

The Role of Writing Center Tutors:

Global Issues on a Local Scale

Hailey Danielson | Writing Center Tutor

Who am I?

Hailey Danielson

I am a rising senior at the University of Utah honors college, double majoring in English and Communications.

I have been a writing center tutor at the U since fall of 2019.

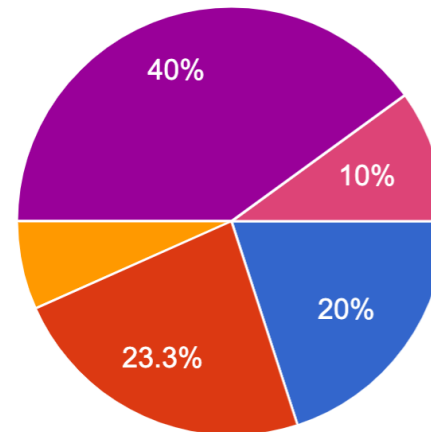


What is the Duty of a Writing Center Tutor

- Tutoring is a complicated interpersonal relationship, add writing to mix and it can become even more so.
- Writing is intimate and personal. Writing tutors are tasked with helping students maintain their integrity and personal voice while also improving upon that.

The Survey

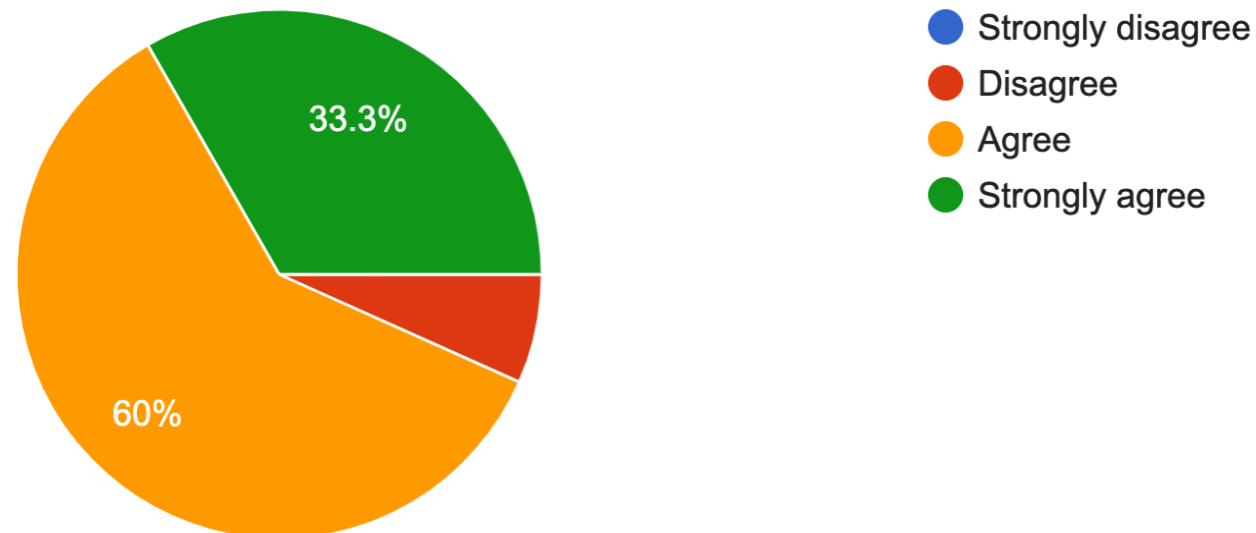
- My survey was titled “The Role of the Writing Center and its Tutors”
- The survey received responses from tutors who work at five different universities across utah: the University of Utah, Weber State University, Salt Lake Community College, Utah State University, and Westminster College.



