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## Everyday Reflective Writing: What Conference Records Tell Us About Building a Culture of Reflection

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## Everyday Reflective Writing: What Conference Records Tell Us About Building a Culture of Reflection

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### Abstract

Heeding previous scholars' calls for a critical investigation of the role of reflection in the professional development of tutors, this article examines reflections written by tutors in the context of conference records. More specifically, the authors investigate the consequences of incorporating a prompt to reflect on tutoring strategies into our online conference-records database. The authors first present the results of their opening coding of nearly 300 conference records, offering a taxonomy of specific types of reflections found in the conference records. The authors then identify three shifts in the content of conference records written after the introduction of the reflection prompt. Finally, the authors draw on analysis of tutor interviews to illuminate how the positive influence of the reflection prompt is inextricably linked to a larger culture of reflection that is often collaborative and leads to transfer of learning within and beyond the writing center.

*Reflection* is a capacious term, including both routine and deeply intentional activities. Writing center scholars have described reflection as necessary for the ongoing professional development of experienced tutors—and indeed entire writing centers. Despite this longstanding emphasis on reflection, however, research taking a sustained and systematic look at the effects—or the challenges—of reflection in writing centers is more difficult to come by. Part of our goal in our research was to capture the various types and functions of reflection in our writing center. Through our analyses of the records written after peer writing consultations (which we refer to as *conference records*) and of tutor interviews, we came to understand that the everyday activity of writing conference records functioned as an ongoing, low-stakes opportunity to build a culture of reflection in our writing center and as professional development for tutors. For new tutors, beginning to write conference records provided opportunities to work collaboratively with experienced tutors and to learn the ways of knowing valued within the community of practice that is our writing center; for experienced tutors, writing conference records offered daily opportunities to document and reflect on their developing knowledge and confidence. The culture of reflection in our writing center is, we discovered, profoundly collaborative.

Conference records in our writing center, while hardly unique, function in ways significantly different from those described in much of the published scholarship on conference records. Our records are not sent to either writers or instructors; they are in-house documents, kept as a means of both helping tutors learn whether writers have already met with a writing tutor (and, if so, what happened in that earlier conference) and as a means of reminding a tutor about a project if there is an ongoing writer/tutor relationship. Our long-standing prompt was a simple “Brief summary of session.”

What makes our conference records a particularly rich site for exploring reflective practice is an addition we made five years ago; at the suggestion of our tutor-led Reflective Practice Leadership Cluster, we added a second prompt in a separate box: “Reflection on tutoring strategies.” To be frank, Rebecca (in her role as director) wasn’t initially sure exactly what tutors would put in this box. But since reflection is widely accepted as an important part of our work as writing tutors—and because we work at a Jesuit university that privileges reflection as part of the “Ignatian pedagogical paradigm” (International Commission, 1993, p. 6)—she readily added that tutor-generated prompt to our conference-record form. When the reflection prompt was initially added, the Leadership Cluster did share with the full staff the rationale for that second prompt—and during their internship semester, subsequent tutors learned from experi-

enced tutor-mentors how to compose effective conference records; but as a staff, we never paid close or substantial attention to the “Reflection on tutoring strategies” portion of our conference records. Although we readily acknowledge that this benign neglect is not a desirable approach, it has nevertheless provided an opportunity for us to study how reflection unfolds in low-stakes and largely self-regulated contexts.

In this project, we analyze those records to see how tutors reflect on their tutoring practices in a context that is ostensibly public (everyone on staff has access to and can read those conference records) but is in practice relatively private (there has been little conversation about those records so little sense that anyone else has the time or interest to read beyond the “Brief summary” box). Our comparison of tutor records written before and after the explicit reflection prompt was added suggests that given little guidance, tutors have taken uneven advantage of the opportunity to make connections and think about the trajectory of their professional development in these notes; however, we do see evidence that the existence of a “Reflection on tutoring strategies” prompt as part of conference records both increases and somewhat alters the nature of reflective writings. Furthermore, we argue, those reflective writings are part of a larger culture of reflection; recognizing how the conference records mediate participation in this larger tutoring community illuminates both the collaborative dimensions of reflection and the ways in which reflective writings facilitate transfer of learning within and beyond the writing center.

## **Review of Scholarship**

This project sits at the intersection of three ongoing areas of inquiry in writing center studies: conference records, reflection, and transfer of learning. Although our data do not allow us to gauge tutor learning beyond self-reports, this project does provide an opportunity to interrogate how the everyday activity of composing conference records might intersect with the valued practice of reflection and an emerging body of scholarship on transfer of learning among tutors.

Much of the scholarship on conference records has focused on the appropriate audience for those records. Some scholars (e.g., Conway, 1998) have argued for the importance of keeping records private in order to keep the tutoring relationship distinct from the classroom dynamic; other scholars (e.g., Cogie, 1998) argue that sharing conference records is a powerful way for writing centers to increase faculty understanding. A range of other approaches—including giving writers the option to share the conference record with their instructor and including writers in the

process of composing the conference record—have proliferated (Weaver, 2001).

But a more recent—and for our purposes more relevant—turn in research on conference records has looked at how the genre of the conference record leads tutors to write themselves into roles and understandings that inform their work as tutors. Rita Malencyzk (2013) analyzed a set of nearly 150 conference records that (like our center's records) were geared toward an internal audience. She argues that embedded in these supposedly low-stakes pieces of writing are narratives that enact and perhaps even create understandings of what types of writers tutors most enjoy working with. Melissa Bugdal, Kristina Reardon, & Thomas Deans (2016) analyzed multiple tutor identities performed in conferences. Their ability to identify distinct personae in the conference records underlines how this everyday writing becomes a site for creating and enacting particular approaches to the work of tutoring. R. Mark Hall (2015, 2017) similarly focuses on the ways in which the act of composing conference records works to create and maintain certain types of relationships with writers. Through his analysis of over 700 conference records, Hall identifies 10 common rhetorical moves. What strikes us most in Hall's analyses is how the very act of writing the notes constructed tutors as individuals who, for instance, give advice (both general and specific) and build relationships with writers (through rapport building at the start of the records and comments on writers' learning over time). Inspired by the work of Hall, Malencyzk, and others, we wondered how the "Reflection on tutoring strategies" prompt in our conference records might (or might not) nudge tutors to compose a sense of connections among their various tutoring experiences and assist in developing their future practices.

