Faculty Writing Residencies: Supporting Scholarly Writing and Teaching

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Faculty writing residencies present an opportunity for teaching and learning centers to support faculty in disseminating the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). The authors examine how an intensive retreat balancing dedicated time for faculty members' writing with small-group feedback on drafts helps faculty make the crucial, and often difficult, step of going public with their Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research. In addition, the residency process encourages faculty participants to examine their own writing processes, prompting changes in how they support their students' writing in the disciplines.

In *The Advancement of Learning* (2005), Huber and Hutchings argue that "the scholarship of teaching and learning must move from personal engagement by small numbers of people to more structural arrangements" (p. 84). Hutchings elaborated on this point in her 2006 plenary address at the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education Conference, asserting that "the time is now right to move such work to the center (and, yes, to the Teaching Center), where it can both harness its power and help shape its future" (p. 32). These sentiments are shared by many who work in teaching and learning centers. Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, and Beach's survey of educational developers in North America, published as *Creating the Future of Faculty Development* (2006), reveals that "developers from all types of institutions agreed that the scholarship of teaching is an important issue to be addressed in faculty development services" (p. 86). Kreber (2006a) extends these ideas across

the globe, arguing that "An educational development unit wishing to optimize the student learning experience on campus may wish not only to 'tell' departments and faculty about what we know about 'effective pedagogy' (and student-focused, inquiry-based learning), but also involve staff directly in exploring how best to facilitate such learning of their students with their unique disciplinary and departmental contexts" (p. 11).

A gap often exists, however, between the high value teaching centers place on the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) and the support those centers provide for such work. Sorcinelli et al.'s study reveals that despite the agreement about SoTL's importance, "services provided were much more modest" (2006, p. 86). Indeed, of the eight "key issues" that faculty developers identified in the Sorcinelli et al. survey, SoTL was second only to assessment of student learning in the disconnect between "important to offer" and "currently offered" (p. 72).

Several models have emerged of teaching and learning centers supporting SoTL on diverse campuses. Faculty learning communities probably are the most common approach used in North American teaching and learning centers. These groups, first developed at Miami University in Ohio, involve cross-disciplinary cohorts of faculty meeting throughout the year to focus on shared questions about teaching and learning. The peer review and inquiry into learning that characterize faculty learning communities foster SoTL projects, even when such research is not the motivation for the community (Cox, 2003). In a similar way, Indiana University's "decoding the disciplines" approach moves many faculty from reflective teaching to SoTL by helping instructors develop researchable questions out of their frustrations with "bottlenecks" to student learning (Middendorf & Pace, 2008). Carolin Kreber, at the University of Edinburgh, in Scotland, has outlined seven ways for "educational development units [to] support teachers' engagement in inquiry-based learning about their teaching" (2006b, p. 84).

Such excellent programs model effective ways for teaching and learning centers to ease faculty entry into SoTL. However, these approaches focus so intently on the inquiry process that they may not sufficiently support faculty in the final essential step of scholarship, what Shulman (2004) calls "going public" to make work available for peer review. While faculty members have been trained to write in a particular discipline, SoTL writing requires them to consider, often for the first time, how to write about classroom practice and evidence of student learning, raising sometimes troubling questions about genre, voice, and expertise (Cambridge, 2004; McGowan, 2006). Without such support, faculty may not successfully publish their SoTL work. Both national SoTL initiatives, like the Visible

Knowledge Project, and successful campus-based programs, such as the one sponsored by St. Olaf College's Center for Inquiry in the Liberal Arts (Peters, Schodt, & Walczak, 2008), seem to demonstrate that faculty active in SoTL often do not see their projects through to publication.

This finding is troubling. An essential aspect of *any* form of scholarship is presenting the process and products of inquiry for peer review so that the community of scholars can build on that work. "As with all intellectual work of scope and scale," Gale (2008) argues, SoTL's purpose is not only "to improve one classroom context, but also to add knowledge to the field and, thereby, have an impact on how students learn and how faculty teach in multiple educational contexts" (p. 41). For faculty who expend the time and energy necessary to do SoTL projects well, the rewards associated with publication will complement the intrinsic and pedagogical benefits of SoTL—and will contribute significantly to disciplinary and cross-disciplinary understandings of pedagogy. Additionally, supporting SoTL requires significant resources and expertise from educational developers. The payoff for teaching centers will be greater, in the eyes of both the faculty we work with and the administrators who make funding decisions, if our efforts produce both a steady stream of peer-reviewed publications *and* the more difficult to assess (but no less significant) results of better teaching and deeper student learning.

