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**Presentation Title:** Mavericks in our Midst: Creative Writing in the Writing Center

**Presentation Category:** Practice

**Type:** Round Table

**Abstract:**

In this roundtable discussion, creative writers who work as writing center consultants and administrators at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) invite participants to imagine how we might prepare tutors to work with creative writing and how creative writing techniques can support writing center goals. Roundtable attendees of all writing backgrounds will leave with ideas for how to respond to creative writing and adapt its pedagogies in their own writing centers.

**Proposal:**

Writing centers have historically occupied a liminal place in the North American university; they share this positionality with creative writing programs. Both entities are mavericks who can undermine the neoliberal drive to standardize, and both can offer students a rare and important opportunity: to have their work read closely, and to be taken seriously as writers. While several scholars have made the case for knowledge sharing between these two subfields, the discourse has remained slight, leaving many questions unanswered or barely asked. In this roundtable, we invite attendees to explore with us how these complementary ecologies of practice can inform and enrich each other.

One strand of the conversation about creative writing in writing centers has focused on a perceived difficulty in responding to creative writers: If we bring more creative writing into the writing center, will tutors be equipped to respond? Kenneth Pobo has suggested that the work of a writing center tutor is not so different from the work of a creative writing instructor, while Hans Ostrom argues that our tendency to mystify creative writing obscures the fact that a tutor prepared to address unfamiliar scholarly genres is also prepared to address creative writing. Katherine and John Adams have suggested that creative writing pedagogy has already had a deep impact on writing center pedagogy, and writing center practitioners Annesley Anderson, Lea Masiello, Beverly Connor, and Julie Neff have noted that exercises like those used in creative writing classrooms can be beneficial for students who visit the writing center.

Our Writing Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is a particularly fruitful place to consider the role of creative writing in the writing center. The English Department, which houses UNL's Writing Center, offers study in both creative writing and composition at the undergraduate, masters, and doctoral levels. Consequently, there is a high level of interest and expertise in these fields among our students, faculty, and writing center staff. Our roundtable

presenters all identify as both writing center practitioners and creative writers, and we will speak to and from both areas of fluency to investigate this topic. To frame this roundtable conversation, we will first draw on WCOOnline client report forms to snapshot the types of creative writing that student-writers bring to our writing center and the strategies that our tutors have deployed to address fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. With this information, we will ask how we might prepare tutors to work with creative writing, how we might encourage creative writers to use the writing center, and how creative writing techniques can support writing center goals. We will also explore how our backgrounds as creative writers inform our writing center work. Whether we are conducting workshops in collaboration with faculty partners across the disciplines or devising generative exercises to help our writers overcome writer's block, we understand our doubly-mavericked identity to be a valuable asset. Roundtable attendees of all writing backgrounds will leave with ideas for how to respond to creative writing and adapt its pedagogies in their own writing centers.

#### **Works Cited:**

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