Part I: Foundations

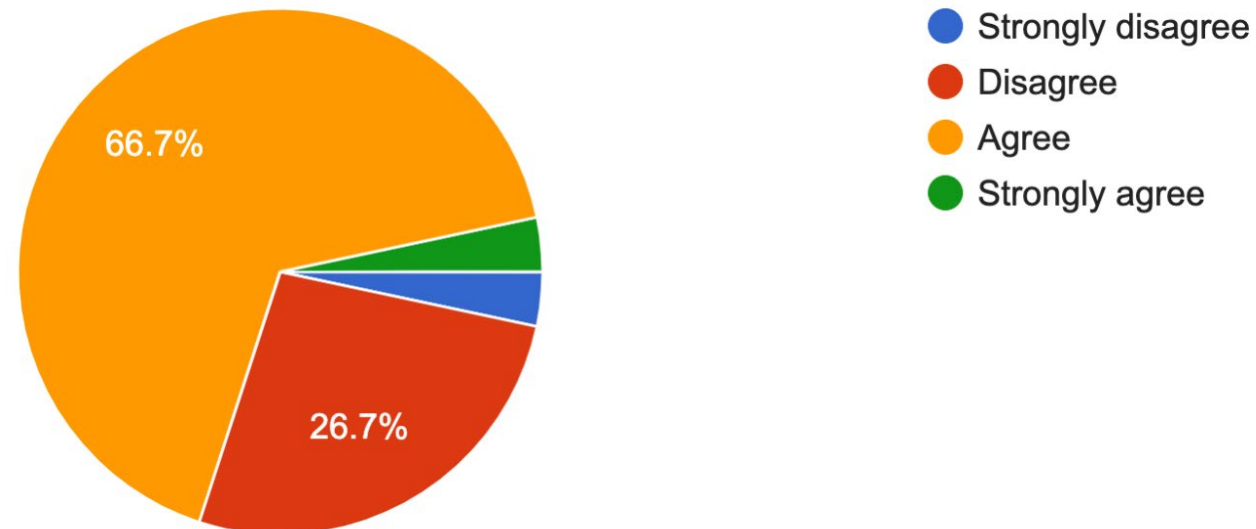
Important Foundations

- “Do you think that a writing center should put the wishes of the client first?”
 - 93.3% of the tutors said they either agreed or strongly agreed, while only 6.7% disagreed



Important Foundations Cont.

- “Do you think that a writing center should help students get good grades?”
 - 70% of tutors either agreed or strongly agreed with getting clients the best grade possible, while 30% of tutors either disagreed or strongly disagreed.



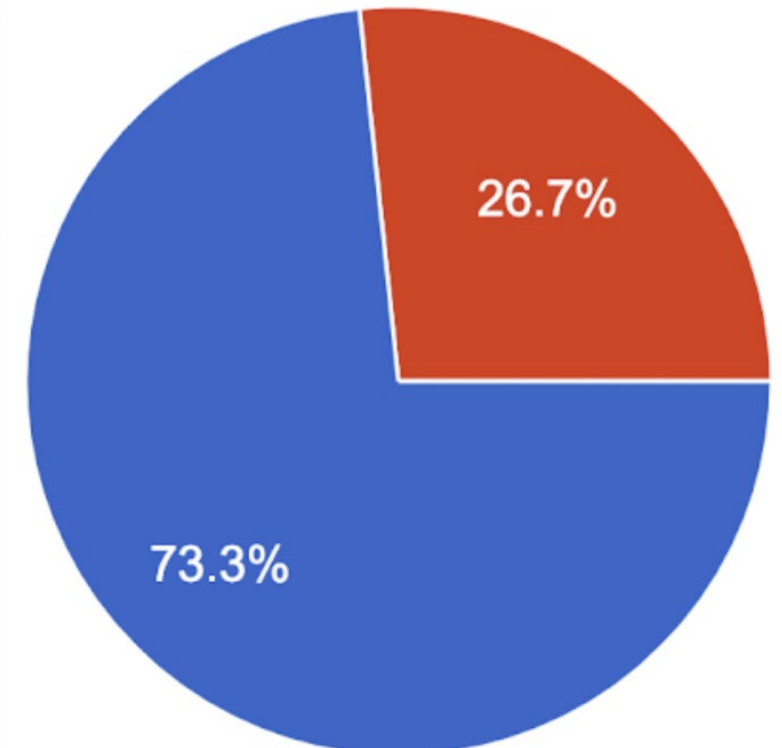
Important Foundations Cont.

- Many tutors have the simultaneous goals of assisting students with what they want to work on and supporting their center's mission of helping students find their unique voices, which might compromise the inherent goal of receiving the highest marks possible.
- Through purposefully targeted questions, this moral ambiguity and unrest can be clearly seen amongst peer tutors in higher education environments.