Writing center scholars have long recognized the value of reflection for the work of engaging writers in conversations about writing. In her early encomium on peer writing tutors, Muriel Harris (1995) stressed the importance of "the metaknowledge of *awareness* to reflect on both goals and strategies" (pp. 33–34; emphasis in original). Over the past several decades, guides to tutor education have often positioned reflection as central for learning to become a tutor. Paula Gillespie & Neal Lerner (2008), for instance, include reflection as key even to the first observations new tutors make of experienced tutors. In Chapter 5, they offer a page of questions to help new tutors reflect via discussion with their mentor, and they encourage new tutors to "reflect again" in writing; another entire chapter is devoted to "Reflecting on the First Session." More recently, Lauren Fitzgerald & Melissa Ianetta (2016) have described reflection as "essential to . . . learning as well as to tutoring" (52). Christina Murphy & Steve Sherwood (2011) argue that reflection is central to the development

of tutors' reflective practice and suggest that a reflective practice can improve the quality of tutoring. A reflective practice, they explain, is one in which the tutor views rules as guidelines and guidelines as avenues to further refinement of aptitude, or know-how. The know-how of good tutors comes from a willingness to reflect on their efforts and to keep learning. (9)

Throughout the guides meant to scaffold the development of new tutors, reflection is positioned as essential for new-tutor education.

Anne Geller, Michele Eodice, Frankie Condon, Meg Carroll, & Beth Boquet (2007) similarly identify reflection as vital for a number of important dimensions of a robust writing center, including cultivating a sense of epochal time, sustaining a culture of learning, helping tutors develop more writerly identities, and cultivating antiracist pedagogies. Gail Okawa, Thomas Fox, Lucy Chang, Shana Winsor, Frank Bella Chavez, & LuGuan Hayes (1991), Sarah Blazer (2015), and Sarah Dees, Beth Godbee, & Moira Ozias (2007) similarly posit reflection as central to more inclusive and antiracist practices in the writing center, while Lisa Zimmerelli (2015) uses reflective journals to engage her tutors in a more complex understanding of their service-learning experiences.

Within the field of writing studies as a whole, reflection has attracted significant attention, most recently entering into what Kathleen Blake Yancey (2016) has described as a "third generation" of research (p. 9). In the second generation, scholars such as Yancey directed attention to the central role reflection can play in portfolio assessment (1992, p.16) and writing classrooms (1998); Cathy Leaker & Heather Ostman (2010), for instance, argued for reflection's importance as a part of prior-learning assessment of experiential knowledge. One trend in the emerging "third generation" of research has been more systematic, empirically grounded examinations of the role reflection plays in student learning; such work has suggested, for instance, that "reflection is one of the necessary conditions for transfer of learning" (Beaufort 2016, p. 24) and that "a very specific type of rhetorical reflection [both inward and outward] helps develop the capacity for transfer" (Taczak & Robertson, 2016, p. 43).

In the area of writing center studies, however, there have been many fewer empirical studies of the role reflection plays in the writing and learning of tutors and writers. Nearly two decades ago, Jim Bell (2001) pointed out that relatively few empirical studies sought to directly track the influence of tutor reflection on tutoring practices and the effectiveness of conferences; in his own study, Bell was disappointed by how little influence he saw. We have identified no systematic studies of the consequences of reflection in writing centers since that time—despite the continued emphasis on the importance of reflection. As a prelude to his description

of a more effective dialogic-journaling assignment, Hall (2011) offers a refreshingly honest narrative of how easy it is for a writing center director to trust in the power of asking tutors to reflect without scaffolding that reflection in extended or intentional ways. Our work aims to continue in that vein—looking critically at what we mean by reflection in our writing center and systematically examining what impact our effort to encourage reflection via the conference-records prompt actually had.

Our project is also informed by recent scholarship on transfer of learning in writing centers. “Transfer studies and writing centers,” Bonnie Devet (2015) argues, “are made for each other” (138), and a set of studies has begun to unpack how writing centers might do more to facilitate transfer of learning. Most of that scholarship focuses on the learning of tutors. Heather Hill (2016), for instance, has sought to track the positive influence one carefully crafted staff meeting can exert on subsequent tutoring practice. Dana Driscoll (2015; see also Dana Driscoll & Sarah Harcourt, 2012) has similarly argued that tutor-education classes can positively impact preparation for future learning, both while working in the writing center and in subsequent coursework. And interviews gathered as part of the Peer Tutor Alumni Research project (Hughes, Gillespie, & Kail, 2010) provide evidence that what tutors learn through their work as peer tutors—about writing, about listening, about interpersonal communications, and more—persists over years, proving relevant and transferrable to personal and professional contexts even decades later.<sup>1</sup>

To some degree we, like other researchers interested in transfer of learning, are tracking the influence of a particular intervention: in our case, the intervention is the introduction of the “Reflection on tutoring strategies” prompt into our conference records. However, our data (which focus on self-reports of conference behaviors and include no transcripts from the conferences themselves) do not allow us to track the depth and quality of that transfer in a robust way. The data do, however, illuminate what tutors actually write about when asked to reflect and allow us to explore the degree to which those reflections involve any processes of connection making, trajectory tracking, or identity building.

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1 Research on transfer of learning for the writers who visit writing centers is less common. One important exception is Pam Bromley, Kara Northway, & Eliana Schonberg’s (2016) effort to track writers’ perceptions of transfer through surveys and focus groups.

## Methods

This study was conducted at a midsized, Jesuit university in the Midwest within a writing center staffed by approximately 45 undergraduate tutors, five graduate tutors, and a faculty director. The project reported here has its roots in a staff meeting held in January 2017 that focused on how and why to write conference records. Inspired by the work of Hall (2015), Malencyzk (2013), Bugdal, Reardon, & Deans (2016), and others, Rebecca took a sample of 183 conference notes written over a two-week period during the fall 2016 semester. Doing a rough first-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2015) to identify the focus of the “Brief summary of session” and “Reflection on tutoring practices” boxes, she developed four overarching categories: description of paper, description of conference, evaluation of conference, and connections. These four categories included 21 subcategories. During that staff meeting, Rebecca provided every member of staff with a sample of their own records to analyze in light of the emergent categories. A lively conversation on the functions the two boxes could and should serve ensued. Afterwards, the graduate tutors on staff were eager to more systematically interrogate the ways in which the reflection box was and was not serving the purpose our Reflective Practice Leadership Cluster had originally imagined.

