 1:00:21  
We will make a note and look.

**G** Grace Pregent 1:00:25  
Usually on Facebook, more often than not, is where I find...

**C** Colton Wansitler 1:00:29  
Yeah, yeah.

**G** Grace Pregent 1:00:34  
Well you two this has been wonderful. I really enjoyed this. I'm hoping you all have as well.

**S** Scott Chiu 1:00:40  
It's fun. Yeah, it's always fun.

**G** Grace Pregent 1:00:48  
I love hearing about this period, that kind of transitional period. I think this is and I think all we've got a series of interviews lined up a lot of people I think you'll relate with Elena and Marilee and Ben and Dave Sheridan and so I feel like we're gonna...



Scott Chiu 1:01:01  
Oh



Grace Pregent 1:01:02  
...good. This next group is kind of all from that that time period so I'm excited to talk to all of them. I had never heard the words Second Life before this morning when someone mentioned them to me and then you brought them up, "What is this Second Life stuff?"



Nicholas Buonanni 1:01:20  
It's on WOnline.



Grace Pregent 1:01:25  
Ours?



Nicholas Buonanni 1:01:25  
If you go way back it shows online in parentheses (Second Life).



Robyn Tasaka 1:01:31  
What's twaddle? Twiddle Twaddle?



Nicholas Buonanni 1:01:35  
That's what it became after. Twidla.



Grace Pregent 1:01:39  
Twidla.



Scott Chiu 1:01:39  
Right. Yeah, yeah. Twidla.



Grace Pregent 1:01:46

Okay, well, I've got some questions for Dianna now.

**N** Nicholas Buonanni 1:01:50  
We found the book too, by the way. It was like a book that she wrote with some articles about Second Life.

**S** Scott Chiu 1:01:57  
Everybody had to read that book. Haha.

**N** Nicholas Buonanni 1:02:01  
Did some research during our interview.

**S** Scott Chiu 1:02:08  
Don't tell her anything I said, Okay.

**R** Robyn Tasaka 1:02:12  
Haha.

**S** Scott Chiu 1:02:13  
I was trying to be very supportive during that time when she was just, you know, doing that I was like, "Ohh."

**G** Grace Pregent 1:02:21  
You said great things about it actually, you know that MSU you know, we can can try things out like that. And well, this is this is going to be the new way to do online instruction. And it's exciting. I feel like we still do that. Right, Trixie, always signs on for a pilot.

**S** Scott Chiu 1:02:39  
The funny thing is, a few years after, and I went to a conference, and somebody was talking about Second Life for an online consultation. And they were saying, "Look at what



MSU was doing." So they're inspired by what you were doing...no matter how miserable people were. And, and yeah, I feel I kind of feel guilty, you know? "Oh my god, you're gonna hate that."



Scott Chiu 1:03:12

I remember that...she was from Florida. Jennifer something. Yeah, they were talking about that then. Yeah. So just so you know everything you're doing at MSU can get spread out in the field and people will be inspired. And so yeah.



Sharieka Botex 1:03:37

Thank you, thank you both for all the stuff you shared. This is definitely positive and encouraging. And it's good to see people that were in the Writing Center space where we're so fortunate and blessed to work now in different spaces and what you've taken from there and like how you're building on that and reflecting on that. So thank you.



Scott Chiu 1:03:52

You're welcome. Alright.



Robyn Tasaka 1:03:58

Alright. If you think of anyone else we should speak with or any other stories that if you know, we end this zoom call and you think this is the story, you're always welcome to reach out to us. We'd love to hear from you again, and I'm sure I'll be seeing you at conferences if and when we have conferences again.



Scott Chiu 1:04:15

Okay. Looking forward to both, yes. Thank you.



Robyn Tasaka 1:04:19

Thank you. Nice meeting you folks. Thank you.



Scott Chiu 1:04:21

Thank you. Bye

