

Travis & Lamiyah

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SPEAKERS

Nicholas Buonanni, Travis Webster, Lamiyah Bahrainwala, Colton Wansitler

- C

Colton Wansitler 00:03

Okay, I think we're set up. Perfect. So I'll start off with some introductions. My name is Colton Wansitler, and I'm currently the interim Assistant Director at the Writing Center at MSU. I am in this position until Trixie returns from her sabbatical. Nick?
- N

Nicholas Buonanni 00:25

I am Nicholas Buonanni, and I am currently a graduate coordinator at the Writing Center at MSU.
- T

Travis Webster 00:33

Nice to meet both of you, and do ya'll want me to introduce myself too? Okay, got it. I'm Travis Webster. I'm an Assistant Professor and Director of Writing Across the Curriculum at Pace University in New York, and I'm a Michigan State Rhetoric and Writing alumni 2012 and I worked in the Writing Center from- as a GA from 2010 to 2012.
- C

Colton Wansitler 01:01

Perfect. So that actually leads us into our first question pretty easily. So we're going to gather some context first, and then move on to gathering stories.



Travis Webster 01:13

Perfect.



Colton Wansitler 01:13

If you could reiterate when you worked at the center, that would be great. And then if you could also tell us who was on the leadership team, so any directors, assistant directors, fiscal officers, anything like that.



Travis Webster 01:25

Sure. Sure. So I was there from 2010 to 2012. As a graduate assistant, in that role, I was a grad consultant, and also I was, oh goodness, what was the title...I coordinated the workshops. The leadership team at the time: Trixie Smith was the director, Diana Baldwin was the assistant director, and there were several GAs in different administrative graduate assistantship roles. Oh my gosh. Yeah. Judy was our...I don't remember, Judy Easterbrook, I think was our...was housed in the Writing Center also, and she did our... a lot of our budgetary stuff as well.



Colton Wansitler 02:16

Wonderful. Thank you so much. So while you were working on campus, where were center locations across campus? Does that make sense?



Travis Webster 02:27

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.



Colton Wansitler 02:28

If you remember what the spaces look like or where they were at, if you want to give us a little bit of insight, that would be cool.



Travis Webster 02:34

Yeah, sure. The main center was in...oh, my goodness. I can't remember the name of the building. I know where the, wherever the main center is. I think it's still the main center. That's like... Say it again?



Travis Webster 02:50

Bessie. There you go. I was like, I know it's not Olds. Olds used to be another part of our rhetoric and writing spatial identity, but yeah, Bessey Hall second or third floor, kind of in a large adapted classroom with administrative offices and two different conference rooms. A lot of events took place there. A lot of grad seminars took place there. There were also I think, when I was there, seven additional satellites. There was a business satellite, two or three dorm satellites, library satellite. I want to say we had something also in the main student center, which also can't remember what that was called either... Memories... It's been a while back! But the spaces, the main space was incredible in that, like, the staff would create kind of ceiling tiles to kind of represent the identities of the staff members at the time and that was kind of a rolling onboarding process, which I always thought was cool, but also linked to the tutor training course. So I think yeah, I think you have a lot more satellites now. But there were like, at least seven back then.



Colton Wansitler 02:50

Bessey Hall.



Colton Wansitler 04:17

Great. Thank you so much. And so our last like context question is what services did the center offer while you were there? So we're looking for like writing groups, face to face, anything like that, that you can recall.



Travis Webster 04:30

Sure. So, face to face sessions, we had group sessions, we had graduate dissertation writing groups. There were workshops across the university. Another kind of space I forgot to mention is that we used to be in Second Life, which was Diana Baldwin's research area, which was...I don't think it's still a writing center thing anymore, but it was kind of an online virtual roleplay space where students could get the support online through avatars and things like that. The MSU Writing Center had to space in that virtual world.



Travis Webster 05:12

It had a huge kind of --when I was there-- a growing digital identity. One of the conference rooms was specifically devoted to kind of our digital Graduate Writing consultants who did a lot with like multimodal writing through the professional writing graduate program and across campus. I think that's all I can remember at the moment.