Once the six of us (Rebecca and the five grad tutors on staff that semester) reimaged this inquiry as a more systematic project, we continued coding conference records using methods of grounded theory (Saldaña, 2015, p. 55) because we wanted the analyses to be, as much as possible, anchored in the contents of the conference records rather than our pre-existing expectations. We used a sample of six records for a round of second-cycle coding. Individual sentences were sometimes given a single code (e.g., “R came in wanting to look at two specific responses for his job application” = *description of context*); in other cases, different parts of a single sentence received different codes (e.g., “We discussed some general tips // and she is planning on bringing it back” = *description of advice given* // *description of writer’s future plans*). As a result, we came to speak of coded phrases. This process of collaborative coding resulted in 17 codes. A third round of using those categories to code 18 additional records finalized our coding schema in the ways described in Table 1. Once the coding scheme was set, we used it to analyze two sets of data. Taken out of context, some of the examples included in Table 1 may come across as defensive, but our experience of reading the records was that they were largely focused on capturing the quotidian nature of conversations in the writing center.

**Table 1***Types of Reflective Behaviors*

Tutor descriptions of activities or behaviors	Examples
Description of context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “M came in with an almost-done 8-page review, that was due in 2 hours. She still had to read the book and add content.”</li><li>• “She wanted a reader’s perspective and feedback on flow, especially regarding the definition and consistent application of criteria.”</li></ul>
Description of topics covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “We talked about the general structure and the order of her paragraphs.”</li><li>• “We went over making the paper more concise, as well as the presentation of evidence and the overall organization.”</li></ul>
Description of tutoring strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “We talked about her ideas, did a reverse outline, and then clarified a few content issues.”</li><li>• “We read through the draft and I asked clarifying questions as we went.”</li></ul>
Description of resources used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “After we chatted for a few minutes, I handed her off to the research desk.”</li><li>• “We also asked [tutor]’s help with suggestions for [professor]’s course and for what a thinkpiece is.”</li></ul>
Description of time constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “But it took almost the whole hour to go over a single-spaced 1-page document.”</li><li>• “I explained that we would probably only have time to go through one of her papers today.”</li></ul>
Description of advice given and priorities set	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “At the end of the conference I suggested he tape himself discussing the prompt and his paper as a way to brainstorm since he mentioned he could not type as quickly as he thinks.”</li><li>• “I encouraged him to schedule a second conference for his additional draft.”</li></ul>

Description of writer engagement/participation behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Because A was also making suggestions on where she could cut out sentences or words, she was aware of the errors she was making and also had ideas on how to improve.”</li> <li>• “She wasn’t interested in discussing any other aspects about the paper.”</li> </ul>
Description of writer’s future plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “She said she’s going to try to make another appointment with me next week and got my name and hours down.”</li> <li>• “The writer planned on adding a conclusion paragraph after the session.”</li> </ul>
Tutor evaluations and speculations	Examples
Evaluation of personal enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I was much more comfortable. It was actually pretty fun.”</li> <li>• “I also liked how this conference went because it was very collaborative.”</li> </ul>
Evaluation of the overall success of the conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “This appointment went really well.”</li> <li>• “This appointment went just okay.”</li> </ul>
Evaluation of the issues prioritized in the conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “But I felt like that’s the kind of brainstorming he needed most.”</li> <li>• “In the future, I’ll be more clear about finding out everything they need help with beforehand.”</li> </ul>
Evaluation of specific tutoring strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It was effective to do that.”</li> <li>• “Reading the paper out loud seemed to be really helpful.”</li> </ul>
Evaluation of the quality of the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “This was one of the appointments where everything in the paper honestly looked fine.”</li> <li>• “This was a stronger piece of writing in general than her other one.”</li> </ul>
Evaluation of writer engagement/participating behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “He did some changes on his own.”</li> <li>• “I felt like she was mindlessly taking every suggestion I gave, rather than working with me.”</li> </ul>

Speculation on how the writer felt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The student seemed really pleased.”</li> <li>• “She seemed to get more confident with it as we progressed through the session.”</li> </ul>
Speculation on what the writer seemed to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “She caught on quickly to her mistakes and started finding new ones before we finished discussing the old ones.”</li> <li>• “Which seemed to help him recognize errors and notice where sentences were too long or didn’t sound right.”</li> </ul>
Tutor reflections on growth over time	Examples
Connections to concepts or strategies encountered in staff meetings or readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I caught myself, several times, telling her what I would do—being directive rather than indirective.”</li> <li>• “I also told her about the MEAL plan tool for writing analytic paragraphs.”</li> <li>• “Cognitive scaffolding was on my mind as I went into this conference.”</li> </ul>
Description of tutor’s existing and developing knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I don’t know if this is because I am not versed on the topic or because I haven’t written a paper like this.”</li> <li>• “I have found it to be difficult to help some of the [FYC] students.”</li> <li>• “I guess I need to read up on that [Chicago-style documentation] more.”</li> <li>• “I was able to describe how the paper should be laid out and could build on itself.”</li> </ul>
Reflection on working with a returning writer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “L has been to the writing center multiple times for this paper.”</li> <li>• “C had come to the workshop on personal statements that I delivered earlier in the semester.”</li> </ul>

Records were coded in phrases; not every word or sentence in a record was coded, and sometimes codes appeared more than once in the same box; if they appeared more than once, they were still counted as a single instance. Every record was coded by two members of the research team who discussed it until they came to consensus. After all records were coded,

they were reviewed by a single, additional team member; any remaining coding issues were discussed and resolved with a fourth team member. The records were then tallied, as shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

The first prereflection data set draws from conference records composed during the fall 2011 and 2012 semesters, when tutors were only asked to provide a summary of the session. We began with a set of 1,127 records; choosing every tenth record, we identified a set of 112 records representing 12 different tutors (including five graduate and seven undergraduate tutors). The postreflection data set drew from 1,818 records composed during the full 15 weeks of the fall 2016 semester, two years after the reflection prompt had been introduced. Again sampling every tenth record, we gathered a set of 170 records representing 29 different tutors (five graduate tutors, the faculty director, and 23 undergraduates). Because we compared data captured before and after the addition of the reflection prompt, and because of the turnover in our student staff, the records were necessarily drawn from two different time periods and tutor groups. Thus, the sets of records we compared were not written by the same tutors.

The analysis of the conference records was supplemented with discourse-based interviews with 17 current tutors (including all six coauthors of this piece) who agreed to share their experiences writing and reading conference records (see Appendix for the interview script). These interviews generally lasted about 15 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, then analyzed for patterns of responses about the affordances and constraints of conference records as a tool for reflection. We draw on these tutors' explanations and anecdotes to better understand the patterns that emerged through the open coding of the records. This project has IRB approval (HR-2504), and all tutors, past and present, provided their informed consent for us to interview and/or analyze their conference records.

