Access Matters:

Writing Centers and Accessibility

as a Process

Writing centers have historically sought to become more accessible in a variety of ways: to writers of diverse backgrounds, class, race, and orientations; to writers of diverse home dialects and languages; to writers with various learning needs; to writers who cannot visit the physical site; to community members outside of the institution; and to writers of varying (dis)ability. Centers have also sought to become more accessible to tutors along similar lines, seeking to expand representation in the center.  Accordingly, accessibility can serve as a rallying cry but also a question of sorts for writing centers, particularly regarding how access is defined and who gets to define it.

With recent work—particularly in disability studies—endeavoring to shift “the ‘problem’ of disability away from individuals and toward institutions and attitudes” (Price, 2011, p. 4), writing center practitioners are invited to consider our role in expanding and refining our ideas and attitudes about access.

We encourage attendees to consider the following questions:

* What roles do Writing Centers play in supporting access?
* In what ways are we complicit in institutions’ exclusionary practices?
* In what ways can we improve inclusion and meaningful participation within and among our communities and among the members of those communities?
* How can we expand our definitions of who counts as a member?
* How do we expand who is authorized to contribute to the knowledge base of our subfield, and how do we encourage and cultivate emerging tutor-scholars?
* How do our valued practices—both inside and outside of sessions—enact principles of inclusion and access?

We invite you to participate in a conversation about writing centers’ role in accessibility and to consider accessibility not as a final, finished state, but rather as an ongoing process of reinvention and inclusion. We especially encourage students and consultants to feel included and to add their voices to this conversation.

For the sake of expanding our own access, this year MiWCA is offering attendees from high school writing centers and attendees from the Upper Peninsula **the option to attend digitally!** We will provide Google Hangout links for those who qualify.

Reference:

Price, M. (2011). *Mad at school: Rhetorics of mental disability and academic life*.

University of Michigan Press.