

Distilling Vision in the Pot of Dissonance - SoCal WCA 2026 Tutor Conference Script

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Introduction

- “Hello! My name is Jillian, I’m an undergraduate consultant...”
- Zoë introduces herself
- “And we hail from the writing center down at Concordia University Irvine! We are so excited to be leading this workshop session! First off, we’d like to thank the SoCal Writing Center Association for the opportunity to share our presentation. It’s such a gift to be able to meet with other people who love the collaborative experience of writing as much as we do.”
- “We’d also like to acknowledge the hard work of Camille Beeson, who was originally scheduled to facilitate this workshop with me, but she was unfortunately unable to make it today. But she poured many hours into planning this presentation and we wanted to acknowledge her contribution.”
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- Zoë explains thesis and structure of presentation (this workshop will happen in 3 phases, journal is your companion guide, we will direct you to pages as we work)
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- “I’d like us to begin the session with a memory. Think about a time when you completed a consultation and felt totally energized. Maybe you felt like the guiding questions you asked or the words of advice you offered were just what your client needed for that step in their writing journey. But maybe it wasn’t just the client’s reaction — maybe you also felt like you had successfully conveyed the values and methods that matter most to you as a consultant and a writer. Like you had represented yourself and your center well. Isn’t that the best feeling? These are the moments we live for as consultants.
- “But in times of dissonance and confusion, these moments may feel few and far between. Sometimes we get stuck in the gap between our client’s expectations and our intentions. Sometimes there’s just a disconnect across the space of the table between us and we can’t quite figure out what it is. Ultimately, these kinds of moments are inevitable when we’re working with other wonderfully complex human beings. But what if there was a way to reduce the frequency that they occur at? To create more moments like the ones we thought of earlier?
- We believe that this can be accomplished by *distilling our vision*. By intentionally thinking about the things that matter to us and then implementing them tangibly into our work.

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- Today, our workshop is going to be divided into three steps, as we learn how to distill our team’s vision into a personal philosophy, enact our philosophy in our sessions, and display our philosophy through the high-impact practice of E-Portfolios. Each step will include a presentation, a time of silent reflection through writing in those handy booklets you received, and a group discussion.
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Step One: Distilling Group Vision to Personal Philosophy

Presentation

- “So how exactly does one go about developing a personal philosophy? A great place to start is with your writing center’s mission statement or vision statement. We’ll be using those terms interchangeably, but the general idea is that these are the unifying principles that act as a compass for you and your staff. Maybe this statement has an official spot on your university’s website. Maybe you treat it more like an ongoing conversation in staff meetings. Either way, it serves as a great jumping off point to consider what you want your personal philosophy to look like.
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- “As an example, here’s our writing center’s mission statement:
- Zoë reads: “In accordance with the University’s mission, the Writing Studio seeks to empower students as life-long critical thinkers and clear communicators by supporting their development as writers. We believe that writers across all disciplines, at all skill levels, and at any stage in the writing process, benefit from genuine dialogue about their writing. Through one-on-one conferencing and group workshops we act as listeners and guides, respecting and supporting a diverse range of writers as they ask questions, solve problems, and discover new ideas in order to communicate effectively. During this process, we seek to equip students with strategies for future writing tasks so that they may develop into confident, independent thinkers and writers.”
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- Back to Jillian: “Having a clear sense of why we work the way we do helps us to navigate the pot of dissonance in a variety of ways. Vision statements act as a guide, reminding us what direction we should be moving in during all of our consultations and interactions with others.

- “Another significant source of dissonance that we encounter in the writing center is misperception about our purpose. We’ve all heard the classic request from a client for us to just fix their grammar or tell them what’s wrong with their paper. When we have a clear vision statement in mind for ourselves and our center, we can respond to these kinds of misunderstandings with both kindness and confidence, offering easy clarification about the more engaging and applicable kind of help we want to offer.”
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Activity

- “Now we’re going to move into a time of silent reflection through writing, as we consider what we want our personal philosophy to look like. Please open those booklets you were given to page two. You’ll have the next five minutes to record your thoughts.”
- Find your writing center’s vision/mission statement. If you don’t have one, do you have student learning outcomes? Using these as a jumping-off point, brainstorm 5 core values that seem most important to you and your fellow consultants.
- Which 2 or 3 of these values are most important to *you*?
- Where and how might you have felt a distance between how you perceive your goal as a consultant, what your clients want or expect, and what you actually end up focusing on in the day-to-day grind?
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Discussion (Zoë)

- “Now, we’ll move into our first discussion. Consider these questions on the screen with the people around you.”
- Does your center have a vision/mission statement? If not, do you have student learning outcomes? Do you think about them or discuss them as a staff, and if so, how frequently?
- Share some of the personal values you wrote down during journaling.
- How can these values guide your consultations when you encounter dissonance with a client?
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Step Two: Enacting Philosophy in Our Sessions

Presentation

- “I’ll admit that living out our values in an actual session is definitely easier said than done. It’s easy to say that I want to make the writing process more enjoyable for

students, but how do I actually do that? That’s why we are going to offer some practical methods to help you carry that out. Not incidentally, these methods are all based on the idea of self-reflection.

