

How We Write

Series 3: How We Consult

Episode 1: Introduction to the Series

TRANSCRIPT

MUSICAL INTRO BY MICHELE SOLBERG: From the University Writing Center, at the University of Texas at Austin, with host Alice Batt...

OVERLAPPING VOICES: How We Write.

ALICE: Hello, and welcome to How We Write, the podcast where we talk about how we write just about anything. I'm Alice Batt.

[00:30] In this episode, we begin a new series. We're going to take a step back from writing and consider the kinds of choices writing center consultants make when working with writers. We're calling the series *How We Consult*, and the episodes were created by the students in my Writing Center Internship class in spring 2023.

Let me tell you how these episodes came about. Early in the semester, interns picked a scenario out of a hat. Each scenario described a situation they might encounter in the writing center [01:00], and their job was to consider how each scenario is shaped by its context. I asked them to consider several areas in their exploration:

First, they had to identify the immediate challenges the scenario presented, such as the task itself, the deadlines, and the issues the student wanted to address.

Second, they had to discuss the things that might shape the student's position in society—things like race, class, gender, neuro-identity, nationality, linguistic background, university status, and age [01:30]. Essentially, they were supposed to consider anything they thought might be relevant.

Third, they had to consider elements of their own identity and position, and how those might shape the consultation. (I reminded them to share only to their level of comfort, and not to share things they wouldn't want published.)

Fourth, taking all these things into account, they had to explain how they would approach the consultation. How would they facilitate the best possible experience for the writer?

There was one more requirement [02:00]: research. Anywhere it seemed relevant, they needed to back up their claims with research from writing center journals or other scholarly sources.

After writing their papers, each intern was placed in a group with others who had drawn the same topic, and for their final project they created these podcast episodes about what they learned and how they'd approach their scenario.

I began preparing the interns for this assignment the very first week of class by having them discuss Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's popular TED talk [02:30], "The Danger of a Single Story." Adiche reminds us that our own story is never the only one. She encourages us to be open, curious, and aware of the differences between our perspective and other people's perspectives, and at the same time to refrain from stereotyping people. This balance can be hard to achieve, but it's ultimately very important to our work as writing center consultants—and, I would argue, to the work of building community.

Throughout the semester, the interns read lots more texts [03:00] that shaped their thinking about this project, including "Changing Notions of Difference in the Writing Center" by Jean Kiedaisch and Sue Dinitz, "Should Writers Use Their Own English?" by Vershawn Ashanti Young, and excerpts from *Multilingual Writers and Writing Centers* by Ben Rafoth, the *Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring* by Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner, and *Engaging Ideas* by John Bean.

One final note: The scenarios used in this assignment weren't all written by me. They were [03:30] created over a period of 7 years by the very talented graduate student administrators at the University of Texas at Austin Writing Center. You can read the full list of their names by visiting uwc.utexas.edu and clicking Podcast.

On behalf of the UWC internship class of 2023, we hope you enjoy listening to How We Consult.