Developing a Writing Residency

Elon University is a 5,000-student private university in central North Carolina. Teaching ability has long been the primary criterion for faculty promotion and tenure, but expectations for scholarly activity have increased in recent years. Elon follows Boyer's model (1997) of defining scholarship, allowing a significant number of faculty to have SoTL as a component, if not the focus, of their research agendas. However, faculty members' SoTL projects have tended to exist in isolation on campus, and many do not result in peer-reviewed publications or off-campus scholarly presentations.

Elon's faculty writing residency emerged in 2005-2006 from conversations between the directors of two campuswide faculty development programs, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and the then-new Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL). The CATL director had participated twice in four-day writing residencies sponsored by the Visible Knowledge Project (McGowan, 2006). Adapting this model to Elon's setting would foster faculty publications about SoTL, an important goal for the new teaching center. The CATL director sought to partner

with WAC because the residency would require leaders who were skilled at facilitating small-group discussions about writing; WAC seemed to be the logical place to find that expertise.

The WAC director quickly warmed to the idea of participating in the writing residency. WAC work, both at Elon and nationally, typically focuses on increasing and improving the use of writing within diverse disciplinary settings. Although the residency did not seem to be connected directly with that mission, it offered a new opportunity to build faculty communities that worked together on writing. At Elon, like at many institutions, WAC had been evolving in response to multiple pressures, including increased demands on faculty time. Current WAC models have moved away from broad-based participation in general workshops to smaller, more specialized workshops for homogeneous groups, such as departments or instructors of certain specific courses. Although this approach had achieved considerable success at Elon, the WAC director lamented the apparent weakening of the community of faculty focused on the complexities of teaching writing.

The WAC director and his colleague, who coordinates Elon's first-year writing program, speculated that nurturing such writing communities would lead to positive changes in writing pedagogy and to a greater understanding of the complexities of doing and teaching writing—a goal of both their programs. These preparatory discussions set a research agenda to explore whether and how the writing residency would not only foster writing about SoTL but also produce changes in how faculty understood and taught writing in their undergraduate courses. While many scholars have speculated on the long-range paradigm shifts coming for WAC, few have theorized how such alternative approaches to raising faculty awareness might be a factor (Russell, 2001; Walvoord, 1996; Walvoord, Hunt, Dowling, Jr., & McMahon, 1997).

After considering several models for residencies, we decided to create an intensive experience at the start of the summer. The timing would allow participants to have four uninterrupted days to focus on writing, something impossible to achieve during the semester. We also hoped the timing would help launch faculty into a productive summer of writing. We considered several possible locations both on and off campus. We settled on a local environmental education center 15 miles from campus that offered a nature preserve with walking trails, a "treehouse" with multiple indoor spaces and a huge porch overlooking a pond, and, perhaps most importantly, *no* Internet access. Even cell phone reception was minimal, heightening the sense of isolation. Although participants would return home each night, they would have four days that they spent distinctly

away from the distractions and pressures of campus and home life.

During the four-day residency, we devoted daily time to writing, small-group feedback, and group lunches, with the residency bookended by a group opening and closing (see Figure 1). We each facilitated a small group during the feedback time, allowing us to divide the participants into three feedback groups. The feedback sessions lasted 90 minutes to two hours each day, allowing us to facilitate discussion about each participant's writing for approximately 20 to 30 minutes; during this time, we strove as facilitators to keep discussion focused around the feedback requests of each writer, and we acted as timekeepers, ensuring that the small groups had ample time to discuss each group member's writing-in-progress. Although the Small Group Feedback Time is represented in Figure 1 as occurring at a set time, each feedback group selected a meeting time that worked best in relation to the group members' writing habits. For instance, if members of a writing group were more productive writers in the late afternoon or evening, the group might meet in the morning so that members could write during their peak times.