- “What does self reflection have to do with living out your values? Well, developing a sense of self-awareness is often the first step to changing your behavior, and there’s research to support this.
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- “Lyons and Zelazo, in their study on self-regulation, explain the importance of the practice this way: “Just as regulatory agencies cannot enforce laws without actually monitoring whether companies are adhering to them, human self-regulatory systems cannot adequately control their behavior without some degree of awareness of the ongoing operations of the system.” Developing an awareness of the way we act in sessions – the operations of our system – will help us to adjust our future consultations for the better.
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- “Additionally, research has found that self reflection helps us to better understand other people and their perspectives – namely, our clients. In their study on Perspective Taking and Empathy, Gerace, Day, Casey, and Mohr found that “Reflection on one’s own past experiences (e.g., relationship problems; bereavement) makes it easier to take the viewpoint of another person in a similar situation, but this requires both increased perceptions of similarity and cognitive processing of the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that accompanied one’s own experience” (see Gerace, Day, Casey, & Mohr, 2015)
- “As you can see, self-reflection has a number of benefits. It allows us to empathize with our clients more easily, and to change our own behavior more intentionally.
- “So how do we incorporate self-reflection into our sessions? One way is through the practice of journaling.
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- “In our writing center at Concordia, each consultant owns a journal, which we received during our staff training at the beginning of the year. We use these journals to take notes during and after our consultations. Our primary goal through this notetaking is to identify and distill our immediate thoughts and emotions post session, and then to consider how effective and helpful our approach was for our client.
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- “In this process of self-reflection, there are two kinds of questions that guide us: those that we ask our clients, and those that we ask ourselves. The questions we ask our clients offer us repeatable data to collect and consider, and the questions we ask ourselves take us deeper into what our response to that data will be.
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- “As an example, here are a few of the questions we ask our clients during sessions:
- “Before we examine the paper, we ask: “What do you want me to look for?” or, “What aspects of your writing do you want me to pay attention to?” Later in your journaling, you can compare their request to what you actually accomplished.
- “After reading through the paper together, we ask: “What is one thing you did well and one thing you want to improve upon?” In future reflection, this temperature check helps you to see the student’s ability to diagnose their own work, and creates space for them to set the session agenda. It’s also just a useful gauge for the kinds of concerns that come up most often in students’ writing.
- “Finally, at the end of the session, we ask, “What was the most helpful part of our session today?” As you journal on this later, the answer to this question will help you reflect not only on where you feel you led best, but also what was the most valuable aspect for the client.
- “As for the second kind of question – the ones we ask ourselves – we’ve included a few examples of those on page four of your booklets.
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Activity

- “Now, we’ll be moving into our second time of journaling. Consider these questions in your booklet:
- Have you reflected through writing on your experiences as a consultant before? Did you find it beneficial for your improvement in your work?
- What are the guiding questions you find yourself asking most often in sessions? What kinds of insights do you gain from the answers?
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Discussion (Zoë)

- Share some of the guiding questions you wrote down.
- What other aspects of the consultation do you want to consider in your future post-session reflections?

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Section 3: Distilling on Display in ePortfolios

Intro: one of the key moves that needs to happen for self-reflection to foster alignment and effective change is taking your reflections and working meaningfully with them to analyze, synthesize, and otherwise critically engage with them at a later time. For us, the key to this work is tying reflection to a deliverable and a deadline to encourage this work. We're going to share with you the method our Writing Studio Staff employs to craft meaningful work that can be shared with your writing center and beyond: the ePortfolio!

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What is an ePortfolio?

A website/digital space that displays your work in meaningful ways. There are many sites available to help host this work, including WordPress, Squarespace, Canva websites, Canvas ePortfolios, and Google Sites. Some of these include paid options for graduating seniors who want to customize their pieces according to their future job market. As a staff, while we have access to Canvas and Google Sites for free, some staff prefer hosting their ePortfolio on other digital platforms to ensure they can maintain it post-graduation.

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What's in an ePortfolio?

Your ePortfolio should be customized to you and include an author bio, picture and intentional navigation to ease reader experience. The other content can be cocreated by staff or selected by your leadership team to offer consistent opportunities for your writing center staff to display their work. While these materials are typically included in eportfolios, each has been carefully prompted to evoke direct work with our staff vision and values:

- Job Materials
- Consultant Development
- Scholarship
- Personal Touches
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- “Job materials”
 - Tutoring philosophy statement
 - Resume with writing center job listed
 - This helps foster understanding and intentional integration of current work with narrative of work beyond WC. These pieces are often used in educational fields and graduate school applications, so are both philosophical and pragmatic.

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- Consultant development
 - Observation reflections
 - Annual goals and reflections
 - Timebound reflections help consultants mark their own progress in real time and reflect on how they develop throughout the AY

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- Scholarship
 - Annotated Bibliography on WC scholarship (Year 1)
 - Key Term exploration (Year 2)
 - Significant contributions to the staff (posters, marketing, statistics, SoCal WCA presentations)
 - Original research
 - Often, our role as WC consultants is the first time we learn that WC is its own field with its own scholarship. This display of scholarship in our field is more than an invitation; it’s proof that you are an active member of the field.

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- Personal touches!
 - Creative work, significant work from throughout the year in other classes or jobs
 - Fosters connection and understanding of how WC work influences your work in other realms

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Activity (Journalling)

- Why do you think “displaying” your work might concretize self-reflection into meaningful action?
- Looking at the example ePortfolio prompts, which sound exciting or interesting to you? What other ideas might be fun to incorporate in an ePortfolio?
- What barriers might you encounter in creating your own ePortfolio/implementing this practice as a staff?

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Discussion

- Share what you wrote about with those around you. Be ready to share what sounds most exciting or valuable for your own staff.
- What questions do you have about ePortfolios and how self-reflection can be meaningfully shared?

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Thank you for joining us today. Your booklet contains our contact information if you'd like to stay in touch and share your staff reflections and ePortfolios with us. The QR code also has links to our presentation, script, booklet PDF, ePortfolio prompts, and related materials so you can continue exploring this in your own time. Thank you!