Colton Wansitler 05:41

Awesome, thank you. So now we're gonna move on to some gathering stories, which we'll have Nick do that section.



Nicholas Buonanni 05:50

All right, so our first question in this section is: when you think of the Writing Center at MSU's history, what comes to mind? Obviously, this is a very broad question. So we broke it down and we said, for example, what do you think the center's most significant achievements are? Or can you recall any outreach programs or significant events that the center had created while you worked there or had at the time?



Travis Webster 06:12

Mmhmm. I was there before...I feel like current writing center research has really taken up the idea of social justice, kind of, intersectionality. You know, the kind of lived experiences of writing center stakeholders, but when I was there, that was kind of a budding idea. And I feel like the Writing Center at MSU had a kind of a major role in that. I was in the grad seminar Trixie taught when Facing the Center, which is by Harry Denny, it's one of the first Writing Center book-length manuscripts that deals with like, these kinds of issues related to identity and social justice and things like that. But I felt like MSU was kind of right there alongside that, the early representations of that research in a very, like embodied concrete form, like the things I take away most from that era to think of...I think it was the first time I'd worked in a writing center where identity work, social justice, mission, both of our practices, but also of like our tutor training, were all wrapped up in this idea that writing is this very political kind of ideological space of empowerment for people to kind of empower themselves through their identities. So those are the things that kind of come up a lot.



Travis Webster 07:45

I can't recall off the top of my head outreach programs, but I would say that the Writing Center was often a space where, for example, I think the first time Michigan State's WRAC program taught a queer rhetorics course, Trixie taught it and we met in the Writing Center. And it was just kind of always an interesting place. And I'll always kind of associate that experience of like the first time a course like that being taught by a queer person and also being like, located in the Writing Center for an evening seminar. So I feel like the Writing Center was kind of your standard Writing Center in some capacities, like, yes, working one-on-one and a peer based model, but also there was just always a lot of

energy and activity, often queer energy and queer activity, around the Writing Center the way I remember it.

N

Nicholas Buonanni 08:45

Sorry, I'm also trying to type up some notes for us as I'm listening.

T

Travis Webster 08:50

Oh, yeah.

N

Nicholas Buonanni 08:51

No, you're good. That's fantastic to hear. What...so the next question would be: what is your favorite MSU Writing Center story? Obviously this can be anything. We've heard some fantastic stuff that has absolutely nothing really to do with, you know, a serious quality of the Writing Center--some funny people that they've had in or things like that. So.

T

Travis Webster 09:17

Yeah, favorite Writing Center story. Yeah, I think... So, the semester I defended my dissertation I was also co-teaching with Trixie the writing center theories course, the undergraduate version, and I just remember like a really fantastic kind of semester-long experience with that. It was the first time I taught in an advanced course. Like, I defended what I think was the last day of our class. And so the the class kind of...it was just a really nice experience. A little less like individualized experience.

T

Travis Webster 10:11

I remember we videoed this, like the whole staff got together during like one of our Friday staff meetings and filmed this outreach video for the university. It was to a Beatles song, I think, Help or something like that. And like we got, I can't remember the... Sparty is the name of the mascot, I think? We even... Like, Sparty came in and we had to do everything like in one take that had to happen pretty quick because of the ways that things were. It had to do with like how long we could have Sparty / the labor of the folks doing the filming and stuff like that. It was... it was really fun. It was just a really fun and funny / was a moment where there were students involved. I think the video was a hit across campus. It was really fun.