## Findings

What do tutors write about when asked to reflect on tutoring strategies? One significant contribution of this research is our ability to identify both the types and the frequency of those reflections. Furthermore, our data allow us to track the ways in which adding the prompt to reflect influences the contents of tutors' conference records.

### **What Tutors Write about When Asked to Reflect.**

As evidenced by the categories represented in Table 1, we found that tutor comments in their conference records broke into three major

categories: descriptions of activities and behaviors, evaluations and speculations, and reflections on tutors’ growth over time. The descriptions of these categories we offer in this section draw on the frequency data from the fall 2016 sample represented in Tables 2, 3, and 4, *after* the addition of the reflection prompt. (We draw out the comparisons to the fall 2011/fall 2012 data also included in Tables 2, 3, and 4 in our subsequent discussion of the prompt’s impact.)

**Table 2**

*Tutor Descriptions of Activities or Behaviors in Conference Reflections, Pre- and Postprompt*

	Preprompt reflections (from 112 records in fall 2011 & fall 2012) <i>n</i> =399 comments in Tables 2, 3, and 4.	Postprompt reflections (from 170 records in fall 2016) <i>n</i> =904 comments in Tables 2, 3, and 4.
Description of context	106 (26.6% of comments)	Description box: 153 Reflection box: 31 Total: 184 (20.3% of comments)
Description of topics covered	68 (17.0%)	Description box: 67 Reflection box: 36 Total: 103 (11.4%)
Description of tutoring strategies	60 (15.0%)	Description box: 58 Reflection box: 75 Total: 133 (14.7%)
Description of resources used	16 (4.0%)	Description box: 8 Reflection box: 4 Total: 12 (1.3%)
Description of time constraints	5 (1.2%)	Description box: 13 Reflection box: 10 Total: 23 (2.5%)
Description of advice given and priorities set	23 (5.7%)	Description box: 10 Reflection box: 22 Total: 32 (3.5%)

Description of writer engagement/participation behaviors	19 (4.7%)	Description box: 13 Reflection box: 41 Total: 54 (6%)
Description of writer's future plans	20 (5.0%)	Description box: 5 Reflection box: 12 Total: 17 (1.8%)

**Tutor descriptions of activities or behaviors.** Not surprisingly, the most frequent content in the records overall—when we totaled the contents of both the “Brief summary of session” and the “Reflection on tutoring strategies” boxes—was tutor descriptions of activities or behaviors that unfolded during the conference (see Table 2). The code that appeared most often—184 times (or 20.3%) in 904 coded phrases—was *description of context*. Such descriptions briefly introduce the reader to the participants, the assignment, and basic focus of the conference: for example, “M came in with an almost-done 8-page review that was due in two hours. She still had to read the book and add content.” Although such summaries of the conference context sometimes appeared in the reflection box (n=31), they were far more likely to appear in the description box (n=153).

In addition to descriptions of focus and strategy<sup>2</sup>, tutor descriptions of conferences also include *descriptions of the resources used* (e.g., Purdue OWL, handouts, research librarians, other tutors), *descriptions of time constraints*, and *descriptions of writer's future plans*. Such descriptions were relatively infrequent (each occurring in fewer than 2.5% of the codes), making it difficult to establish whether they were more likely to appear in the description box or the reflection box. Descriptions of *advice given by tutors* and *writer engagement*, though, were somewhat more common (3.5% and 6% of the codes respectively) and consistently appeared more often in the reflection box.

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2 Some readers may be puzzled by the difference between *description of topics covered* and *description of tutoring strategies*. We kept them distinct in order to distinguish more generic descriptions from descriptions that named specific strategies employed by the tutor during the conference. For instance, “We talked about the general structure and the order of her paragraphs” was coded as *description of topics covered*, whereas “We talked about her ideas, did a reverse outline, and then clarified a few content issues” was coded as *description of tutoring strategies*—because “did a reverse outline” indicates the particular strategy employed by the tutor.

**Table 3***Tutor Evaluations and Speculations in Conference Reflections, Pre- and Postprompt*

	Preprompt reflections (from 112 records in fall 2011 & fall 2012) <i>n</i> =399 comments in Tables 2, 3, and 4.	Postprompt reflections (from 170 records in fall 2016) <i>n</i> =904 comments in Tables 2, 3, and 4.
Evaluation of personal enjoyment	0 (0% of comments)	Description box: 3 Reflection box: 41 Total: 44 (4.8% of comments)
Evaluation of the overall success of the conference	4 (1%)	Description box: 6 Reflection box: 82 Total: 88 (9.7%)
Evaluation of the issues prioritized in the conference	1 (—)	Description box: 0 Reflection box: 5 Total: 5 (0.6%)
Evaluation of specific tutoring strategies	1 (—)	Description box: 2 Reflection box: 36 Total: 38 (4.2%)
Evaluation of the quality of the paper	37 (9.2%)	Description box: 19 Reflection box: 34 Total: 53 (5.8%)
Evaluation of writer engagement/participating behavior	0 (0)	Description box: 4 Reflection box: 11 Total: 15 (1.6%)
Speculation on how the writer felt	10 (2.5%)	Description box: 5 Reflection box: 24 Total: 29 (3.2%)
Speculation on what the writer seemed to learn	9 (2.2%)	Description box: 5 Reflection box: 6 Total: 11 (1.2%)

**Tutor evaluations and speculations.** Comments in which tutors more clearly evaluated the conference (see Table 3) were less frequent than descriptions (roughly 31% versus 61% of coded comments)—but in

every case, they appeared more frequently in the reflection box than in the description box. The most common type of evaluative comment focused on the overall success of the conference: for example, “This appointment went really well” or “This appointment went just okay.” Such evaluations comprised nearly 10% of the overall coded comments and were 13 times more likely to appear in the reflection box than the description box (n=82 vs. 6).

Tutors often evaluated their own contributions to the conference, focusing on their sense of personal enjoyment (4.8% of coded comments), their sense of the effectiveness of a particular tutoring strategy (4.2%), and their sense of whether they prioritized issues appropriately (less than 1%). Tutors sometimes evaluated the quality of the paper (5.8%) and made evaluative statements about the writer’s level of engagement (1.6%); they also sometimes speculated on how the writer felt (3.2%) or what they seemed to learn (1.2%).

