

ABSTRACT

ASHLEY MORGAN BURCHETT. Naming the Practice: An Examination of Writing Center Mission. (Under the direction of Dr. Christopher Anson.)

Writing Center (WC) mission statements have undergone a journey initially steeped in metaphor, from the metaphoric nomenclature of “lab” or “clinic” popular in 1930s as scholars like Neal Learner (2009), Peter Carino (1995), Warner Taylor in his 1929 survey, and Stephen North in his “fix-it shop” (1984) work describe to the more current scholarship that builds upon North’s (1984) dialogic mission and Andrea Lunsford’s (1991) focus on collaboration. The prevailing view in research claims that the center’s service to the institution also transforms from *compliance* to meet an immediate teacher, or class-specific need, to *critique* that allows the student-writer and writing center tutor/consultant freedom to deconstruct what they know, and more importantly, create a space that suits the individual.

This study interrogates the language symbols WC mission statements contain and helps illuminate how the teaching of writing and composition are viewed in the academy as a significant area of inquiry and instruction. The investigation focuses on what Elizabeth Boquet (2002) calls “the significance of naming, the correspondence between how we talk about ourselves (writing labs, writing clinics, writing centers) and what we do.” One-hundred WC mission statements were surveyed, then coded via a cluster and metaphor analysis to understand how high frequency and intense terms and their associational clusters and metaphors work together to communicate the practice of WCs. Four WCs were chosen as representatives for the rhetorical analysis. A qualitative method was also utilized through interviews with WC directors to understand their perception of WC mission and practice. Ultimately, the research showed that WC mission statements and missional language are necessary and valuable means of measuring practice within the WC and across the institution. Further research can speak to valuable insights concerning the affirmation of diversity and accessibility through a missional revision that considers non-deficit missional discourse.

Keywords: *writing center, mission statement, mixed-methods, rhetorical analysis, cluster analysis, metaphor analysis, mission, practice, metaphor*