Part II: Values

War of Values

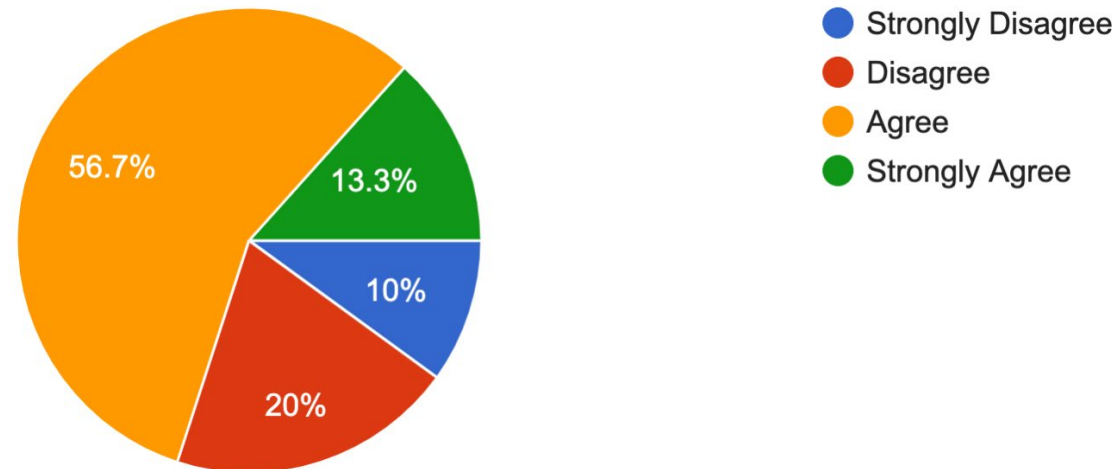
- When forced to choose between “helping students find their unique voice” or “helping students get the best grade on their assignments.”
 - 73.3% of tutors chose “helping students find their unique voice” and 26.7% of tutors chose, “helping students get the best grade on their assignments”
- A majority of writing tutors at universities and colleges in Utah believe writing centers should do more than just help students with their grades. A writing center tutor has a duty to the student on a personal level.



Part III: Offensive and Harmful Language

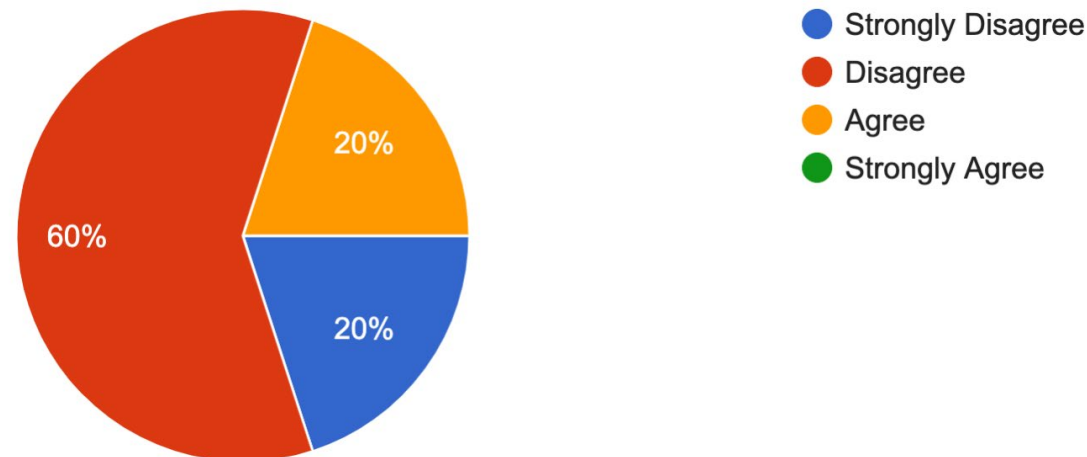
Offensive and Harmful Language

- “Do you agree that writing center tutors have an obligation to seriously discuss offensive topics and language that some clients might bring into the center?”
 - 70% said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 30% said they either disagreed or strongly disagreed



Offensive and Harmful Language Cont.