**Table 4**

*Tutor Reflections on Growth over Time, Pre- and Postprompt*

	Preprompt reflections (from 112 records in fall 2011 & fall 2012) <i>n</i> =399 comments in Tables 2, 3, and 4.	Postprompt reflections (from 170 records in fall 2016) <i>n</i> =904 comments in Tables 2, 3, and 4.
Connections to concepts or strategies encountered in staff meetings or readings	11 (2.7% of com- ments)	Description box: 6 Reflection box: 22 Total: 28 (3% of comments)
Description of tutor’s existing and develop- ing knowledge	4 (1%)	Description box: 3 Reflection box: 20 Total: 23 (2.5%)
Reflection on working with a returning writer	5 (1.2%)	Description box: 5 Reflection box: 7 Total: 12 (1.3%)

**Tutor reflections on their own growth over time.** In addition to offering description and evaluation, tutors occasionally wrote about their existing knowledge and emerging confidence (see Table 4). By terming this third category *tutor reflections on their own growth over time* (rather than *descriptions of growth over time* or *evaluations of growth over time*),

we recognize we are, to some degree, privileging this particular type of reflection. The descriptions and evaluations we have already reviewed are also, we argue, types of reflection. Our move to highlight this particular type of reflection on growth over time is likely a function of Rebecca's long-standing interest in transfer of learning: the occasional appearance of these types of comments piqued her interest early during her preliminary coding for that first staff meeting.

In this category, tutors sometimes made connections to ideas or strategies they had encountered in staff meetings or the tutor-education class. For instance, when tutors write, "Cognitive scaffolding was on my mind as I went into this conference" or "I caught myself, several times, telling her what I would do—being directive rather than indirective," they invoke language discussed at length in staff meetings and the tutor-education course. In other cases, tutors described (almost always in the reflection box) their developing knowledge and confidence as a tutor: for example, "I have found it to be difficult to help some of the [FYC] students" and "I guess I need to read up on that [Chicago-style documentation] more." Although tutors occasionally expressed satisfaction with their developing knowledge, most of these statements represented a type of goal setting. A third type of comment focused not on the tutors themselves but on the writers they worked with, noting when they had opportunities to work with a writer repeatedly or when a writer was returning with a draft (e.g., "C had come to the workshop on personal statements that I delivered earlier in the semester"). Although these comments rarely elaborate on what is made possible (or not) by those repeated conferences, the potential for such observations exists.

**The influence of the reflection prompt.** We compared the types of comments tutors made in two different data sets: comments written before the introduction of the "Reflection on tutoring strategies" prompt (399 distinct comments made in 112 records written by 12 tutors during the fall 2011 and 2012 semesters) and comments written after the reflection box was included in daily record keeping (904 distinct comments made in 170 records written by 29 tutors during the fall 2016 semester). When we compare conference records written before and after the introduction of the reflection prompt, we see three important shifts.

First, although the number of conference records in our sample increased by only 51%, the number of phrases coded in those records increased by 126%. These numbers affirm our gut experience coding the records—that tutors began composing a greater variety of observations in their records after the introduction of the reflection prompt.

Second, when prompted to reflect on tutoring strategies, tutors were much more likely to include evaluative statements. Without the reflection

box, tutors composed evaluative statements only 15% of the time; after the introduction of the reflection box, tutors composed evaluative statements 31% of the time. Two of the most striking increases appeared in the “Tutor evaluation of personal enjoyment” and “Tutor evaluation of the overall success of the conference” categories. Before the reflection box there were no recorded instances of tutors evaluating their personal enjoyment; after the reflection box, 4.8% of the coded phrases evaluated personal enjoyment ( $n=44$ , with 41 instances appearing in the reflection box). Before the reflection box, there were only four instances of the tutor evaluating the overall success of the conferences; after the reflection box, 9.7% of the phrases evaluated the overall success of the conference ( $n=88$ , with 82 appearing in the reflection box). The reflection box also seemed to invite more evaluation of specific tutoring strategies: while only one instance of evaluating specific tutoring strategies appeared before the addition of the reflection box, 38 instances (4.2% of all coded phrases) appeared after it was added—and 36 of those instances appeared in the reflection box itself.

It is important to note, though, that tutors became less likely to make a general evaluation of the quality of the paper. Whereas evaluations of the paper constituted 9.2% of coded comments before the reflection box, they constituted only 5.8% of comments after the “Reflection on tutoring strategies” prompt was introduced. Although tutors occasionally evaluated how writers engaged or speculated on how writers felt or what they learned, tutors’ writings after the introduction of the reflection prompt were more likely to evaluate their own choices than the text or participation of the writer.

Third, there were some important shifts in the ways tutors reflected on growth over time. On the one hand, tutors’ inclination to make connections to concepts or strategies encountered in staff meetings or readings stayed relatively constant (at about 3% both before and after the reflection prompt was introduced). Although we confess we had hoped to see more instances of this type of reflection, we are nevertheless struck by the fact that even before the reflection prompt, tutors were inclined, on occasion, to document the ways they put their professional development into action. Reflections on working with returning writers stayed similarly constant (at about 1.3%).

However, we *do* see a notable change in our postreflection-box data set when we look at tutors’ likelihood of describing their existing and developing knowledge. Whereas only three tutors (25% of the tutor sample) described their developing knowledge in the prereflection records a total of four times (1% of the coded comments), a total of 14 tutors (48% of the tutor sample) did so 23 times (2.5% of the coded comments). Although we have not sought to analyze this sample for statistical significance, this shift

strikes us as important. When asked to reflect on tutoring strategies, more tutors began to write (however briefly) about their developing knowledge. Before the reflection box was added, allusions to tutors' developing knowledge tended to be vague ("It was the typical summarize-analyze-respond essay") and were mostly a means of providing more context. After the reflection box was added, tutors tended to reflect more on whether or not the tutor's knowledge was helpful ("Once I had a better understanding of the arguments, I was able to describe how the paper should be laid out and could build on itself") or unhelpful ("I'm having some trouble interpreting her professor's comments and instructions"). In short, not only did tutors become more likely to reflect on their developing knowledge, they did so in more explicitly self-evaluative ways.

If the goal behind adding the "Reflection on tutoring strategies" prompt was to nudge tutors to reflect on their tutoring strategies on a daily basis, it appears we have indeed moved in that direction. A skeptical reader might observe that we asked our hard-working tutors to reflect more and they obliged. That outcome, such a reader might conclude, should not come as a surprise. Perhaps not. But what strikes us is not simply the increase but the changing nature of tutors' reflective activities.

