

Post-Secondary Writing, Belonging, and Identity

Panel Interview with Elizabeth Clarke, Learning Consultant, Academic Equity Programs (WLU); Dr. Nelesi Rodrigues, Assistant Professor, Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy (ISUP) (UT-M); Dr. Christin Wright-Taylor, Manager, Writing Centre (WLU)

Facilitated by Dr. Jason Collins (UVic) and Dr. Loren Gaudet (UVic)

September 25th, 2024

Interview Questions

- We'd like to discuss the institutional barriers students deal with – what experiences or insights do you have about these barriers? What have you done to support students and perhaps (if you are comfortable discussing), what failures have you encountered (at the institutional level, pedagogy, structural, systemic)
- Given your technical expertise and experience building online resources for students, could you speak to how other institutions might think about creating these types of supports?
- Building off of the previous question, how has writing support (both courses and centres) exacerbated these barriers? Are there ways writing support has alleviated these barriers?
- If you had unlimited funds, what kind of training would be provided for writing staff or instructors with the specific aim to help empower multiply marginalized students (and, therefore, all students)?
- We are going to draft a position statement on writing, belonging, and identity in what is now called Canada. What do you think is crucial information to include in such a position statement?

Transcript

Facilitator 1 (Dr. Jason Collins): Okay, so, the first question we have on this topic of "Post-Secondary Writing, Belonging and Identity: we'd like to discuss the institutional barriers students deal with. Barriers that might impact this topic. What experiences or insights do you have about these barriers? What have you done to support students? And perhaps, if you're comfortable discussing, what failures have you encountered at the institutional level, pedagogical level, systemic level – at any level. So, barriers, maybe successes, failures... anything that you think you'd like to share on that topic, please feel free to raise your hand. Yes, Nelesi – am I pronouncing [your name] correctly?

Dr. Nelesi Rodrigues: Nelesi.

Facilitator 1: Nelesi.

Rodrigues: Yes. Yes.

Facilitator 1: Thank you so much.

Rodrigues: Thank you for asking this. Buenos dias and buenos tardes for me. Good morning to you. It's afternoon over here. And thank you to the Writing and Power team for the invitation. I'm really excited to be part of these conversations. My name is Nelesi Rodrigues. She her. I'm an assistant professor at the Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy at the University of Toronto-Mississauga, and I am also... I have a joint appointment at OISE [Ontario Institute for Studies in Education] in the program of Adult Education and Community Development. I'm also a newcomer to this land. I grew up in Caracas, Venezuela, and spent the last 10 years in the United States studying and teaching. And I came to what is now known as Canada last year. And my research is in embodied rhetorics and pedagogies, transnational feminism, and community learning and writing. And I... if that's okay, just for the sake of not taking too much time, I'm going to rely on my notes just to be direct.

And so, when thinking about this question, I think that the first barrier that came to mind is what we often refer to as the hidden curriculum, right, that historically marginalized populations need to learn in addition to whatever it is that they are studying – and the role that the universities can play and help them navigate that hidden curriculum. I had the opportunity to be a graduate student in two different institutions in the United States, and the difference in experience of having staff and faculty members who were very aware of the challenges that I might be facing, versus a university that wasn't so aware because they didn't have such a large international student population, was huge. And I think this also applies to undergraduate students. And so, you know where some students might have access to key information about how to navigate academia, be it parents or close networks, others might not. That privilege.

And I also think that oftentimes these same populations might have less traditional educational trajectories. This might mean that they might be juggling other responsibilities in addition to their learning, such as caretaking of elders or children, they might be working one or multiple jobs at the same time that they are studying, they might be homesick, in the case of international students. And these realities might limit the time and the energy that they might have for learning and getting involved in different activities that would ultimately help them cultivate this sense of belonging and identity within the university.

I think one of, or a few of the things, that I have done in my work that responds to these two barriers that I see – there are others, but I also don't want to take up too much space – but the things that I have done come from my work. My research is mainly in pedagogies and learning in non-formal spaces. So, many of the interventions that I have implemented in my work are connected to community-engaged and community-accountable pedagogies. And so, I'll just give a few examples:

So, in the first-year writing course that I currently teach, I deliberately introduce course concepts in experiential and culturally relevant ways. And I use these opportunities to connect students with different university resources. So, for instance, next week, we're going to begin our unit on discourse communities, and the organization's students for barrier-free access at the University of Toronto are going to come to class to talk about their work as we also engage with their work as a case study for discourse communities. So that's one thing.

I am also currently developing a community-engaged writing course for undergraduates with a thematic focus on mobility justice, and in this course students will have opportunities to hone their collaborative writing skills as they co-develop resources with community partners that are doing advocacy work on mobility justice from different perspectives, including migration, ageing, and accessibility and transportation. And lastly, I want to also mention that I'm involved in a couple of initiatives in my department that support students' identity and belonging. We are right now in the early stages of our program-wide assessment that will give us a deeper understanding of the impact of the first-year writing program in several areas, including how our courses are contributing to equity, diversity and inclusion on campus. And this year, I'm also one of the faculty club facilitators of a space called the Caribbean and Black Writing Collective, which is an initiative that started before I arrived at UTM, but that continues up until now. And it's a space where students can develop their writing and university skills in a culturally affirming setting while building relationships with peers, faculty, and staff, and establishing formal and informal mentorship networks. And I'm going to pause there for now, but I would be happy to discuss any of those in more depth later.

Facilitator 1: Thank you so much. That like... so many wonderful things going on there. I think we could talk about those things for the rest of the workshop. It's wonderful. And hopefully we'll have a chance to talk about some of that in the breakout rooms. Elizabeth: I see your hand up.

Elizabeth Clarke: Thank you so much. I'll let Christin just introduce us, and then I will jump into answering the question. Christin, if you'd like to go.