For the first year of the residency workshops (2006), worried that the residency concept might not be familiar enough to attract faculty participants, we advertised on campus to attract faculty writing about anything, not just SoTL. Inspired in part by the University of Massachusetts Amherst's well established "Professors as Writers" program of half-day and day-long informal writing sessions (Elbow & Sorcinelli, 2006), we encouraged professors of all disciplinary stripes who had writing projects in any or all states of potentiality to apply for this opportunity to focus intensively on their writing and receive community and feedback from interested peers. In response to our call, we garnered interest from faculty working on a wide variety of writing projects, ranging from book proposals to jointly authored articles, and from stages of readiness that varied from blue-sky ideas to nearly completed drafts.

Our 12 participants came from seven different departments. Although all found the residency to be productive and enjoyable, the diversity of the writing projects caused certain problems. Authors who wrote on teaching and learning found the interdisciplinary small-group feedback sessions to be extremely valuable because all participants, regardless of discipline, could bring insights to the draft texts. However, authors who wrote strictly disciplinary manuscripts (particularly book proposals) often did not receive such rich feedback because peers outside their field could not always penetrate the discourse conventions of a different discipline.

More confident in our belief that the writing residency could work in our institutional context as a result of this experience, the following

Figure 1
Sample Schedule for Writing Residency

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
9:00-11:00	Writing Time	Writing Time	Writing Time	Writing Time
11:00-12:00	Group Opening			
12:00-1:00	Group Lunch	Group Lunch	Group Lunch	Group Lunch
1:00-3:00	Small Group Feedback Time	Small Group Feedback Time	Small Group Feedback Time	Small Group Feedback Time
3:00-4:00	Writing Time	Writing Time	Writing Time	Group Closing

year (2007) we opened the residency only to faculty who were writing on teaching and learning. Our 10 participants from eight departments appreciated the SoTL focus. The quality of small group feedback conversations significantly improved over the previous year. These more cohesive small groups not only were more productive during the residency, but also spilled out into the summer and following academic year. At the request of our 2007 participants, we adapted the UMass "Professors as Writers" program to create "Writing Fridays," a designated space and time on campus when residency participants (and, later, all faculty) were welcome to write in the company of other writers. Some of the 2007 residency groups periodically reconstituted themselves for certain Writing Fridays, building on the community they had established during the summer program.

Given the success of the 2007 residency design, we repeated it in 2008, accepting 10 participants working exclusively on SoTL publications. Early outcomes from this most recent residency reaffirm the efficacy of our SoTL focus.

Outcomes

To assess the impact of the four-day writing residencies, we asked participants to complete pre- and post-writes reflecting on how their projects developed during the week, how the residencies had supported that development, and what we could do as facilitators to enhance the experience for future participants. In addition, we spent the last two hours of each residency talking in a large group about these reflections. We also requested three progress reports to learn what participants had achieved after their residencies ended.

Almost immediately after the first residency, one participant notified us that the grant proposal she had developed during the residency had been accepted. Other participants have presented their work at conferences or had articles accepted for publication, and we continue to hear positive updates. As of this writing, approximately 60% of the participants from all three residencies to date have submitted their scholarship for publication or off-campus presentation. The second writing residency, in which we asked participants to focus exclusively on SoTL projects, has had the highest success rate, with 70% of the participants noting successful outcomes (a peer-reviewed publication accepted or in print; a peer-reviewed conference proposal accepted or completed). The remaining 30% of the year two participants are actively drafting and revising their projects. Although a few participants have turned to other projects, most indicate that they continue to work on their residency projects as time allows. It is still early to report on year three outcomes, but all of our most recent participants indicate that they are actively working on their projects, and 40% already have submitted to journals and are awaiting responses. In addition, this article was drafted during the year three residency, demonstrating that, as facilitators, we also have learned how to make the residencies' built-in writing time productive for our own work. Figure 2 reflects the outcomes for all three residencies.

Senior faculty were more likely to report successful outcomes, with 75% of the these faculty publishing or presenting their project and 50% achieving that success within the first year of the residency. Junior faculty also had successful outcomes (see Figure 3), but 50% of those faculty still considered their projects to be in-progress, as they continued revising their work or awaited results from publishers and editors. Although we did not collect additional data that would illuminate this contrast, it might suggest that senior faculty have developed more strategies for devoting time to their scholarship or that they have become more confident about completing their writing process so that they can submit manuscripts for review.