- N** Nicholas Buonanni 11:05
I really quick before we welcome our new guest, I actually got the video of the outtakes of that.
- T** Travis Webster 11:14
Oh, yeah. Yeah.
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 11:16
...From Beth. That was brought up in their's so she actually emailed the video that's up on YouTube right now with the outtakes from that.
- T** Travis Webster 11:28
Oh, that's cool. Okay. I like that that came full circle. That's cool, that you actually will get to see that. Haha. That was really fun. I mean...
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 11:37
Hi, how are you?
- L** Lamiyah Bahrainwala 11:39
Hi, I'm sorry I'm late. I had the time written down as 3pm Central. So sorry about that.
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 11:45
Oh, it's okay. I was... I was worried. I even said that, when we started. I was like, I know I think she's in Texas, and so I'm concerned that maybe there might be a time issue but I'm so glad that you were able to...
- L** Lamiyah Bahrainwala 11:56
And there was! Me too. Haha. That's why I'm in my car headed out for an errand and I was like, "Wait a second, something feels wrong." So good to see you.
- T** Travis Webster 12:06

Good to see you too.



Lamiyah Bahrainwala 12:07

And you are also in Texas, but somehow did not have that issue.



Travis Webster 12:10

Well, I'm in New York now, but I do feel like I'm on Texas time a lot. But yeah, yeah. Haha. I moved...a while back. Yeah, like, two years ago or so. So it's hard to keep up...



Lamiyah Bahrainwala 12:23

I want to catch up with you, but it also doesn't feel right in the middle...



Travis Webster 12:25

Haha. Yeah, yeah.



Colton Wansitler 12:30

Um, so just to recap, and make sure that you're all good with the recording stuff. So we're using the Zoom recording to record the video and the audio. We're gonna delete the video--it separates it. So don't... we're not keeping any video. And then we're also using Otter AI to transcribe our conversation as we go. So if you're good with that, we can keep on going. Perfect. And then we did start with some just like formal introductions of ourselves. So if, if you wouldn't mind, would you give us a formal introduction of yourself? I guess we can also give a brief one for you. So I'm Colton Wansitler and I am the interim Assistant Director while Trixie is on sabbatical.



Nicholas Buonanni 13:19

I am Nicholas Buonanni. I'm the one that's been emailing you a lot. And I am currently a graduate coordinator in the Writing Center as well.



Lamiyah Bahrainwala 13:29

What do you coordinate, Nicholas?

- N** Nicholas Buonanni 13:31
Um, I am the scheduling coordinator at this time. It's being changed over and it's going to be called the operations coordinator starting in the fall.
- L** Lamiyah Bahrainwala 13:40
Okay. Um, so in my mind, you're the new Beth Keller, who I know you've been talking to as well because I remember she was the scheduler and then Katie Manthy was scheduler as well. Okay. Yeah,
- T** Travis Webster 13:52
Maria, that's funny.
- L** Lamiyah Bahrainwala 13:55
Oh, my formal introduction. My name is Lamiyah Bahrainwala, you can call me Lamiyah or LB. I am an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, and I worked at the Michigan State Writing Center from 09 to 11. And I worked at a writing center in the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates where I got my undergrad for four years before that.
- C** Colton Wansitler 14:20
Wonderful.
- L** Lamiyah Bahrainwala 14:21
Yeah. And I adore writing centers. Make sure you transcribe that.
- C** Colton Wansitler 14:27
It's done.
- C** Colton Wansitler 14:30
So we're currently in our gathering stories phase. And we had just asked Travis, what his favorite story of the Writing Center was. So do you have a favorite story?

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 14:46
Yes, favorite story. Um,

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 14:53
I remember when I was a trainee, as a presentations coordinator, I practice scheduling folks to see how to work the software. And usually we would tell those folks, hey, I'm just practice scheduling you, you're not actually scheduled for presentation. And then you cancel that, you know, presentation that was scheduled just to go through the run. And I remember doing it one time to our friend Casey Miles, who is not someone who was prepared to be a presenter, and then I did not bother to tell them that they're not actually scheduled for presentation. So they were in a panic. I was very self-satisfied because I had now learn how to use the software. And they were kind of really worried about it. So eventually, of course, we figured it out. But I remember that being kind of a funny moment. And I also loved the two times when I became an instructor of my own class and brought those, brought my students to the Writing Center for presentations. I felt really proud and I felt really supported by the Center.