Dr. Christin Wright-Taylor: Yeah. So, hello everyone. I'm Christin. This is Elizabeth. Elizabeth will introduce herself more thoroughly, but we work at Wilfred Laurier University in the Student Success Division. I manage the writing centre. Elizabeth works with the transition and learning services. And the reason why we're here today is because she and I collaborated together to create a translingual academic writing bank. And so, we'll talk more about that and our experience of putting that together, but I just wanted to sort of frame that we're coming from outside the academic... we're actually organized under student affairs. So we have a slightly different angle approaching this work. So our division, our unit, reports to the VPSA. So anyway, I'll leave it at that and let Elizabeth take it from here.

Clarke: Thank you. So, to introduce myself, my name's Elizabeth Clarke: pronouns she her. And so I work at Laurier as a learning consultant. So my role is to support students in developing essential learning and study skills for success on their educational journey. So I really work in collaboration with our transition learning services, which is our student success department, but also our Centre for Student Equity Diversity and Inclusion. And so a part of my role is really managing the equity – sorry, the academic equity programs. And then I also focus on student success. So that's helping them overcome barriers to education and transition support. And so, this really is to assist students in adjusting to their new academic environment while I also serve as a resource for equity-deserving students or marginalized students, helping them to identify their learning needs and offering culturally relevant but also holistic academic support and programming. I also want to add that my background is within social work, so in some of the other roles that I've done that has allowed me to collaborate with Christin, but also being in this role is, you know, working within research and child welfare and working within homeless shelters, and things like that – working with children and families. So that really is the kind of... background that I bring to this and kind of the lens of really working to support equity-deserving students.

And so, when I also thought about this question, I first thought of it... or, I first thought it was important to acknowledge, you know, the historical background. So, when thinking about marginalized students and the challenges that they face, there's many barriers that they face in post-secondary education as we know. And so again, that's really deeply rooted in historical contexts of, really, the legacy of slavery and white supremacy. So I wanted just to briefly mention that and then get into some... listing some of the other barriers. So, when we're thinking about the institution of slavery and contextualizing this within North America but the United States more specifically, slavery, you know, started early 1600s, so they say, until the 19th century.

And so, when I'm really thinking about the way in which slavery has worked and the way in which it has dehumanized Black and Indigenous individuals, right, as well as many other marginalized groups, enslaved folks were denied basic rights. So that included education. And so, when we're thinking about folks being able to access this and thinking about the ways in which being able to access education really poses a threat to the system of oppression, really, right? Because if you were literate or if you had knowledge, then you would be able to, you know, advocate for yourself, fight for yourself, a be able to question the things that are happening.

And so when we're thinking about or talking about the abolition of slavery – and I like to use air quotes, the “abolition” of slavery – systemic racism continues, right? And so, it's continued at that time of abolition through Jim Crow laws, segregation, and various forms of discriminations. And again, these are the ways that it has created barriers that continue to impact many folks, but really when we're thinking about the educational access to school through generations. So that generational impact and trauma that that has created. And so, then, when thinking about white supremacy and how that has continued to shape

the educational structures and policies in which a lot of us are working within, often privileging white folks or white, white individuals while marginalizing students of color, Indigenous folks, Black folks as well, and other historically oppressed groups. So the legacy continues to manifest in various ways in full secondary education. And so that really leads me to talking about some of those barriers.

So when we're thinking about bears to post-secondary education, I think it's important to again kind of bring it back and think about, okay well, there's a lot of barriers that they're facing before they even get to post-secondary education, and they're facing many challenges through their K to 12 years, right? So when we're thinking about that – and I can share briefly about my background, working with youth involved in the elementary schools and the high schools – but there's educational inequities.

So sometimes... oftentimes, there's underfunded schools, and for many marginalized folks who are living in poorer areas and having poor access to resources and supports – those socio economic barriers, so poverty and food and housing insecurity, when we think about health and well-being, so there's limited or lack of access to healthcare and mental health services. But when folks do get that, because I get folks who often think "well, we live in Canada and you have free healthcare" and all these things, but we're thinking about medical racism and how that shows up for folks as well and having to go multiple times to readdress challenges or issues that they're experiencing. But then I think most importantly, limited or lack of support. So, lots of marginalized students, they may lack access to mentorship or guidance or networking opportunities, which really is crucial for navigating the complexities of school, the educational system, but let alone post-secondary education.

And so, I'll say briefly: some of my background is working with youth involved in the justice system, and in my time working with youth through, kind of, counselling sessions, a lot of times they're telling me that, you know, they don't have support or they don't have the caring adult that they can go to and ask for support. So those are just some of those challenges.

And then as we move to post-secondary and really thinking about that and what that looks like for youth moving from K to 12 to post-secondary, I think what's most important to acknowledge is the visualization. Many marginalized folks don't even envision themselves attending post-secondary education. I can say for myself as well, when I was graduating, and thinking about college or university, I also have a background in child welfare and being adopted and so as a result of that, I was like, okay. I'm definitely not going to school. The stats say that, you know, folks from child welfare, that they don't historically go to school, right? They're more likely to drop out and things like that. So, even for myself and visualizing that, I didn't see it as an opportunity.

And so, when we think about that again, there's also the lack of resources such as academic support, financial aid or information about college applications. So again, think about myself, I was adopted by a black family, but I would have been the first person to go

to post-secondary, right? So when we're thinking about first-generation students attending school, being able to have folks help me navigate through an application process or finding housing on campus or off campus and things like that, so I think that's really important to acknowledge. But really in that visualization, it creates a perception that post-secondary education is unattainable or not something for us, and that's very much what I thought. So even in accessing OSAP [Ontario Student Assistant Program] after and learning about that I was, oh, okay, there's a way for me to move through this.

