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From the Editors

Absence and presence. We've streamlined this editorial process (for the most part) to such a degree that we do not necessarily need to be together, in the same space, making the final edits and preparing *The Writing Center Journal* to go to press. Yet twice a year, we cross out a day or two, and take over a house or two, to sit side by side with our laptops, working independently together. An absent present in many ways.

Absence and presence as concepts have been quite contested in academic circles over the past several decades, and the articles in this issue call into question the ways in which this contestation comes to bear on our writing center work. Beginning with what has come to be a semi-regular feature, we not only need to wonder where founding *WCJ* co-editor Lil Brannon is now, we also need to wonder why we ever thought she was gone at all.

Ever-present on our campuses—indeed, in our writing centers—are the faculty members for whom students are writing. Though many of them might never set foot in our tutoring spaces, their expectations loom large over our sessions. In “Taking on Turnitin: Tutors Advocating Change,” Fallon et al. consider students’ rights to their own texts in light of the increasing prevalence of plagiarism detection services (especially, obviously, Turnitin.com). What, Fallon and his co-authors wonder, is the role of tutors and of the writing center in resisting the encroachment of corporate interests in intellectual property discussions?

Students, however, are not the only people whose presence is regulated in the writing center. Tutors themselves are subject to surveillance, not only by the faculty members with whose students they work, but also by the directors charged with guiding those same tutors toward more effective pedagogy. Michael Mattison, in his article “Someone to Watch Over Me: Reflection and Authority in the Writing Center,” takes a practice common to most writing center staff education efforts, one which could be considered not only typical but also effective and, indeed, responsible, and lays it bare for our examination. Drawing on Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, Mattison exposes potential limitations of reflective practice, particularly when it leads tutors to feel surveilled and to internalize systems of surveillance in a manner that leaves them feeling self-conscious rather than self-assured and anxious rather than self-aware.

While our first two articles rely on absent authority figures, our final article, Steve Sherwood’s “Portrait of the Tutor as an Artist: Lessons No One Can Teach,” explores the importance of presence when tutoring. With the increasing prevalence of online tutoring options, physical presence is no longer a precondition of one-to-one tutoring, and Sherwood reminds us that there are many ways to absent oneself

in interpersonal interactions, even when sitting right next to a writer, talking about a piece of writing. With no one “right” way to be fully present in a tutoring session, Sherwood explores options for tutors seeking to embrace the moment, to think artistically and resist rigid notions of tutoring.

Finally, too often, high school teachers serve as scapegoats for students’ poor writing skills and negative attitudes toward writing. In spite of the important contributions of many writing center scholars, high school centers remain under-represented in our discussions of theory and practice. The two reviews in this issue highlight not only what K-12 writing centers can take from writing center scholarship in general but also what they contribute to the field’s understanding of a developmental model for literacy instruction. Catherine Oriani reviews Richard Kent’s *A Guide to Creating a Student-Staffed Writing Center: Grades 6-12* and Anne Ellen Geller reviews Cathy Toll’s *The Literacy Coaches’ Desk Reference*. Together, these guides encourage us to think about the opportunities for dynamic relationships between and among our different locales.