N Nicholas Buonanni 16:00
Sorry, I'm in the middle of trying to jot down some notes for us. Awesome. So to both of you now, during your time at the world at the-- [object falls] That's okay. [laughter] It was a phone, not a person. So everything's alright.

N Nicholas Buonanni 16:20
During your time at the center did any significant world, political, or university events occur? And can you describe or do you remember the Center's approach or response to those events?

T Travis Webster 16:45
Okay. It's a great question. Um, that was the Obama, the Obama administration. And so I felt like there was... that had happened in a way, like that election. And so I think... I just remember a lot of really incredible synchrony between the mission and values of the center, which were very like, focused on progressive orientation, so writing to writing stakeholders and how that nicely kind of meshed with that administration in that world that I miss a lot now.



Travis Webster 17:28

I'm blanking on a particular kind of world or political or university event. Lamiyah probably has something.



Lamiyah Bahrainwala 17:40

I don't recall a world event, I'm sorry, but I can recall a university event when I believe we had either one or two students on campus take their lives, and I don't remember if it was on campus, but they did take their lives and the Writing Center, Trixie and Diana, decided to have a suicide awareness workshop for us where we were trained as consultants to recognize, pick up on clues in individuals writing that might show that they are having, that they could possibly be having thoughts of killing themselves. And you know, I use those skills now as an instructor and one-on-one conversations. I thought it was really remarkable vision on their part to have that. But I do remember that. Trav, do remember that happening?



Travis Webster 18:30

Yeah. Was it maybe associated with the Tyler Clemente suicide of 2010? Because I think that was taken up in the Writing Center world in some ways. It was a young queer man who was outed.



Lamiyah Bahrainwala 18:43

Yeah, I remember on video, yeah.



Travis Webster 18:46

I think it may have had something to do with that. Because that came up on writing center listserv from a few kind of queer-identified writing center directors and I do think Trixie and Diana were part of that conversation. Um, I think that that.. Thanks for jarring that because I do believe that that was, uh, yeah.



Lamiyah Bahrainwala 19:09

That can be kind of a National Event if not a world event. So...



Lamiyah Bahrainwala 19:14

It does. Maybe I'm remembering about one or two students committing suicide. I may be misremembering, but it's certainly, if not a Michigan State level event, perhaps of a national level event. Yeah. But that was the one that I remembered, Nicholas.

T Travis Webster 19:14
Right.

N Nicholas Buonanni 19:34
So you said that they held workshops to help educate the consultants on recognizing these signs and what to do.

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 19:42
I know there was at least one workshop. I don't know if there was more than one. And specifically, it was identifying signs where an individual may be indicating that they're thinking of taking their life in their writing specifically, and I remember two of the tips or one of the individuals writing about giving away love possession suddenly, like giving away a guitar that they cherished for a long time, that could be a sign. The second take-away I remember is asking consultees directly, if they're thinking about taking their life and learning for the first time that that is actually not a question to avoid and that often folks who are thinking of taking their life really appreciate being asked that question and I would never have thought to be that forthright. So I know there was at least one workshop.

T Travis Webster 20:34
Can I add to that, too? I remember that workshop and it became a value I had as a writing center director later at my own site. I would tend to host for example, the students sort of like mental health counselors on campus to come talk to writing tutors, my own writing tutors later, about thinking about being allies to students in those capacities, too. I love this format because I'm just like, oh yeah, you know. It's really nice to hear what others took and then kind of able to... kind of, it's jarring other memories for me, too. So thank you. This is great.

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 21:20
I was thinking the same thing, Travis. We have all these shared memories, and now we can speak about them from different positions.

T Travis Webster 21:25
Yeah.

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 21:26
I was a masters student when Trav was a doctoral candidate. Yeah.

C Colton Wansitler 21:34
Wonderful.

C Colton Wansitler 21:37
Okay, so now we're gonna move into organizational culture questions. So the first question in this section is, what was one key value or practice that has been or was a constant at the center?

