Every Writer Needs a Reader

For the past three years, I’ve been working at the UMass Writing Center, located in the Learning Commons on the lower level of the DuBois Library. I first heard about the job at my New Students Orientation back in 2010. When I told my advisor that I like to write, he suggested I apply. My mom used to joke that it was the perfect job for me because I liked to correct people all the time. So I applied at the end of my freshman year, and I was hired as a tutor intern.

When I started my training, I quickly learned that tutoring was far more than just correcting people’s spelling. All tutor interns are required to take two honors-level courses in writing pedagogy while working limited hours in the Center. These courses challenged everything I thought I knew about writing centers, tutoring, and writing in general. I remember the first paper I was assigned asked me to define what I thought constituted “good writing.” I used to believe it was all about perfect presentation and never making mistakes. But as it turns out, writing is about so much more than that.

The biggest thing I’ve gained from tutoring is perspective. I’ve learned to see writing as a conversation between thoughts and language, something that’s never truly refined, but always dynamic and exciting because it can be done in so many different ways. I’ve become more open to different styles of writing, as well as the different flavors of writers who visit the Writing Center. These people exhibit a broad range of experience, backgrounds, writing and learning styles, and they all bring such interesting voices to this conversation of writing. I’ve learned so much, not just from my training, but from the people I work with and for. I’ve read everything from political philosophy, to personal narratives, to scientific experiments. This constant connection to writing and the transfer of ideas has inspired me to keep writing and learning on my own, both in my Honors Project and in my personal writing endeavor, The 9 to 5 Adventurer Project.
The Writing Center is currently accepting applications for students interested in becoming tutor interns. This is a great opportunity to explore, talk about, and teach writing, and I would highly recommend applying. For more information, see the Writing Center website.

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