And I'll just kind of say briefly, there's limited exposure. So again, not having role models or mentors to support them in navigating this, but also to see people have that visualization of other folks in these spaces where you can go and ask them for help saying, hey, how did you do it? Kind of question their experience so you better insight into that. I think really big in society right now is negative messaging. So when I think about the young folks and things that they're seeing, whether on social media, on TV and things like that, it really does kind of reaffirm these systemic barriers and societal stereotypes creating a narrative that higher education is not for them. And so, I think that really is challenging for young folks as they're trying to adapt through this world and finding their identity, figuring out who they are. And then also, you know, allowing themselves to engage in social media, which is a big thing for them at this age as well.

I think another one is financial constraints. So again, when we're thinking about folks coming from that low socio-economic background, right? It might be difficult to afford tuition, books, and other educational expenses. I know our previous panelist also noted social isolation or lack of belonging, and I think that's a big one for the students that I work in that they talk to me about, you know, not feeling like they have a space here, especially being on a predominantly white campus and trying to navigate that the best that they can in their classrooms while sometimes they're also facing, you know, really avert or sometimes subtle racism. And how do they have those conversations? If it's your professor, can you say something? Who do you go to? When we're thinking about some of those things, right? I think cultural insensitivity, so really understanding that educational environments are not always culturally responsive or inclusive. Again, if they're thinking about reporting this, "will I be believed or will someone actually advocate for me? Am I doing this by myself?" And then I think just lastly: culture barriers. So really, when we're thinking about this, and I think this speaks overall to writing, sometimes the perception is that the dominant culture in higher education and sometimes writing often reflects white, middle-class values and perspectives. So then this really excludes folks, but particularly students from diverse backgrounds, from being able to engage in this or connect with their faculty or the curriculum or enter these spaces. That was a lot of talking, so thank you.

Facilitator 1: Thank you so much. Thank you. And then, I just wanted to invite... if you have something, Christin, you'd like to add, or we can, we can move on to the next question. Awesome. Perfect. So, Loren, I'm going to pass it on to you.

Facilitator 2 (Dr. Loren Gaudet): Great. Okay. Such fantastic, insightful answers from you guys. And I'm going to build off that set of responses and basically ask, building off the previous question, and these like great insights, how has writing support specifically – so both in courses and centres – exacerbated these barriers? And are there ways that writing support has alleviated these barriers? Yes, so. Any initial thoughts?

Wright-Taylor: Yeah, I can speak to the writing centre perspective. I'll just introduce myself quickly. So my name is Christin Wright-Taylor. I am American and married a Canadian, which is how I ended up in Canada about 10 years ago. I actually grew up overseas, until the age of 14. Although, everywhere I lived, I was always... I always got the chance to be educated in my home language of English. And I, of course, always showed up as white in those spaces the, you know, the colour of privilege, no matter where I was. But with that said, I did experience some culture shock, and I think the invitation to think of the world as a multicultural place and to... an invitation to think outside of my own, sort of, egocentric norms, and to sort of understand that American culture is just one of many cultures that inform the way people come into the world, and engage the world in education and um... I came to this work because I taught for many years first-year composition, like Nelesi, in the States and saw how international students were struggling with culture shock and transition and the chaos that ensues with that, as well as language barriers and trying to integrate into Northern American education. So, I brought that into my PhD work and studied how to support international students in the Canadian writing classroom, and so bring that research perspective into my work as a writing centre professional.

However, again I realize that as a white, well-educated woman, I embody white supremacy whenever I get in front of the room – whenever I'm the one talking, leading. And so, I have committed to actively staying aware of that and doing the inner work and the spiritual work. For me, it's very much connected to my spiritual journey as well. To reflect on that and stay open and to be as mindful as I can, and then also really decentre myself in this work and create space for others to come in and speak into it, and to collaborate with wonderful people like Elizabeth as we try to create those spaces for students in the writing centre and the way that we teach writing. So that's what led to the start of the translingual academic writing bank.

So how is writing support in writing centres exacerbated these barriers? I think to build on Elizabeth's point of representation and visualization, students don't see themselves in the writing centre. They don't see themselves in the writing tutors. They see, sort of, traditional... They don't see themselves in the writing director. Like me. And so, it's really important for me to hire inclusively.

And so, we've been very intentional last couple years of overhauling our hiring practices and making sure that we have identified our outcomes for the learning... for the, for the interview process. We have a rubric in place. We're very strategic about where we promote: we promote through our accessible Learning Centre, we promote through CSEDI [Centre for Student Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion], promote through the Indigenous

Student Centre [ISC]. Like, really reaching out to those populations. But I am a firm believer in relationships, relationships, relationships. And those things don't happen outside of the context of relationship.

And so, I, first and foremost, have been working to build those relationships with the leaders of ISC: the 10,000 cups of tea, just being consistent, showing up investing in relationships, being in the space, being willing to be *guests* in the space, which I think is something as a white person... we're so used to the institution being our space, and I really love bringing my staff and my tutors into spaces where they're not.... like, it doesn't cater to them. So having times when we are invited and able to go into the Indigenous Student Centre and feel that you're a guest in the place and practice being a guest in a space. And so... yeah. So, with that, we've been able to actually hire more inclusively and working on bringing in tutors that are more representative of the student body, which I think has been really helpful.

And then I think, part of how we alleviate these barriers is that representation: trying to hire intentionally and inclusively and trying as much as possible to give that space away to others and know that it's not just our space. We want it to be everybody's space. So there's more I could say, but I think I'll stop there because it might tie into some of the other questions.

Facilitator 2: Thank you, Christin. That's, yeah, really insightful. And I love the idea about just, like, thinking about that being embodied in the space and the role that space plays there. I think that's like, incredibly insightful. Nelesi?