T Travis Webster 21:51
One thing that comes to mind for me and, I think I've alluded to it some, is that like, the embodiment of writing kind of, and I... That sounds really abstract, but I'll say it as concretely as possible. Trixie and Diana really, along with the research they valued, the ways they taught the grad seminar, the way we taught the undergrad seminar were focused on how writing is intricately kind of bound up in real lived experience, bodies, people, and that they're not... That writing is not this kind of neutral thing. And I felt like before that, I really... Even studying rhetoric, rhetoric and composition before that, I knew that, but it was really made concrete for me at the Writing Center.

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 23:00
Um. [Internet connection cuts audio]

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 23:10
very seriously and that was providing support on to the Michigan State and the broader East Lansing Community. And [internet connection cuts audio] that meant is that we actually [internet connection cuts audio] individuals who were currently enrolled in seeking writing support, which I think was quite remarkable. And the only reason I discovered that they had this ethos, and we're bringing you to the center, was because

there was a particularly combative kind of disagreeable console team made their way through a lot of consultants, all of whom were eventually saying that they're really, really rude and you know, dismissive. We don't want to work with them anymore. And so what Trixie and Diana work to do was make sure that that person still got a writing consultations but with people [internet connection cuts audio] and broader East Lansing Community. So I thought that was remarkable. Um, I think it also made me realize that our writing center at Michigan State had actually really, really tried to internalize the idea of service and service-based praxis. So, that stuck with me, because it would have been so easy to just turn this person away who was already difficult and not currently enrolled at the university.

T Travis Webster 24:43
Yeah.

C Colton Wansitler 24:47
Great, thank you so much. So, our next question is, how would you describe the quality or the spirit of the center, like the space itself?

T Travis Webster 25:06
Um, very queer.

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 25:08
You can speak first, if that's okay, Trav?

T Travis Webster 25:09
Yeah, very queer, very kind, very collaborative. Very multimodal. The first Writing Center I worked in where a digital project could come in as a piece of composition and students could could get feedback on that, as a piece of multimodal composition. I think the center was also very queer in that Trixie and Diana were open in their out Writing Center administrative identities and that attracted a lot of queer people of color. It made for a very diverse kind of writing center staff. Those are the kinds of... those are the kinds of initial, like, descriptors that come to mind for me.

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 26:12
Because my screen [internet connection cuts audio]

C Colton Wansitler 26:18
Are you there?

N Nicholas Buonanni 26:27
You gotta love Zoom.

C Colton Wansitler 27:10
Okay.

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 27:11
Hello?

C Colton Wansitler 27:12
Oh, are you there?

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 27:14
Ah. [garbled audio]


C Colton Wansitler 27:23
We're having a hard time hearing you.

L Lamiyah Bahrainwala 27:27
Okay.


N Nicholas Buonanni 27:32
Uh-oh, maybe she'll try and rejoin.


- T** Travis Webster 27:34
I put she'll pop back in.
- T** Travis Webster 27:44
There she is, I think.
- L** Lamiyah Bahrainwala 27:46
Here. Okay? Hi!
- C** Colton Wansitler 28:09
Hi!
- L** Lamiyah Bahrainwala 28:13
[Garbled audio]
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 28:34
I'm wondering too, if she tries and joins without the video if that might just help.
- T** Travis Webster 28:41
Yeah, that's helped me sometimes too. Yes. Good advice.
- T** Travis Webster 28:47
Can y'all hear me okay?
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 28:49
Yeah. I was like, okay, maybe it's my internet because every once in a while, I have really bad internet connection with these things. And, but then I'm like, but no, I'm hearing Travis fine.
- C** Colton Wansitler 29:50


Are you there?


 Lamiyah Bahrainwala 29:53
[Garbled audio]


 Nicholas Buonanni 30:07
I think we can hear you a little bit although it keeps cutting out.


 Lamiyah Bahrainwala 30:13
Yeah, I heard that, this, um....


 Lamiyah Bahrainwala 30:40
[garbled audio]

 Travis Webster 30:40
I couldn't quite make it out.

 Colton Wansitler 30:56
No, I'm so sorry.