Tutors' conference records contain more reflection and more different kinds of reflection, including a striking uptick in the inclination to evaluate not only the overall success of the session but also the effectiveness of the tutoring strategies employed. Although we were initially disappointed to see such a heavy emphasis on evaluation and relatively few instances of tutors making connections to tutor education, careful analysis of our data helped us notice two things. Tutors had always been inclined to include some evaluation in their conference records, but after the addition of the reflection prompt, they became more likely to evaluate their own choices rather than the writer's text or level of engagement. We think this is a positive shift—particularly in light of Malenczyk's (2013) exposition of how records can construct judgmental narratives about writers. Second, tutors had always been at least somewhat inclined to allude to the knowledge they were drawing on from staff meetings (itself an affirming discovery), but after the addition of the reflection prompt, tutors became more likely to reflect on how their developing knowledge was accruing over time. Although we do not have the data to make claims about the precise nature of tutors' transfer of learning, we can observe that prompting tutors to reflect on their tutoring strategies seems to encourage them to articulate how they make use of their prior learning as they move through novel situations.

## Conference Record Reflections as Part of a Larger Culture of Reflection.

The changes indicated by our analyses of the reflection prompt did not occur in a vacuum. Analyzing the interviews made clear how the composition of those records was embedded within a broader culture of reflection in our writing center. To say writing is influenced by its social context and function is a truism of the field, a threshold concept perhaps: writing is a social and rhetorical act (Adler-Kassner & Wardle 2015). Nevertheless, the interviews reminded us that the work of reflecting in the conference records is inextricably linked with the reflective activities woven into the fabric of the writing center's larger community. When we look beyond the conference records themselves, we see that the activity of reflecting is—far more than we had initially realized—a profoundly collaborative activity, one at the heart of participation in our writing center. We found Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's (1991) framework of "communities of practice" and "legitimate peripheral participation" helpful in conceptualizing how reflection operates as an unexpectedly collaborative activity, one that brings new tutors into the community and helps established tutors continue to learn and grow.

In the remainder of this article, we draw from interviews to detail how tutors' reflective activities (including but not limited to writing conference records) were part of their legitimate peripheral participation in the community of practice that is our writing center as a whole; these collaborative reflective activities serve as a means of building membership and acquiring experience in that community and, in turn, influence individuals' abilities to internalize those reflective practices over time. As individual tutors internalize an inclination to reflect, they simultaneously affirm and perpetuate what we have long referred to as our *culture of reflection*—that is, a privileging of reflective practice that is a central characteristic of the writing center. In some cases, tutors' internalized inclinations towards reflective practice also encouraged them to repurpose their reflective behaviors in other contexts as well. This emphasis on the communal, collaborative nature of reflection is fully in keeping with Yancey's (2016) recent focus on "the role of community in this [reflective] process" (p. 16).

For scholars seeking to understand how individuals learn to participate in the culture of a particular workplace in full and informed ways, Lave and Wenger's (1991) theories of situated learning have proven especially generative. Although Lave and Wenger never take up questions of writing directly, their explorations of apprenticeship and learning *in situ* have had a profound influence on studies of learning to write in workplaces. The key to successful participation in a community of practice, the "defining char-

acteristic” (p. 29) of situated learning, is legitimate peripheral participation. In other words, new members of the community learn to write and speak and perform by working together with expert members in ways that are scaffolded contributions to the real work of the community.

When we examine the community of the writing center, we see that the work of writing and reading conference records was embedded in an ongoing series of seemingly individual activities that were central to how new tutors operate as legitimate peripheral participants in a larger culture of reflective tutoring. Composing conference records, for instance, might seem to be an individual activity. However, when asked to explain how they had learned to write records, our undergraduate tutors, time and again, described collaborative scenarios. They described sitting with an experienced tutor, brainstorming with that mentor what to include in a record the mentor was composing. They described how, even before they were leading their own sessions, their mentor asked *them* to compose conference records for a session the mentor had just completed. Such occasions of coauthorship were closely intertwined with informal, conversational reflection on what had transpired during the conference, what choices were made, and what other options were available. These collaborative compositions of conference records were occasions for pep talks in which experienced tutors offered reassurance to new tutors who claimed they would never have known what to do in such a situation. These moments of collaborative authorship became opportunities to discuss issues like how to document conferences with resistant, even aggressive, writers in ethical ways that might assist future tutors. The interviews reminded us of what at some level we already knew but our focus on textual analysis had obscured: writing conference records is, for many tutors, a deeply collaborative and reflective experience from the very beginning of their work in the writing center.

That the work of learning to compose conference records was influenced by reflective conversation with others is also suggested by the very structure of the coding scheme that emerged from our open coding. Although they are certainly grounded in the data, the three categories identified in our study—namely, descriptions of activities and behaviors, evaluations and speculations, and reflections on growth over time—are likely also informed by the ways discussions of reflection are framed in the four-credit tutor-education course required of all undergraduate tutors.

This course devotes a two-week unit to reflective practice. Discussions draw on multiple texts (including International Commission, 1993; Yancey, 2013) to identify a range of different activities that might be included under the umbrella term *reflection*. That unit culminates in a reflective conference assignment that requires new tutors to record a

conference, then engage in four different reflective activities: an account of what happened during the conference; a self-evaluation focused on emerging strengths and struggles; an account of the tutor's thinking about their own thinking about tutoring; and connections between prior experiences and the current situation. It seems probable that the three categories of reflection that emerged through open coding (description, evaluation, reflections on growth over time) are shaped not simply by the conference records themselves but also by the discursive backdrop for the composition of those records—that is, the culture of reflection that permeates our writing center more broadly.

Some elements of this culture of reflective practice, it seems, are within our control. As indicated, we added the reflection prompt to our conference records, and our required tutor-education course spends time defining and practicing reflection in specific ways. Furthermore, every member of staff builds a tutoring portfolio (which includes annual goals, a statement of tutoring philosophy, and reflective writings on peer and mentored observations) that is reviewed in an annual, forward-looking conference.

But other elements of our culture of reflection were less intentional and perhaps not entirely within our control. For instance, reflection is highly valued in Jesuit education and thus part of conversations across campus; that didn't mean every student-tutor automatically "bought into" the value of reflection, but it did mean tutors were operating in a larger university culture that values reflection. In addition, the physical layout of our writing center, best characterized as five small conference rooms located off a large central space, may also facilitate collaborative reflection. Because of our layout, conferences take place in relative privacy (often with the door closed) while tutors gather—before and after their shifts, between appointments, and sometimes even when they're not working—around a large rectangular table that comfortably seats six and often seats more. This "tutor table" is where much of the intellectual and emotional collaboration of our writing center unfolds: this is where many tutors write their records, where they mentor tutor interns through formal and informal instruction (and write conference records together), where they revisit choices and strategies with fellow tutors after a particularly difficult conference. Indeed, a number of tutors expressed a conviction that the reflection requested in the conference records was more effectively developed through conversations with fellow tutors. One explained that

I think a lot of the reflecting we do is talking to other tutors . . . because that's the best way to flesh out what happened and make sure if you're understanding how the appointment went in general. And if they can give you feedback I think that's kind of the best

reflection that happens.