Rodrigues: Thank you. I think... I was thinking, in relation to this question, you know... Elizabeth started her answer by reminding us that education has... exists within a context and has a history, and I think that this is also the case of writing centres and writing courses, which are closely tied to the moment where access to university education was expanded to minoritized populations or marginalized populations, right? And that connection isn't always... it's a complicated one. Because these spaces [writing courses and centres], for some time, were considered to be the spaces that would quote unquote "fix" students who didn't conform to certain expectations of what students should look like or sound like in the university. And so, you know, while writing centres and writing courses have vowed to support these new student population in their academic journeys, sometimes the support has pitted the learning goals that they have against their own ways of knowing and being and their communities, right? So,... this I think that even though so much has changed in both of these spaces and how we frame the work that we do, sometimes the legacy of this history continues to creep in our work as writing study scholars. And the community adjacent to that is to grapple with those legacies all the time and think about how we can undo them.

But I also think that at the same time that there's such history, there's a long genealogy of educators starting at that very same point who have resisted this deficiency paradigm. Right? And more so, you know, that that has only grown more richer and louder and

diverse. And I think that if we look at contributions from fields that include new literacy studies, translingual pedagogies, anti-racist and anti-colonial pedagogies, community-engaged pedagogies, queer and feminist pedagogies, and disability perspectives, all of these have made it not only possible but *urgent* for us to reimagine writing classrooms and writing centres as spaces that do two things at the same time: make students resources so they can navigate institutions that are still largely white and male and ableist, and also become spaces where their identities are recognized and uplifted as they gain a better understanding of how... what the context of the history of their learning is. I'll pass the... I can talk about some initiatives that are writing specific that are happening at UTM, but maybe like in a second round about this question.

Facilitator 2: Thank you. That... Yes, that is such an important response. And yeah, we'll come back to you about specific initiatives. Elizabeth: I see your hand.

Clarke: Thank you. I actually just wanted to add something onto what Nelesi shared, actually. And when we're thinking about, I guess writing services or, just, academic writing conventions – and that's really what it was for me, with the last two, when you're talking about the goals – Christin and I, as we were writing the translingual writing guide, really spoke a lot about... kind of the impacts of the conventions not really aligning with diverse linguistic backgrounds of marginalized students, right? And really how that creates – and I think for me in my work, I see this a lot – how this creates this pressure or reinforces feelings of inadequacy or imposter syndrome a lot of times. You know, students will be like, "I'm having imposter syndrome. Am I supposed to be here?"

And so, when I'm thinking about that, I think that's really one of the barriers to what... or, adding on to what Nelesi was saying about writing centres, but I think that I can only speak to my institution in working with Christin, but, the ways in which we're really working together to change these things or to improve the writing services or writing centres is to really collaborate, to really have more representation, to invite folks into the space, is what we've been doing. I think it's really working well.

But, quite frankly, coming to the space... So, Christin actually mentioned that she had herself and her writing centre, her coaches, come to an event that myself and some other colleagues who do this kind of EDI work with students, they came to the space, and they were actually, I think, probably the only white folks there, right? And they really had to kind of, you know, put themselves in this environment and maybe feel a bit uncomfortable, but also to do the work to kind of talk about it. And Christin did share with me that, you know, she spoke with her writing students to really talk about like, you know, us having a privilege and going into the space is a gift.

And so, I think those conversations have been really helpful for me even just to see, because I've also never seen myself in writing. And so when I see students and they come and talk about the challenges they're experiencing about writing centres and the services, I can understand where they're coming from initially. And so now that we have Christin in

her position, it's great to refer them there. So I'm often doing lots of referrals there. So yeah, thank you for sharing that point, Nelesi. Really helpful.

Facilitator 2: Yeah, Christin.

Wright-Taylor: Thanks. I can't... For some reason I can't see my hand raise icon, so I'll just raise my real hand if that's okay. So yeah, I wanted to just touch on Nelesi's point about the academic voice and sort of the preconceptions of what that sounds like. And we know that that is a traditionally raced, gendered, classed voice, and so the writing centre... really, the position we're coming from is the belief that all students have linguistic capacities that can empower them and are an asset in writing academic writing and that they should be allowed to bring their cultural and linguistic diversity into their academic writing. And so that's what Elizabeth and I were working on, was naming that, calling that out and then compiling this bank of academic writing that does demonstrate that code meshing that Doctor Vershawn Ashanti Young talks about.

And we find ourselves in an interesting spot, though, in the institution, because we are not in charge of the curriculum and we're not in charge of training faculty. So we're in this weird place of, like, we're empowering the students and letting them know there's nothing wrong with you. You're not faulty, you're not broken. And yet what we hear back is, yeah, but my professor's still going to give... you know, mark me down. Because the assignments aren't actually antiracist assignments. They're not... they're not decolonized. They're not assignments that are taking their linguistic capacities into consideration. And so, it was kind of a tightrope we had to walk, Elizabeth and I, when we were putting this together because we know that faculty access our website. So it was like we're writing it for students hoping that faculty will read it and get ideas about how to redesign their assignments in a way that can account for where their students are at. But we also had to just... flat out at the bottom of it we created a section that was like "how to talk to your professor about this." And here's a template of an e-mail. If you wanna try to use code meshing in your academic writing, here's how to open that conversation.

So, it's a weird rhetorical situation that we're kind of in. But where I've landed in terms of training our staff and our tutors are agency, agency, agency. We can't control the faculty and their assignments. But we are here to help the students. We can let them know they're not dumb. We can let them know they're not broken. We can affirm their linguistic capacities, and then we can give them options, and we can show them how to navigate some of these embedded... did you call it the invisible curriculum, Nelesi? I like that a lot. Like, make that visible for them so that then they can make choices about it rather than internalizing false narratives about themselves. So, I think that's the best we've come up – *Hidden curriculum*. Thank you – that's the best we've come up with trying to, like, walk that balance here.

I also will say, I never anticipated when I took the job in the writing centre how much I would get a behind the scenes look at faculty and their curriculum [laughs]. I just thought I'd be working with students and I'm like, oh, we see a lot. We see a lot.