 Lamiyah Bahrainwala 30:57
I'm gonna try [garbled audio]

 Nicholas Buonanni 31:05
I was going to say if you want to try without the video on maybe it'll help.

 Lamiyah Bahrainwala 31:10
[garbled audio] Okay, is that... Can you hear me?

- T** Travis Webster 31:19
A little better, yeah.
- C** Colton Wansitler 31:33
It's okay. With the magic of Final Cut, I can take out this little section.
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 31:45
Okay, are you with us?
- C** Colton Wansitler 32:17
Hello?
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 32:22
I'm watching the little microphone next to her name to see if it, like, is picking up that she's talking.
- C** Colton Wansitler 32:29
Well since we're experiencing some technical difficulties, it might be best to move on to the next question.
- T** Travis Webster 32:36
Okay.
- C** Colton Wansitler 32:37
For the sake of time, we have about 15 minutes and eight questions left.
- T** Travis Webster 32:44
Okay.
- C** Colton Wansitler 32:44

We can move forward.

T Travis Webster 32:47
Yeah. Okay.

C Colton Wansitler 32:48
The question is, please describe the center's approach to hiring, and/or onboarding and training. For example, can you describe the recruitment process for graduate and undergraduate consultants? Were there intentional efforts in place to recruit staff across disciplines? If so, what were they? And were they successful? It's a big question. I'm so sorry.

T Travis Webster 33:09
No, no problem. I can kind of sum that up pretty quickly. A lot of the recruitment came from WRAC: Writing, Rhetoric, and American cultures for undergrad and grad. But Trixie and Diana were the type of administrators to be in a lot of rooms to work with a lot of different stakeholders across campus. So I always remember grad and undergraduate tutors and GAs who had very diverse, distinct backgrounds and disciplines and I always thought that was really fantastic, and that we were not just made up of rhetoric and writing or English people. We were business, we were music we were, um... We had biologists. We had social science folks. I loved that about the Writing Center. In terms of, let's see... I think it was a really successful recruitment process back when I was there. I think we had between 80 to 100 different tutors, grad and undergrad, and I would say we were represented really well across a lot of different disciplines across MSU. And I always thought that was really fantastic.

C Colton Wansitler 34:28
Wonderful. Thank you. Um, what was the onboarding like?

T Travis Webster 34:34
Yeah, so there were two kind of onboarding processes. One I would say is more like training, like day-to-day training, like, you know, timesheets and, you know, interfacing with the office staff, learning the kind of day-to-day logistics, but then there was also kind of a professional development seminar or grad or undergraduate course about writing center work and theories and research and those took place at the undergrad and grad

level. I took her... audited the grad level one and I co-taught the undergrad one as one of the Writing Center GAs. I think that actually is your question. So...



Colton Wansitler 35:23

That's great. Can you talk a little bit about the design of the undergraduate course?



Travis Webster 35:31

yeah, um, I believe it changed a little each semester to kind of think about the kinds of... the kinds of things taking place in the center. Like when Trixie and I taught it for example, we noticed particular phenomenon kind of happening around the first year writing program. And so we wanted to prepare undergrad consultants to work with first- and second-year writers and so one of our first projects centered around looking at project descriptions or assignment prompts and things like that just for tutors to be familiarized with, like those kinds of genres and helping undergrads through that. The course was also built around kind of a multimodal, and also a research pedagogy. So you leave the class with a sense of being able to consult writing in a lot of different ways, to do research on consulting writing, and also to see writing and also to, you know, build projects, participate in the center. It was a very research focused center. And there was a lot of room for people in the professional development or seminars to participate in those kinds of things.



Colton Wansitler 36:49

Great, thank you so much. So we're going to move on to our next section, which Nick will do.



Lamiyah Bahrainwala 36:55

Okay.



Nicholas Buonanni 36:56

Also, just a heads up, Lamiyah said that she was going to try to join from a laptop in like the next couple minutes, so she can be back with us.



Travis Webster 37:05

Cool. Yeah, no problem.