Figure 2
**Writing Residency Outcomes by Year**
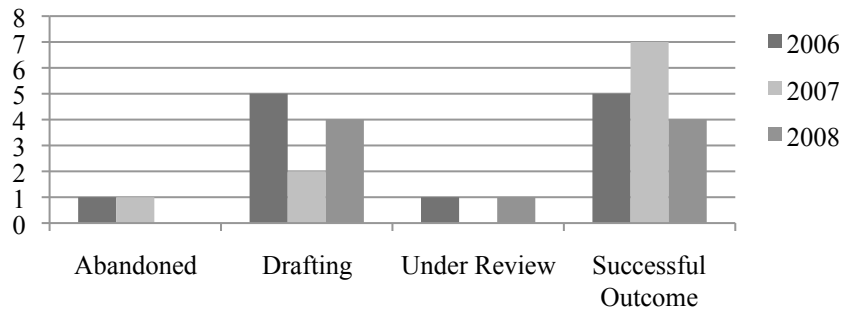
We recognize that our sample size is low, but we believe that participants' success rates have a lot to do with the high-impact/small-scale work possible with a small group. The residency process simply would *not* work as well with a large group, because facilitators' time would be more divided and the intimate community building would be harder to maintain.

While we can track the scholarship outcomes from the writing residencies, assessing the impact of such residencies on WAC pedagogy is slippery at best. Many critics have pointed out the indeterminate nature of traditional WAC assessment (Condon, 2001; Russell, 2001; Walvoord, 1997; Yancey & Huot, 1997), or what Thaiss calls WAC's "laissez faire" principle of assessment (2001, p. 309). While direct assessment of such outcomes is beyond the scope of our project, we can confidently assert that our goal of raising faculty awareness of writing process complexity has been achieved and will have some impact on pedagogy across the curriculum. Several notable post-writes from participants clearly show faculty who, through working intensively on their own writing processes, have been moved to a clearer understanding of what their students encounter in course-based writing. One colleague remarked as follows:

> This experience reminded us of the struggles of writers. Our concerns about time, slow progress, the messiness of writing, the need to think and rethink things through, and figuring out how to write together has shined a light on the kind of support our

Figure 3
Writing Residency Outcomes by Faculty Rank
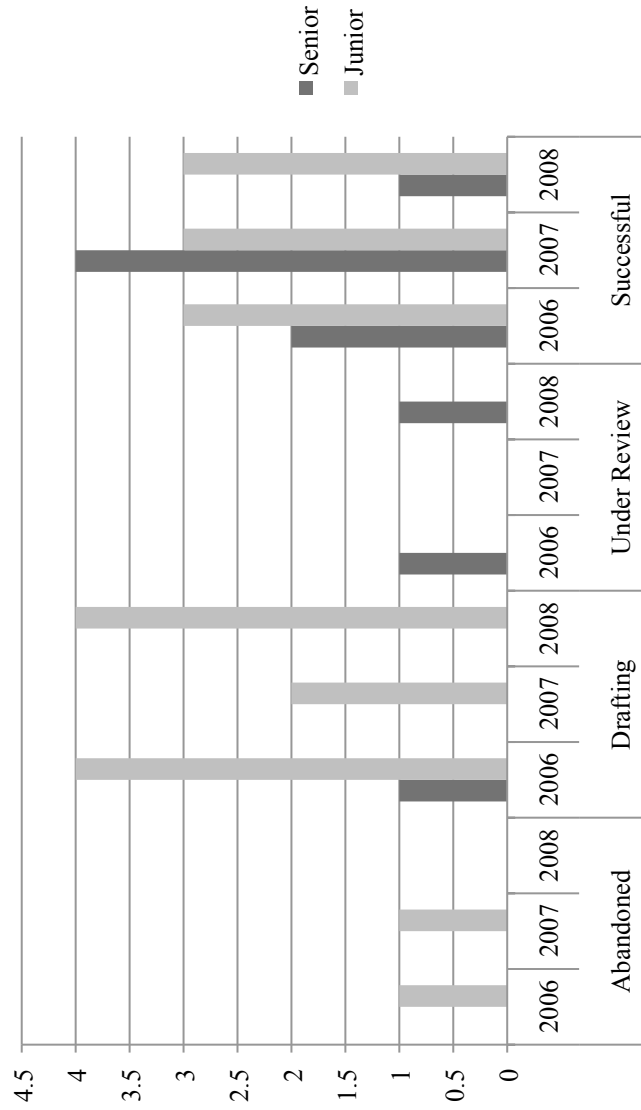
students will need when attempting an involved writing task.