- “Do you agree that if a student came in with a very offensive paper that the tutor should focus on other issues with the assignment and avoid discussion of any political, difficult, or uncomfortable topics?”
 - There was an increase, 80% of tutors either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while only 20% said they agreed



Offensive and Harmful Language

- Many tutors believe, while it does not fall upon the tutor to outwardly start a debate, a writing center tutor shouldn't just sit by and ignore the issues, they have a duty to speak with the client about their harmful language.

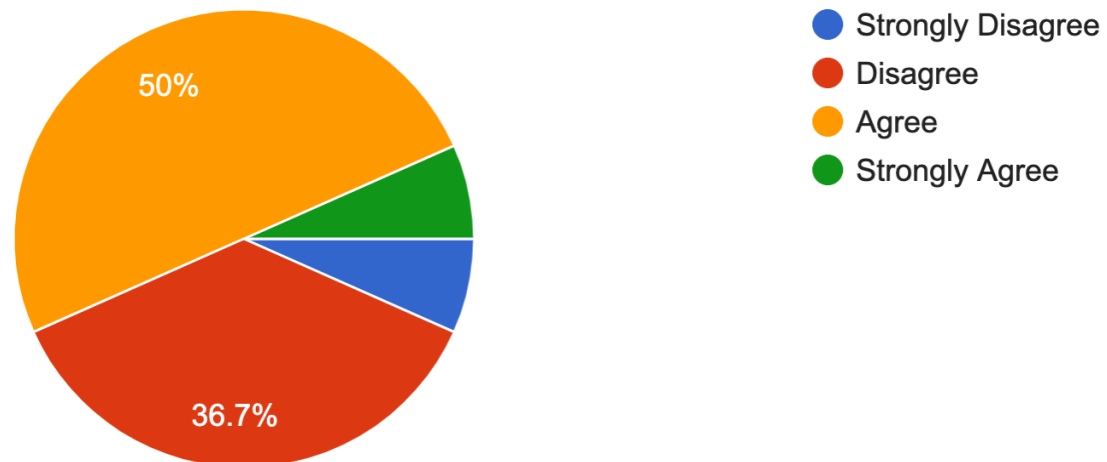
Part IV: Dialects

Dialects

- “Do you agree that all dialects of English (anything beyond the dialect one would typically see in an academic paper) should be accepted as correct and proper in an academic setting?”
 - 70% of tutors said they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while only 30% said they disagreed

Dialects Cont.

- “If the paper is written in an academically nonstandard English dialect, do you agree that it is the tutors role to help clients shape their paper so that it fits the dialect expected of an academic paper?”
 - 56.7% of tutors answered that they either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement, while 43.3% of tutors said they either disagreed or strongly disagreed



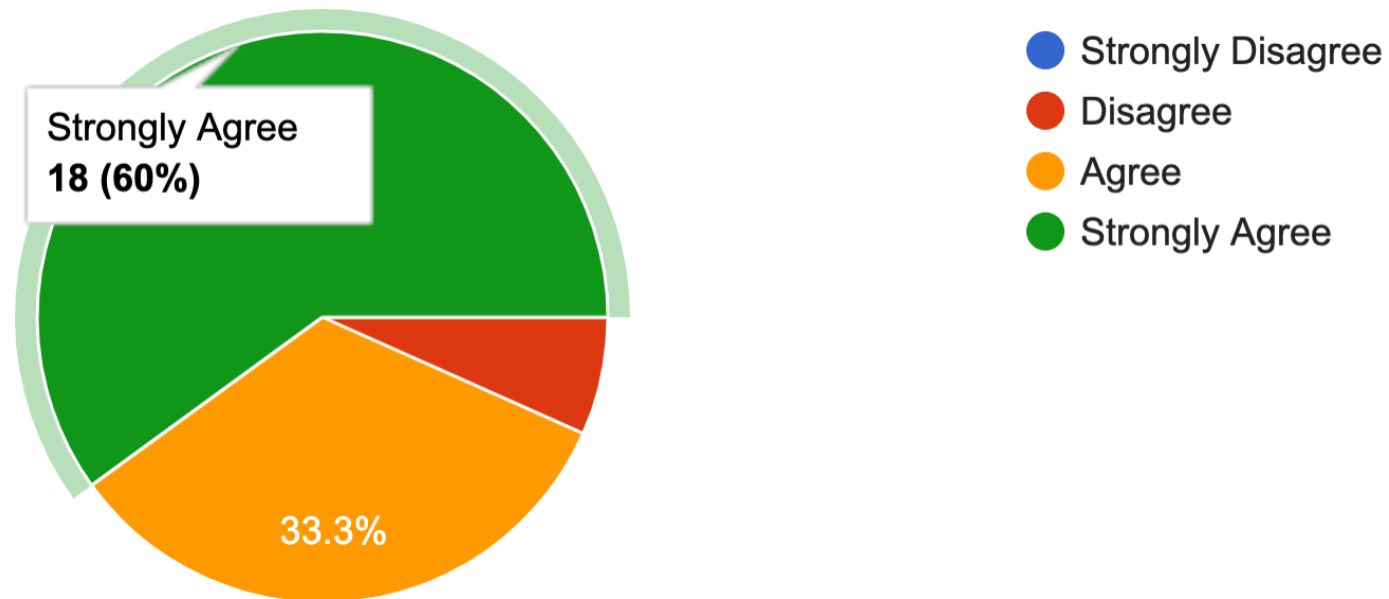
Dialects Cont.