Facilitator 2: That's really, really fascinating, Christin. And Nelesi, maybe as an instructor you could weigh in about the other side of that? That would be fantastic.

Rodrigues: Yeah. I was actually just going to say that. That tension that Christin is talking about, it's very familiar to those of us who maybe tried to cultivate translingual orientations among our students. And what I would say... Or, and the conversations that I have with students, because, you know, students want and legitimately want to... like, that's a valid goal: they want to do good. They want to get good marks. And what faculty decide to do, it's out of our hands, really. But I tell them it's important for them to develop an awareness of this history and this context, so that when they feel that they have to write a certain way, it doesn't, as Christin says, it doesn't make them feel inadequate, that they don't have a place there. That they understand why they're being asked to write in that way.

And also too, I tell them that to have translingual orientations doesn't necessarily mean that you will always have to code mesh, which is like... I wish we could, we could do all that all the time, but you can also rely on your writing communities. You can.... You can use in your writing process... You can move through your, like, diverse linguistic repertoires, right? It doesn't necessarily mean that the end product has to look a certain way. And so, I ask them to just become aware of what... how they can really bring all of that to the writing process. I had a very interesting, interesting conversation with a student a couple of weeks ago where they were telling me that in their culture when a person's face turns green they're getting angry and as opposed to getting ill, right? We were talking about how, you know, having linguistic repertoires that are multiple, it's not only about the language in itself, it's a worldview, and that you can still, you know, fuse that worldview to inform your writing. So that's one thing.

And I also wanted to mention that the first-year writing course program that we are implementing, it's still in its rollout... But at UTM, the first-year writing program and the first-year writing course that we are rolling out, it's called "Writing for University and Beyond." And this program, which uses a "writing about writing approach," emphasizes transferability, and it also prioritizes the development of critical language awareness. As Shawna Shapiro has theorized it. But you know, like, I think that this course is interesting because it creates opportunities for novice writers to practice the skills required in academic settings and also to consider writing as a social practice that has a place beyond universities and the curriculum structure so that we can bring that into consideration throughout. So, it [includes] a writing story unit, a discourse community analysis unit, and general analysis unit. And they can, at each point... Well, the writing stories, it's a personal narrative. But then in the other two assignments, they can choose to look into the university or look out, right? And so, that also helped us to create... make space for students to bring, you know, the fullness of their identities into the classroom.

And in addition to that, we have the initiatives such as the Caribbean and Black Writing Collective that's out of our academic skills centre that I mentioned already. And there's also an initiative that sounds a little bit like some of the initiatives that Elizabeth is involved

in. There's the Support, Engaged and Experienced UTM that's not tied to our unit in particular, but it's an access program and a collaboration between the University of Toronto, Mississauga and The Hill District schoolboard where high school students can take a few entry-level courses, and they count towards their high school degree, and they can also kind of like count once they transition, if they decide to come to UTM. And you know, this week, this past week, at one of the events at the Caribbean and Black Writing Collective, we were really excited to welcome back some of the C students who are now coming as [word unclear] writers into the collective. And this is all to say that one of the things that I see as really essential to cultivate identity and belonging at the university is the need for articulation. Like, there are so many skills to... we can make interventions [word unclear], but the more we can deliberately link them, the more powerful they are going to be.

Facilitator 2: Absolutely. Thank you guys. I also just want to remind everybody who's listening as well that I see amazing stuff in the chat, and also that Google Doc is up. So if you have ideas or like contributions that you want to expand upon, I know people are in there. Just a reminder that you can take advantage of that. Thank you. I'm going to pass it over to Jason.

Facilitator 1: Yeah. Thanks. This conversation has been great. And I think this next question... Like, some of it, a few of you have already kind of touched on. I know Christin, you've touched on this next question with some of the things that you've talked about – that you have your folks in the writing centre do. But, let's be imaginative with this, with this one, right? So, if you had unlimited funds right, in a world where university was not tied to dollar signs, which it unfortunately is, what kind of training would be provided for writing staff or instructors – so on either side: the writing centre side or the instructor side – with the specific aim to help empower multiply marginalized students. So, if anyone has thoughts on... I know training is definitely a needed thing, right? Yeah, Christin.

Wright-Taylor: I can just give a quick answer off the top. Immediately it comes to me that I believe every... I would love to have every person who works in the writing centre and helps with multilingual writers to go on exchange and be in a place where you are the minority and where you are the guest in the room, where you don't know the cultural norms. Just to start to get a sense of what that feels like. Because I think when you're so used to being the majority, there are things you take for granted. You know, we can talk... I love that term "hidden curriculum" that Nelesi used. We can talk about it, but you don't understand what we're talking about if you haven't experienced the hidden curriculum somewhere else. And so I think if money was not an issue, I would send everybody on exchange.

Facilitator 1: Yeah. Wonderful. I think that would be great for everyone. I love how you talk about, like, going into spaces where you don't automatically belong – as opposed to spaces where you're... you are the default. Yeah.

Wright-Taylor: Yeah.

Facilitator 1: Yeah.

Wright-Taylor: And I wanna let Elizabeth talk, but I'll just add a little bit to that. So the ways in which I can do that, I've tried to do that. So, when I was teaching first-year writing, I developed relationships with our Intercultural Resource Centre (IRC) on campus. I taught at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and I would have every course I taught... we would have a collaboration with the IRC, and we would spend time in the IRC. And it was at their invitation because also we're taking up that space, and I'm very conscious of that. And it was remarkable to see how agitated the students would be – the white students. Because they genuinely just had not experienced that before. And how uncomfortable they would get. And to be able to unpack that with them of like, why is this uncomfortable? Well, you're not used to being the guest in the room and just being able to just sit and watch and let other people take up space and have space and bear witness to that, right? Bear witness to how they interact, how they're doing those things.