N

Nicholas Buonanni 37:08

Okay, so we're going on to the logistical and practical questions now. So the first one is, when working in the Writing Center, how did you work or organize the consultations, you know, do the clients schedule appointments, if so how?

T

Travis Webster 37:23

Sure, yes. So we operated off of Writing Center Online. Students could make their own appointments by setting up accounts. They could also call in and speak with kind of the administrative staff about making and scheduling appointments. I believe they were 50 minutes... 50 minutes sessions, 10 minutes between for prep. I think you could also at the time schedule a two hour appointment. Um, yeah. So pretty, pretty standard in terms of Writing Center Online practices and organizational pieces like that.

N

Nicholas Buonanni 38:07

And then our next one is, do you remember receiving or being directed to a handbook when you were hired?

T

Travis Webster 38:13

Yeah, I do. And also, I believe when I was there, there was a process of... there was a committee on revising the handbook, I think for undergrads and grads. I think I graduated before it was done. But definitely, there was a focus on you know, creating that resource for tutors.

N

Nicholas Buonanni 38:31

Do you remember anybody that was on that committee?

T

Travis Webster 38:34

Yeah. I think Marilee and Alena... Alena At-... goodness.... Of course, see Adkins... It's gonna... I could grab her name.... She had- her name changed. Her last name changed and so I'm blanking a little bit on it. I believe the two of them were pretty integral to that... that process.

N

Nicholas Buonanni 39:04

Okay, great. And then do you know... Well, this was probably.... I'm not sure that we need to ask number three about the initial creation of the center. So... I guess we can just go to the final question and then that way, if we are rejoined... What was that Colton?

C

Colton Wansitler 39:32

Oh, I think we could still do number four... Was the wr-

N

Nicholas Buonanni 39:37

Yeah. So the question is, when the center opened, was the service widely celebrated across MSU, but we can ask like, while you were there, was the center widely celebrated? Were there any people who were suspect, unconvinced, or upset, you know, by MSU's funding of the center?

T

Travis Webster 39:59

Um, I only... I was... I was just starting to understand kind of administrative practice, like administrative work as a GA at the time. I, you know, I think writing centers institutionally and kind of culturally can be misunderstood. So, I mean, there was occasionally, "Yes, so the writing center this or that," but for the most part, I remember the Writing Center being really respected there. It was well funded, it had a huge, huge budget, a huge number of interdisciplinary consultants it worked with and was in a lot of... worked with a lot of writers. They were in a lot of rooms. I mean, I'm just thinking back to like the hosting of events, you know. There was a spoken word... there was a spoken word event, there was a event related to kind of race relations. There were just... There were a lot of things happening the center that I think brought it a lot of respect. I remember I worked with Trixie on some faculty initiatives that were more or less kind of writing in the disciplines, teaching-based... building workshops where you would kind of help faculty build and work with their teaching, or their teaching documents. And, you know, there was always a good number of stakeholders in the room for that. Like, I felt like it was a really respected space, really well funded. You know, I think that certainly far outweighed any kind of criticism you'd hear about the Writing Center. Actually can't even.... I don't know that I remember too much criticism or folks being upset necessarily.

C

Colton Wansitler 41:55

Wonderful. Thank you so much.

T Travis Webster 41:57
Yeah.

C Colton Wansitler 41:58
So we have a couple of questions to just kind of round it off, and then we'll see if they're able to join us or not. So the last question is, is there anything else you would like to share about the history of the center?

T Travis Webster 42:17
I think, um... Yeah, I mean, I think of the Writing Center at MSU..... There's a lot of scholarship and research on identity, queerness, justice, related to the Writing Center. I sometimes think of that as very abstract, but I think the MSU writing center has always been a place where that's a very lived, concrete orientation to writing center work. And I always have thought of that as kind of like, you have writer scholars who write about it, but I always feel like when you, in the Writing Center discipline and the field of research, when you think of who does the work, who lives the lives the life or walks the walk, I always think of the Writing Center at MSU and, in particular, Trixie and Diana, and a lot of the folks who've become writing center directors out of that... at least out of my cohort and will continue to do so. The last time I talked to Trixie something like there were almost 20 or so writing center directors who had spawned from the... like Trixie's kind of lineage, lineage kind of thing, like gone on to be writing center directors in some capacity. I always thought that was really cool because you can see the kind of Writing Center at MSU stamp on the field. You know, I've just always... Again, I think it's a space that walks the walk.