Not only, then, might the “Reflection on tutoring strategies” box serve as a prompt for written reflection, but also, for tutors sitting at the “tutor table” while composing their conference records, the box might serve as a nudge to conversational reflection as well.

Our culture of reflection might also, we suspect, be supported (in ways we did not initially expect) by a culture of research. Over the past five semesters, tutor-conducted projects have examined videotapes of conferences, conference records, notes written for writers, and more. As a consequence, tutors have grown accustomed to the idea that their everyday practices and artifacts might be studied by another member of staff. Indeed, multiple tutors suggested that the existence of *this* research project encouraged them to view their conference records in a new light.

Ultimately, to the degree that our reflection prompt seems to have (thus far) avoided the type of reification described by Hall (2011), we suspect a variety of factors together infuse the activity of reflection with genuine purpose within the community of practice that is our writing center. Written and spoken reflection is an opportunity for legitimate peripheral participation for new tutors, and the physical layout, the larger university culture, and our ongoing research projects serve as affordances to make ongoing spoken and written reflections part of everyday life in the writing center.

### **Exploring Possible Consequences of That Culture of Reflection**

Not only did the interviews illuminate how record writing was imbricated in a larger culture of reflection, but also they have led us to speculate on the possible consequences of that reflective engagement for individual tutors. We did not design this study to establish causal relationships, so our arguments here document self-reports rather than make definitive claims from triangulated data. Nevertheless, we can identify two ways the collaborative culture of reflection appears to feed back into the individual: (1) the ways the reflective activity of reading and writing conference records has a dynamic relationship with emerging tutor confidence and (2) individuals’ inclination to engage in reflective behavior more generally.

**Reflective activities and emerging confidence.** Through interviews, we learned something that had not been evident in our sampling of conference-record data: namely, tutors’ motives for reading and writing conference records often changed as they acquired more experience and confidence. Several tutors reported that as new tutors, they spent a great deal of time both writing their own records and reading those of others. When they felt insecure—if, for example, they were about to conference

with someone in a perceived authority position or outside their major area of study—tutors read conference records to reassure themselves. One tutor in her first year on staff explained she was most likely to read existing records on a writer “if it’s something like philosophy that I’m not super comfortable with. Or . . . if it’s an upperclassman or grad student. . . . I guess it’s a confidence thing.” In some cases, tutors noted that reading the records of previous tutors who were honest about what did not go well in the conference helped them feel more comfortable in reflecting honestly about their own conferences.

When do I go back and read the clients I’m about to have? Pretty often. Especially if I’m more intimidated by the assignment. If it’s a nursing paper or engineering, I kind of like to go back and see what the conference was like before. . . . When I started I was really nervous about making mistakes or not having things go the way I’d planned. And I remember I started going back when I first got access [to the records and I read other tutor’s records] and I was like [that more experienced tutor] didn’t have stellar appointments every time. So it kind of gave me the comfort to look back and be like it’s okay to sometimes admit it could have gone better.

For new tutors just finishing the internship semester and now leading sessions by themselves, reading other tutors’ records seems to extend a sense of conversation and community—providing additional information, reassurance, and encouragement to honestly reflect on and assess what’s going well and what is not.

As they acquired more experience, most tutors reported reading conference records less often. Those who continued reading frequently reported they simply read conference records for context rather than reassurance. Other experienced tutors reported they now rarely read the records from other tutors, worrying (based on their experiences) that the records might skew their perceptions of a writer.

Some tutors also reported a shift in their purposes for *writing* records as they acquired more experience and confidence. Sometimes this meant a shift in the contents of the conference records.

When I first started I used it as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of a conference and what in the conference I thought I did well. So it tended to be more self-reflective, and what I could do to improve, or things in my own knowledge base I was lacking. Now it’s a very clear statement of this is what I’ve learned and this is how I’m applying it and this is how I think I can apply it to my own writing or when I teach with writing.

For this tutor, conference records became less about self-evaluation and more about tracking a trajectory of growth. A number of tutors reported

that as they grew more confident, they simply wrote shorter records. For instance, one of the most experienced undergraduate tutors on our staff explained,

I think that the reflection box is good for me as a tutor but it has become a hassle, you know. I still value it, especially in those appointments where there was a moment where I'm like oh this is exactly what happened, this is a strategy . . . but if there isn't a moment like that [where I see a direct connection to a strategy or concept discussed in tutor education] in the session, then I don't really find [writing conference records] valuable. . . . Now that I've been a tutor for two years . . . those strategies are just how I conduct a normal session so I don't think about them. So I think the reflection part is good to try to remind myself of that. But it's not always conscious.

For this experienced tutor, writing conference records by herself was becoming a “hassle”; for a busy senior, perhaps the returns on the time invested in composing those records had become less obvious, and the invitation to reflect was perhaps growing reified in the way Hall (2011) describes. However, while being prompted to reflect on tutoring strategies on an everyday basis may have become something of a “hassle,” the process of writing them (at least for this experienced tutor) continued to provide an opportunity to connect concepts and strategies learned during tutor education to her everyday practice. Ultimately, although our data can't fully illuminate the degree to which tutors write records for themselves or their larger community of fellow tutors (a sense of audience that might shift frequently), we do know many tutors learn to compose records through collaboration and may at some stages value those records as a means of tapping into the experience of other tutors.

**Reflective activities in other domains.** Finally, through these interviews we gained some insight into how the reflective engagement prompted on a regular basis (through conference records and ongoing conversations) within the writing center might be influencing tutors' inclination to engage in reflective behaviors in other domains of their lives. When asked whether “writing these records encouraged you to do reflection in any other context,” most tutors gave what appeared to be a frank answer: no. We were neither surprised nor troubled by this response, but we were struck by the various reasons tutors gave. Some tutors reported they had long been inclined to engage in lots of reflection, either because it was a habit they'd developed early on (“I think I've always done reflective writing in some form or another. So I don't know that it's prompted me to do more reflective writing . . . it just fit into my natural process of doing and evaluating”) or because it was a habit others had encouraged them to develop (“Because I've been in therapy before, I have

always been slightly more self-reflective”). There may well be an element of self-selection at work: individuals with a penchant for reflection may be more likely to become peer writing tutors.