So, two things come to mind since coming here to Laurier. I had... So, Elizabeth and her colleagues did a Black culture night and very kindly invited the writing centre to come and promote our services and connect with their students. And so I took two writing tutors with me, and they went and they sat in the corner of the room at our little booth, and I actually didn't want them interacting because I didn't want us to take over the space. This was the Black students' space. It wasn't our space. We were guests there, so they just stayed and they were ready to interact as people came up to them. I went around to the tables and talked to people and, you know, made connections. And then afterwards I asked them, I said, how was that for you? And they were like, everybody should have to go to something like this where you're... where you're the only white person in the room. Like it was so interesting. It like made us totally understand how Black students may feel in an all-white classroom, and this sort of thing, right? Like making those connections.

Another thing that comes to mind was we had our... for the Indigenous Student Centre we've been cultivating writing drop-ins over the years and have gotten to the point now where we have Indigenous writing tutors who are dedicated to those spaces. But initially, we were just building the relationship, and I would have my staff go in and sit, at invitation, you know, and do those. And one of my staff came back and was like, that's not a very academic space because there was a conversation happening among the students about menstrual cycles and the moon. And he was like, trying to do writing drop-ins at the same, and he was sort of struggling with it. And he was like, it's just, like, it's not really a very academic space. And I said, okay, let's, let's unpack that. Let's stop right there. And let's talk about that. Why is that hitting you that way? What are your expectations about what an academic space looks like? How is that embedded into your cultural conditioning as a white person in higher ed, right?

And so, I think those things are so... Those conversations can't happen... I wanna say to all the white people in the room, I think those are conversations we as white leaders can have with our white staff, right? We can hold... We can start to help unpack some of those things

and push them and help them really start to reflect on that and deconstruct where some of that is coming [from]. And it was a good conversation. When we were done, he totally was nodding his head, and he was like, I guess that if we are committed to doing decolonial work, this is what it means. It means having these conversations and looking at our biases and our prejudices. So, it was a fruitful conversation. Anyway, I say all that to say, examples of... If I could have every white person do an exchange, or be it a guest in the room or the minority in the room, I think that's what I would do with money. So, I'm done.

Facilitator 1: Thank you. Yeah, that's wonderful. Elizabeth. I see your hand.

Clarke: Thank you. Yeah, I really was just going to, kind of, piggyback off Christin, and thinking about whether exchange... I was initially thinking of an employer supported volunteerism, and so I know there are places that sometimes do that. They will pay their workers a part of their wage or their salary to go to other places to volunteer and do work. And I think that that's something that could be done, right? So, to give back to the community in ways that they may not be able to afford or contribute. You're still being paid for it, but you're giving your time, your services, your resources, but, quite frankly, you're really engaging and experiencing different cultures, different backgrounds, different folks who come from, you know, various walks of life. I think that really is the [unclear word]. And so, Nelesi said a couple of things earlier talking about, like, the worldview, and I think that when we're moving in certain spaces because we have a certain worldview that we are used to, we are comfortable with, and sometimes coming outside of that worldview is hard, obviously, because, you know, our privileges and the power that we do have and things that are allotted to us. But really, it is up to us to do that work to, you know, step outside of that and see what else, you know, other folks are experiencing. What else does this world have to offer? I think most importantly...

And so Nelesi also talk about how realigning these things and so, I think about that and community, and think about just the power that community has, right? To advocate or to do this work. It's much easier to do this work in community. And so especially the comments in the chat talking about advocacy and maybe with some of that being within that hidden curriculum, if we are doing this in community, right, we're supporting one another, we're being allies to one another, so it's, you know, a little bit easier when we're taking the pushback or the brunt from the institution, from the organization or from folks who have things to say when we know that we are in alignment together. We're in solidarity together to push forward a certain agenda, right? Whether that's decolonizing or empowering or uplifting folks. And I think that really is the work that we're here to do and definitely can be challenging because people do have to feed themselves. People have to pay rent, and so there's so many other things. But again, I think we forget that we're stronger in numbers, and that we have the power. And the folks who are above us or the folks who are in these positions of power, they're not... They're there because of us. And so, sometimes I think we forget that we have the power, but we've given them so much power.

So I think it's about how do we reclaim that power for ourselves in the work that we're doing and to also transfer that onto our students so that they're also empowered as they're moving through the world – especially when I think about writing, because we have to write all sorts of things. And so, I think it's not just about in academics, but I think a lot of the work that I'm doing along with Christin is really helping the students understand that this goes much further than just academia or being in post-secondary, but something that you'll need to be able to read things, write things, send things back. So, yeah. Thank you both Christin and Nelesi for sharing your input. It's really helpful for me, even, just to think about. Appreciate it.

Facilitator 1: Yeah. Thanks so much. And Nelesi. Yeah, I see your hand.

Rodrigues: Yeah. This is, you know, one word I am sitting with after hearing both of you is *space*. What's the space that... where we do our work, that we occupy. And one of the things that I had written in response to this question was that I really think that, you know, community engagement, when done with intention and accountability, can be very powerful in instilling a sense of purpose and belonging in our students, but also in ourselves. Especially those of us who are faculty and staff who also belong to those historically marginalized identities. I think that thinking about how, you know, how we engage with communities that the university belongs to is important, and also even where we hold our classes, right? Not to put you in this spot, Loren [Loren Gaudet, Facilitator 2], but I recently read your piece with Lydia [Toorenburgh] about the course that you have been facilitating, and I thought, you know, it's it was so powerful that move to have it in the First Peoples House. And I think there is a shift... Every time I take my students outside the classroom, they really, like, light up when they see and can talk about writing happening in specific places and doing things, right? So that that would be one thing, I think, connected to space. So training on how to do meaningful and accountable community engagement work.