C Colton Wansitler 43:56
Great. Thank you so much.

T Travis Webster 43:59
Of course.

C Colton Wansitler 44:00
So the last question is, is there anyone else that you worked with or know about that worked at the writing center that you think you should reach out to an interview?

- T** Travis Webster 44:10
Yeah, so sounds like Marilee gave you a pretty extensive list. Um, gosh. So, you talked to Marilee, Beth Keller.... Have you talked to Katie Manthy?
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 44:27
She was on our list but she didn't respond when I sent out the Doodle poll, so.
- T** Travis Webster 44:32
K. Maria Novotny?
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 44:39
Do you know how to spell the last name?
- T** Travis Webster 44:41
Yeah, it's N-O-V-O-T-N-Y, I think. She's at I think Wisconsin Milwaukee.
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 44:59
Let me see. Because Scott Chou sent me a list of other names. And Maria was not on there. So that's good.
- T** Travis Webster 45:17
Okay.
- N** Nicholas Buonanni 45:20
Was there, um. I'm trying to think. I know you mentioned Judy Easterbrook, who was like the fiscal officer, or was in charge of budgets and whatnot. Are any other office staff or anyone that you remember?
- T** Travis Webster 45:42
I, uh... The, um... The administrative assistant, I believe her name was Kathy. I could not tell you her last name. I believe she'd been at Michigan State for a long while and may have

retired. Like she had already been there like 30 years I think when I was working there. She may have since retired. Um... Say it again?



Colton Wansitler 46:09

She did. Okay, in 2014 when I came.



Travis Webster 46:13

Okay, okay. Um, trying to think of other folks. Somebody who worked in the Writing Center a long time ago who's on site with you all is Danielle Devoss. She was like one of the, one of the first like, writing consultants with like Janet Swenson and stuff like that. And her earliest work was around writing centers and stuff like that, even though she's become, you know, a rock star in digital rhetoric and stuff like that. But she could probably answer questions like from the early 90s about being a writing consultant there. She was an undergrad at Michigan State, things like that. And I can also get a firmer sense of Elena's last name at the moment. I know it. I know what it was a long time ago. I just I don't think that's her last name anymore so I can...



Nicholas Buonanni 47:12

Garcia.



Travis Webster 47:13

There you go. There you go. Garcia, maybe. Okay. See, she may already be on your list.



Nicholas Buonanni 47:20

So Danielle Devoss. Casey Mills



Travis Webster 47:23

Cool. Yeah.



Nicholas Buonanni 47:24

Ben Goodwin.

- T** Travis Webster 47:25
Yeah. Mmhmm. John Lochner was a big person in the digital movement. James Jackson, I don't know if you know him. He's now in industry. I think he works like in... Somewhere in Washington. He had a major, major impact on the center's earliest discussions of access and disability, and also its intersection with digital rhetoric, and this is before people were doing that kind of work. Now I feel like a lot of people are in conversation. He was doing that conversation... He was in that conversation long before, I feel, like that was kind of a commonplace academic discussion.
- C** Colton Wansitler 48:19
Well, thank you so much.
- T** Travis Webster 48:21
Yeah, of course
- C** Colton Wansitler 48:22
Well, that's all the interview questions we have.
- T** Travis Webster 48:24
Fantastic.
- C** Colton Wansitler 48:25
And it's also at the hour, so that's perfect.
- T** Travis Webster 48:28
Okay, great.
- C** Colton Wansitler 48:29
I'm gonna stop our recording before we have people leave. Just you know, to make sure nothing happens.



Travis Webster 48:36
Yeah, yeah.