- Many of the tutors share a similar conflict; how can they improve writing if the standards they have been taught to hold up as 'good writing' are incorrect or biased?
- For the most part, writing center scholars come to the consensus that writing centers should stand for the more progressive side of academia, but the ways in which writing centers can actually impact their institutions in the name of promoting a more progressive ideology remains unclear.

Part V: Within Institutions

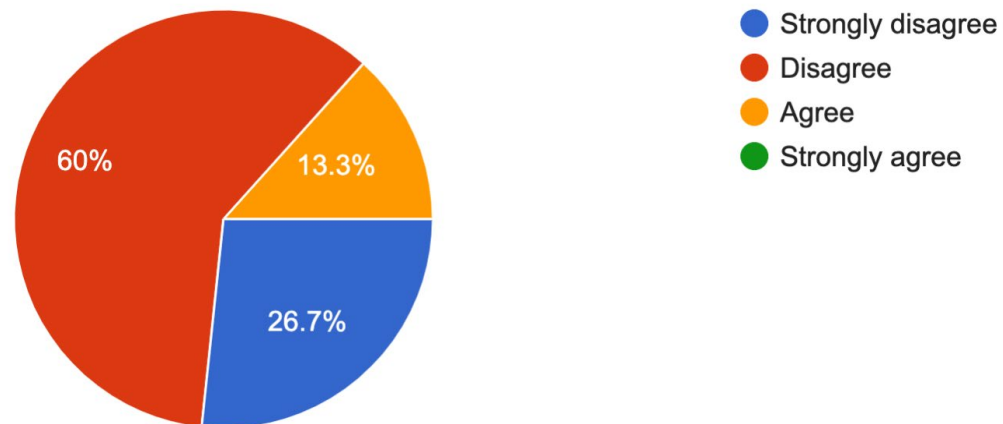
Within the Institution

- “Do you agree that Writing Centers can be instruments for college or university institutional growth/change?”
 - 93.3% responded they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while only 6.7% either disagreed or strongly disagreed



Within the Institution Cont.

- “Do you agree that there is not much that a writing center can do to affect change within their college or university institutions?”
 - instead of the previous 93.3%, 86.7% of tutors disagreed with this statement, saying writing centers can affect change within a larger institution, while the 6.7% disagreed with the first statement rose to 13.3% in the second statement



Part VI: The Outlook

The Outlook

“Writing center tutors have a specific power to affect change on a micro level: one student at a time. For this reason, it is our duty to help students find their voice, validate their experiences, bolster them as writers, and help them become more confident and comfortable in their writing (and with any luck, in their lives).”

-Jessica Hahn, a tutor from Utah State University

The Outlook cont.

- These are global issues: equal rights, equal voices, equal writing standards. It might seem like too much for a single tutor to handle, but if all tutors and all centers share the same goals and we all make small steps every day to reach those goals, there's nothing that can stop us. Locally, we can still implement global change, one tutorial at a time.

Questions, Comments, or Concerns?

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Or Visit the University of Utah Writing Center!