I also think, you know, I really appreciate that you started this workshop talking about a trauma-informed approach and, you know, from the legacies of residential school to slavery to, you know, a pandemic that's still ongoing – I have so many students falling ill right now with covid – to multiple [word unclear] unfolding, I feel like our students are coming to our classes heavy. We are also doing that. And I think developing trauma-informed approaches to writing pedagogies is key to this goal of identity and belonging, so that would be another area.

And lastly, I think, training on anti-racist and accessible assessment. I find that assessment is one of the areas where we find it the hardest to do away with the legacy of standardized English. And training might do a little bit in helping us just shift our attitudes about how we assess our student work.

Facilitator 1: Thanks so much. Oh. Yeah. Christin?

Wright-Taylor: So yeah, I'll just add that in terms of what we do with our tutor training is we bring in some of that translingual academic writing, and I like to... We do a full week of training before the term starts, and we do a few sessions on working with translingual students. And what I like to do is use Doctor Vershawn Ashanti Young's article "Should Students Use Their Own English?" And he writes it completely in Black Vernacular English. And so, we read a portion of the article, and then I lob them the question, is this academic writing? And then we just spend the time discussing and unpacking it. And then that leads into talking about helping them to sort of see and think about the social norms around academic writing as culturally based, and also rooted in white supremacy and colonialism, and then we have further trainings, and then we continue to do it throughout the year. We have 12 professional development sessions throughout the year for our tutors, so we bake it into some of those sessions as well to continue to think about and talk about how do they then support students because, as we said earlier, the tutors always come back with "but what if the students want to write in standard English?" Because, as Nelesi said, something they do. They want to just... they wanna write to get an A. They wanna check all the boxes. And also, "what do we do if that's not what the professors are asking them to do?" So then that's when we really focus on the agency part of it and being a cultural informant and a literacy broker for students.

Facilitator 2: So powerful you guys. This is fantastic. Yeah, so many good phrases coming out. I've just been, like, taking notes, and yes, I love this and thank you so much for that kind shout out. That's so exciting to me that you read that article. Yes. Okay. So, our last question, which is, I mean, excellent time management everyone! Really well done. We are... In the next portion of the workshop one of the things that we're hoping to do with these sessions are to draft some position statements. And so, the question that I would put to you guys now is: we are going to draft a position statement on writing, belonging, and identity in what is now called Canada, and, basically, what do you think is crucial information or points? What is crucial to get into that position statement?

Wright-Taylor: You're asking us that question or are we working on...?

Facilitator 2: I am, yes. I'm asking you that question. Sorry Christin. Yes, that's my final question for the panelists: if you had to, like, highlight some specific "must includes" in a position statement, what would they be? Thank you. Elizabeth?

Clarke: Yeah. When I think about it for myself, I think about really including, like, a historical context to it, I think, right? And I think, obviously being based in Canada is definitely most important, but also like just a worldview of thinking about the ways in which many different countries around the world have had a long history of slavery, right? And I think a lot of times we don't talk about that. I think folks just think about the British Empire, United States, things like that, Canada. But it really does run deep, and I think it's challenging because this literature isn't always available. So, including a historical context will really be helpful for folks to really kind of set the tone for, you know, why this

conversation is important, most importantly. And then. Yeah, I think, for now, just historical context for me at this point. Thank you.

Facilitator 2: Thank you. Nelesi?

Rodrigues: Yes, I absolutely agree with Elizabeth that opening with context would be really important. Especially to think about what... what is it about the Canadian context that might be different from other places. I also, you know, looking at the folder with resources that everyone contributed was so amazing, but something that was sitting with me was, I was like, oh, it seems from looking at the resources that there might be different understandings of what cultivating identity and belonging in writing spaces entails. And I think maybe that would be important to elaborate a little bit on. Like, all of those approaches might be necessary and important, but I think to talk about, maybe, those layers would be helpful.

And I also think it would be important to identify these scales, right? The scales for intervention. Just looking at the resources that were there, you know, there are things about writing centres, first-year writing courses, writing in the disciplines, and writing across the curriculum. Those are, like, areas. And then there's course design, including syllabi, assignments, assessment tools, class activities, course materials, instructor's positionalities. There's also co-curricular activities, and then there's writing research. I think like, there are, you know... There's so much to cover that I think it's important to name that the position statements are not going to do all the work. It's a first step, but I think that just to say, well, these are the areas people are working on, and there might be others as well, but we want to name them. So yes, that's... Those are my two things.

Wright-Taylor: And I think for me – this Christin speaking now – I think about the audience. Who is the position statement for? Is it for students or is it for scholars and faculty? And I think immediately, just given the positionality of my role in the institution, I immediately think of clear statements to the students. I don't know how to say this in a formal way. You're not broken. There's nothing wrong with you, you know. Trying to help them disrupt the myth of the ideal native writer. And kind of disrupt the internal narrative that somehow they're inadequate or lacking. So, if it were a student-facing position statement, I'd wanna state that and then cite the scholars who have done work to show that, like Paul Kei Matsuda and Suresh Canagarajah and Maya Poe and those people.

Facilitator 2: Nelesi?

Rodrigues: Yeah, I just... Something that Christin said also brought this to my mind. Elizabeth was talking about this at the beginning of the conversation. Is, you know, we were we're talking, in this panel, about student belonging and identity. But a part of that equation is also faculty and staff belonging and identity. And so maybe, kind of, put attention into that at some point in the statement? Or maybe that's, you know, that's a different statement, but I think, you know, it is important. It's so... I think it can be very

powerful for students to be able to connect with faculty and staff whose experiences resonate with their own. And unless we make sure that those faculty can feel at home in the university, they are not going to find them. And we also need to make it so that they are not overworked and, you know, have time to engage with their students.