All too often, even in WAC workshops, we tend to "neaten up" the inherent messiness of the writing process, breaking it up to focus on discrete stages. This can result in a misleading sense of linearity. We map our assignments around syllabus calendar dates and the rhythms of semesters, not necessarily around the observed best practices of actual writers. During the residency faculty trade places with their students, working with peer editors and regular deadlines, which encourages them to see student writers in a different light. As another participant noted, "This is complex. Do my students approach writing the same way I do, so that my experience is in any way valid for them? If so, then more feedback (peer or instructor) early on in the writing process might help them." For WAC purposes, such comments are rich and suggestive.

The final major outcome of the residencies has been a strong sense of community among the SoTL faculty. The residency participants represented a range of career stages, with first-year members of the university community mixed with mid-career and senior faculty. For writers with a longer history at the institution, the residency discussions represented a return to "Old Elon," when a smaller faculty and less busyness promoted more interaction across departmental units. Faculty enjoyed a renewed opportunity to learn about other participants' research and teaching and to engage in interdisciplinary discussions. Although we did not plan the residencies with this outcome in mind, many writers identified the residencies' community-building nature as one of the most rewarding aspects of their participation.

Key Components of Writing Residencies

While the four-day intensive residency model has worked well for us, we recognize that other formats may better fit other contexts. Therefore, we offer the following suggestions from our own reflections and our participants' comments.

Dedicated Time and Space

Writers, especially writers at teaching-focused colleges and universities, often need a dedicated time and space to pursue their scholarship. Although faculty occasionally lamented not having access to the Internet, they appreciated the lack of distractions and the ability to focus on their writing. As one participant wrote: "Most important for me was the concentrated time and the private space away from other distractions."

Because participants repeatedly commented on the value of "official" time for writing, we have attempted to offer additional "writing times" throughout the summer and academic year. After the 2007 residency, we initiated weekly writing days during the remainder of the summer, offering dedicated time and space for writing groups to meet, and for individuals to write in the presence of other writers. During the school year, we now sponsor "Writing Fridays," when faculty can come to the faculty engagement center anytime during the morning to write in the company of other writers.

Participants' comments also suggest that the residency's setting, with nature trails, wildlife, and the absence of usual distractions, while certainly not essential to such a project, was conducive to the success individuals found in their writing endeavors. Seemingly minor amenities also received much positive response: strong coffee and pastries in the mornings, drinks and snacks in the afternoons, and robust vegetarian lunches brought in by the hosts at the nature center.

Frequent Feedback

The writers valued highly the frequent feedback they received during the writing residencies. Some noted that the feedback schedule accelerated their writing, commenting that "daily peer review sped up the revision process—I would have noticed problems on my own, but it would have taken longer." The residences also helped writers move more quickly to revisions because they had far less lag time than when seeking feedback from their usual network of readers. Others suggested that the feedback improved their final products by helping them focus on conveying their key ideas, considering alternate perspectives, and developing a coherent organization: "I was astounded at how rich and helpful the feedback was—not just from the facilitator, but from each group member. My progress was so accelerated! Plus it was a good feeling to have provided valuable input to other's work." The range of disciplinary backgrounds represented in the small groups helped the writers anticipate their audiences' needs because they were receiving immediate feedback on how actual readers, including those who might be unfamiliar with the disciplinary content but share their pedagogical goals, were interpreting their texts. The diversity among participants also ensured that the writers were introduced to new perspectives and potential sources that could richly inform their work.

Facilitators

The facilitators' roles in guiding small-group sessions amplified the helpfulness of the daily feedback. Participants expressed appreciation for both the facilitators' support of everyone's individual products and process steps and the facilitators' roles in keeping feedback focused on content and organization as opposed to editing and stylistic suggestions that might not be relevant until after the writers revised. In the group discussion at the end of the 2007 residency, participants even suggested that the facilitators' support took the "agony" out of the writing process. This perception perhaps exemplifies the notion of writing as a social activity: Writers not only attempt to establish successful communication with their readers, but also rely on social networks to negotiate a sometimes painful writing process.

Timing

While a four-day session may not be feasible in all contexts, frequent meetings within a short time frame contribute to the motivation and energy of the process. Writers' projects stay at the forefront of their minds, making it easier to pick up where they left off at the last session. Long days focused exclusively on writing and feedback seem to develop a momentum that is hard to achieve in less intensive formats. As a result, writers left the residency feeling more confident about their projects and their ability to complete them.