A number of others, though, reported that although they hadn’t spontaneously begun to engage in reflective writing outside the writing center, they did feel the reflective writing encouraged them to engage in more reflective *thinking* and *conversation*. One tutor noted,

No, I don’t do reflective writing. I never have. I just can’t get into it. It just seems too time consuming. I do think, though, it’s been really good for me to do it here. And I do more reflective thinking than ever before, in a lot of different areas. But it’s not necessarily in writing.

Another agreed that although he didn’t engage in formal reflective writing, “the [conference record] forms make [his] mental reflection more cognitively explicit.”

In a few instances, though, tutors reported that the reflective writing prompts had indeed encouraged them to engage in reflective writing outside the writing center. They tended to focus on forward-looking connections. One graduate tutor explained she had found her notes in the reflection box—which she often used as forward-looking notes to herself about what to ask the writer in a future conference or how to approach a similar assignment with subsequent writers—so useful that she began to keep a teaching journal.

Definitely. These records have encouraged me to use [reflective writing]. I reflect on my lesson plans now. After I teach a class now I’ll spend five minutes bullet-pointing what went well, what I would change for next semester, what students seemed to really respond to.

Another tutor explained that the habits of mind she’d developed through writing conference records were influencing the forward-looking documents she was crafting for her job search.

It sounds weird but I really like writing cover letters. I like looking back and reflecting on my time in the writing center or an internship. And it’s not so much looking back and evaluating my time but looking at a job application and saying okay I have to be good at working with people. So I can reflect on my time at the writing center and apply it to that. So especially this semester . . . I’m looking back on all my experiences and reflecting on them to build how I can be in the future for another employer.

Finally, one tutor expressed a belief that the reflective conference records were part of a larger culture of reflective practice that had significantly altered her own inclination to reflect.

I’ve definitely become more reflective. Hands down. And it’s a direct

result of not necessarily the client reports themselves but working in this environment in general. . . . Everything we do in staff meeting? Reflective. Everything we do in a conference? Reflective. Being a mentor? Constantly reflecting about how a conference went. And I definitely see that bleed into all aspects of my life. . . . Before working here I was not reflective.

Although we had initially set out to see whether we could find in the conference records evidence of connection making between staff meetings and accounts of tutoring practice, we also found in these interviews evidence to suggest that some tutors connect their reflective engagement within the writing center to other parts of their lives.

We recognize the self-reports of these tutors may be influenced by a collegial desire to tell us what they think we want to hear. Nevertheless, we find the patterns of interview data suggestive. To be clear: we do not think writing center employment is a magic wand, automatically transforming any and all students into more reflective individuals. But even in this final quote's most ambitious claim for the reflective culture of writing center work "bleed[ing] into all aspects of . . . life," there is at the very least an acknowledgement of our more modest initial claim: the prompt to reflect on tutoring strategies within conference records does not exist in a vacuum but is inextricably linked with a larger emphasis on reflection that infuses work throughout the community of practice that is our writing center.

### **Implications: Building a Culture of Reflection in Conference Records and Beyond**

In the end, what did we learn about the role composing conference records might play as tutors work to improve their practices and build confidence as tutors? We cannot, of course, track causation, and we are not claiming that simply adding a reflective prompt to our conference records has directly resulted in more reflective, more skilled, more confident tutors. Our data do not support such a broad claim. What we have learned—through our interviews and through the ways in which the categories that emerged from open coding largely replicated the types of reflection privileged in a shared early assignment on reflection in the tutor-education course—is that, to the degree that the reflection prompt has taken root as a meaningful activity, it succeeds as part of a larger culture of reflection. As one tutor noted, "This is a reflective place."

Our inquiries lead us to conclude that prompting tutors to reflect on their tutoring strategies within the conference records has had a discernible and largely positive effect on tutors' inclination to reflect on their own tutoring practices. But we also believe the prompt would benefit

from more intentional discussion. Tutors reported that even a one-hour staff meeting encouraged them to see their writings as part of a collective effort rather than as an individual repository. And as two graduate tutors working on this research project acknowledged in their interviews, “I know I’m much more thoughtful about what I’m doing because of the conversations we’ve had” and “Since starting this project I’m more self-conscious of what I write in my own records . . . I’m trying to be more clear and specific.” We recommend looking at variations in conference records with tutors and discussing how those records are (and how they might be) used in order to nudge tutors to see the purpose and value of those records somewhat differently. Although it is surely no surprise that our staff benefitted from a deeper understanding of the whys and the hows of our everyday practices, it may be a consolation that the reflection prompt seemed to have a discernible positive influence even when the many demands of our growing writing center kept us from cultivating that deeper understanding in extended ways.

We hope future researchers might build on this work, looking perhaps at the nexus between the focus of self-reflections composed in the relatively “private” context of the conference records and the more public self-reflections facilitated by peer (and/or mentored) observations. Do those different fora for self-reflection invite more or less self-criticism? Do they invite a focus on different topics identified in the coding schema offered in this article? In what ways might we see (or not) connections among the reflections in these various contexts? Future researchers might also take up the ambitious project of documenting the degree to which these reflections (connection making, goal setting, evaluating) might be connected to the actual practice of tutors during conferences. Even researchers wishing to restrict their focus to the conference records could track how tutor reflections evolve (or don’t) over time, providing another possible insight into tutors’ ongoing professional development.

What has always been clear in writing center work is that reflection is important. Although we have demonstrated that relatively unguided prompts for written self-reflection can have measurable positive impacts on tutor development, we feel even more research into guided avenues of individual and collaborative reflection may offer additional positive benefits.

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## Appendix

### Interview Questions

1. How long have you been a tutor?
2. Tell me about how you usually write your records: where do you write them? How soon after your appointments? How much time does it usually take you?
3. How often (under what circumstances) do you read other people's records on a writer you're about to meet? How often do you go back and read your own records?
4. What do you see as is the purpose or function of the [conference records]?
5. What does the “reflect on tutoring practices” prompt mean to you? How do you use that space?
6. How did you learn to write records?
7. If you've been a mentor, to what degree have you talked with your mentees about writing records?
8. Can you tell me what you were thinking about as you were writing this particular record?
9. Do you use reflection anywhere else, or have been more explicit about it? Have writing these records encouraged you to do reflective writing in any other context?

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