Facilitator 2: Thank you. Yeah, those are... I mean... Yes. You have, like, accurately complexified the need for this position statement by being like “hey, multiple position statements?” So that is a very... I hear you. And then there's a really excellent question in the chat from [name]. So I'm going to read it to you. And this is like... We didn't send this in advance, so I'm sorry. This is on the spot. But [name's] question is: the discussion about students for whom English is not their first language, what are we saying about generative AI? And so I will put that into the chat. And so, if anyone... If you have any thoughts on that as well as a way to kind of end things off, that would be great.

Wright-Taylor: I do have thoughts, but I feel like I keep talking first. So Nelesi or Elizabeth, do you want to go first? Okay. So I – again, just my worldview perspective is working one-on-one with the students in the writing centre – what I find is it is the same old tired myth of the ideal native writer, quote unquote – well, that's the term that Paul Kei Matsuda uses – that has perpetuated this anxiety in multilingual students that they can't write. And I think for all students, that encourages them to try to find alternate ways to complete assignments or reach the goals that feel unachievable to them. It's those same old tired narratives in the institution that keep getting perpetuated, that push, in my experience, multilingual students to use GenAI. And so the same things that always worked to help them embrace their strengths as writers, their linguistic capacities and capabilities, still work with GenAI.

And so, I will tell a story to back this up. I had a student who's from Nigeria last year who kept failing his assignments because he was using generative AI to write them. He's a health studies student. And the funny thing was, he wasn't coming to the writing centre till after he had written it and would get his grade and then he would come to us. And I was like, if you'd just come beforehand, then we can, like, work with you a little bit. So, finally, he figured out... The faculty kept sending him back to us. And when I really sat down to work with him on the assignment, what I saw was he was just a knot of anxiety around his ability to write. And he was so scared. And he'd so... Now the thing is, he's from Nigeria: English is his home language. But it's a world English, so he would write in Nigerian English, and he was very aware of the fact that Nigerian English didn't fit the norms of academic English. And so, through a series of writing strategies and exercises that we use in the writing centre, sat him down, worked through this with him, took off some of the pressure, gave him some writing prompts, did some free writing with him tailored to the writing assignment to allow him to just write in his voice, and to tell him, put down the burden of trying to write in academic English. Write in Nigerian English. It's okay. And then I'll help you from there. And then being able to affirm for him when he was writing in Nigerian English, this sentence, this paragraph actually really works. There's nothing wrong with it. It works. Now, make sure, your citations are right. Like, I'll teach you the citation thing. And then

having a conversation – he gave permission for us to reach out to the faculty – having a conversation with the faculty on the other side of... he's been meeting with me faithfully. He's writing in Nigerian English. I'm making sure that it's correct. I'm making sure that he's addressing the assignment requirements to kind of give her context so she could take that into consideration when she's grading, right? And again, it's that sort of sly, like, we're not supposed to train the faculty. We're not supposed to... But kind of slyly trying to open her worldview too, to how she's teaching writing, and grading the writing. She's not a writing instructor. She was a Health Sciences instructor. And so, to come back to the question, I think the drive and the desire, in my experience, to use GenAI is coming from that same place that it's always come from that's a result of an institution that prioritizes and privileges, you know, a colonial white supremacist view of academic English.

And I'll just end with this little thing I saw in an article. I'll have to find the article and put it in here. But someone wrote “using GenAI in a writing class is like using a forklift in the weight room.” Meaning you go to the weight room to build muscle, to grow, to get strong, and if you bring a forklift to it, you're not actually growing. You're defeating the point. And the whole reason why we ask students to write in class is because they're growing their critical thinking skills, their reading skills, their writing skills. They're not actually building that muscle. And so I think helping students understand they don't have to rely on it to actually build that muscle. They don't have to rely on GenAI to build the muscle that they're being asked to build in their assignments.

Facilitator 2: Thank you. Nelesi?

Rodrigues: This type of question... I feel like this could be also another panel. But I'll say a couple of things. The first thing is that in my writing classrooms, I have started to operate from... Like, starting with transparency. So, I tell my students I would like you to restrict the use of GenAI to only prewriting, and we talk about what that involves. But I also would like you in your... at the end of your references section to include a statement of GenAI use. You tell me what you use, what you used it for, and what you did with the output after you got it. And something that I have learned is that anyone who's been under the impression that mostly multilingual students are using generative AI is wrong. Like, most of our students are using, you know, GenAI – for different reasons and for different purposes, but they are relying on it a lot. And I find that helpful because if I see how they are using it, I can tell them, well, you're using it for this thing and this is a skill that you're supposed to be learning here. Like, I want to balance this idea of, you know, write... learn to write in the classroom the way you eventually go on to write in your jobs and your other courses with, actually, I want you to develop the skills that you need to critically assess. If, like, when you're using GenAI, what is it giving you? And so, that's one, that's one way I'm responding to generative AI in the classroom in relation to equity and identity.

And the other thing that I'll say is I am part of a team of faculty and educational developers at UTM who have been working on a resource for faculty members to assess their own cultural biases when suspecting academic integrity violations connected to generative AI. Because I think that that's an area where we might encounter some assessment injustices

being reinforced. It's not fully... it needs to be approved by several offices, and it's in the process of getting those approvals. But yes, that's an area that we're also kind of considering.

Facilitator 2: That's... I'm so excited about that initiative. That's like... As you were saying that I was just like shaking my head, like waving my pencil. Such a great idea! Okay, well, before we switch gears... First of all, thank you to all of our panelists for these amazing insightful responses. This has been so fantastic. Again there's the Google Doc. If you want to continue this discussion, feel free. You'll continue to have access to that. Again, that's totally optional, but it's there. Sarah put in the chat that we will be... we have a workshop on October 23rd about, basically, writing technology and accessibility, and I think we might include that fabulous question [about GenAI] in our discussion questions because it's super. And then I just wanted to quickly say thank you to our transcribers for being with us and doing that work with us. We're really grateful for your time and your expertise. So thank you for joining us today.