As we had hoped, the timing of our residency at the start of the summer frequently launched participants into a productive summer of writing. For some participants this initial momentum was critical, as suggested by a 2007 residency participant: "I achieved the goal of *getting started.* This is often the most difficult step." Yet the jump-start effect also extended to planning and invention for continued writing. Post-write comments, such as "Now I have a better idea of where I'm going," suggest that participants gained a better sense of how they could complete projects—provided they found time for their writing; many concluded the four days with outlines or plans for collecting additional evidence in support of their arguments.

Peer Pressure to Write

Participants repeatedly noted that the daily feedback meetings created peer pressure to produce work. Even if they were only adding one more paragraph or doing the mental work of re-conceptualizing their writing for

a more specific audience, they appreciated the daily deadlines as motivation to write: "The writing residency helped by providing me a quiet and peaceful place to draft and positive peer pressure to produce each day." "Having others around me writing," another participant noted, "there's a welcome[d] kind of pressure in that." These statements echo others that expressed appreciation for both the expectation and the opportunity to write uninterrupted each day. Because participants felt responsible to their group members, they carved out additional time after leaving the residency site for the day to extend their writing and to meet their personal writing goals in time for the next group session.

"Going Public" With Alternate Formats

In addition to the ideas we have implemented to extend the "sanctioned" time for writing on our campus, our participants also suggested alternate formats that might be more appropriate for other contexts. Their ideas include a follow-up residency just before the start of the semester, motivating participants to continue writing during the summer; mini-residencies throughout the academic year; and writing residencies centered on specific disciplinary areas. We also have heard colleagues describe faculty workshops on strategies for completing different stages of the academic publishing process (Schick, 2008) and brown bag lunch series offering all campus members a chance to read their original work (Knepper, 2008).The most frequent request from our own participants, though, was simply for more—more sanctioned time and more residencies with facilitated feedback.

As we have considered these alternate models and how to extend support for faculty writing at our institution—as well as how to adapt writing residencies for other contexts—we have noted a general trend. The amount of teaching center resources invested in supporting faculty writing corresponds loosely with the possibility of assessing outcomes associated with the expenditure of those resources (see Table 1).

In other words, some approaches to supporting faculty writing require little time, money, or expertise from a teaching and learning center, but the nature of these strategies likely makes it difficult to demonstrate that the center's work contributed to specific outcomes, such as publications or pedagogical innovations. As an example, we find it difficult to assess the specific outcomes of our Writing Fridays program. Although we frequently conduct a quick count of how many faculty are taking advantage of the time and space, we do not track which faculty write in the faculty engagement center during this dedicated time or what types of projects

Table 1
Alternate Models for Supporting Faculty Writing

	Cost ($)	*Time*	*Facilitator Expertise*	*Community Building*	*Assessable Outcomes*
Dedicated Time/Space	Low	Low	Low	Low-Mid	Low
Regular Half-day	Mid	Mid, Episodic	Mid-High	Mid-High	Mid
Intensive Full-days	Mid-High	Mid-High, Short-term	High	Mid-High	High
Overnights Away	High	High, Short-term	High	High	High

they are composing. However, programs that demand more teaching center time, money, and expertise may have a higher payoff, as the center assesses (and legitimately can claim) the articles and innovations that emerged from its work. During the Writing Residencies, for instance, we can track faculty members' progress on their pieces, which since 2007 have all been SoTL projects, and when faculty have successful outcomes, we can legitimately connect those outcomes to the time and resources the teaching center invested during the residency in supporting the faculty members' scholarship.

While our primary goals for the faculty writing residency were to support dissemination of SoTL work in peer-reviewed venues and to foster positive change in writing pedagogies across campus, we also hold ourselves accountable for "going public." Therefore, we remain mindful of how we might assess new initiatives and have opted to balance low-resource, less assessable options with the continuation of our more demanding but assessable summer writing residencies. This balance has led to faculty SoTL publications that explore involving students in course redesigns, students' experiences in service-learning, and honors theses as transformative learning experiences, among other SoTL topics. It also enables us to go public with our assessment of the writing residency model while reflecting on and enhancing our support of scholarly writing and teaching.

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