

# EQUITY STATEMENT

*The Writing Center produced the following Equity Statement as a guiding document to accompany our Mission Statement and Core Values. This statement was written collaboratively, and has been reviewed by the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.*

The Wofford Writing Center is committed to serving our community equitably. We reject a view of language support where our work would erase linguistic variety in the name of “correctness.” We reaffirm that [students have a right to their own language](#), as the Conference on College Composition and Communication has since 1974. This commitment does not mean withholding valuable information about academic writing. By discussing academic expectations as they are - changeable histories of language use within disciplines - not as absolute truths, we give writers more nuanced ways of navigating their work at college without denying their own voices.

Everyone’s sense of self is deeply connected to the individual ways they use language. [Historically](#), the standardization and policing of language - the idea that there is only one right way to communicate - has been a tool for maintaining power hierarchies, and in American educational institutions, Standard Written English as the norm has upheld [white language patterns](#) to the exclusion of other languages. At Wofford, which is a predominately white, private institution that was built by enslaved people and which is currently situated in a majority-minority city, we can be sure that our judgments of language are impacted by the broader history of racial inequity in the United States. Acknowledging this fact is particularly important in our current historical moment, when efforts to account for past racial injustice within our institutions [are increasingly politicized](#).

In the context of writing centers, students or their professors may expect us to make sure their work is “fixed” before they leave a session - but that idea supposes that their writing comes to us “broken.” Approaching writing from the [perspective of deficit](#) in this way negatively impacts writers and their learning. Students bring rich language resources to their work, and we do a disservice to them and to our community when the language in our classrooms - not just what we study, but also what we *write* - cannot include multilingual expression, including Black English, regional dialects, or the many other tools that students bring with them. There is such a thing as error in writing - but many of the things we are taught to consider errors are in fact rules-governed features of writers’ languages that can and should have a place in educational environments.

Beyond supporting linguistic variety, the Writing Center is committed to supporting the diverse range of ideas writers bring to us, as well as their variety of approaches to the writing process. Because we work one-on-one, each person who comes in can tell us what they need, as the authority on their own project. This listening-first approach guides our practice, but there is more to be done. As Wofford diversifies as an institution, we must ensure that the educational spaces students enter are set up to celebrate and support them. For people who identify with groups that have been underrepresented at Wofford, in terms of race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, gender, sexuality, or economic status, we cannot assume that our space is automatically ready to offer the support that people need. So, in addition to our listening-centered philosophy, we also have more specific commitments about how an equity perspective impacts every aspect of our operations. [Our list of practical commitments is on the next page.]

# EQUITY PRACTICES

*The following list of practical equity measures accompanies the Equity Statement on the previous page. As a center, we commit to pursuing equity in our work in the following ways.*

## SESSIONS

- Supporting multilingual writing & dialects
- Not pressuring writers to conform to any mode of expression
- Offering online consultations
- Protecting confidentiality
- Refusing to “guarantee” any outcome in student writing

## HIRING

- Posting job ads widely
- Emphasizing our translanguaging philosophy in our job ads and emphasizing multilingual skills as a sought-after qualification
- Reaching out to all departments in seeking applicants
- Reaching out to multicultural student orgs about applying
- Inviting people who visit us as writers to apply

## TRAINING

- Including anti-racist & translanguaging perspectives on writing instruction in training new consultants
- Continually keeping up to date with anti-racist ideas in writing instruction during ongoing staff trainings
- Engaging with scholars from the communities they’re writing about (scholars of color for antiracist work, disabled scholars for disability work, etc.)
- Creating a process of self-reflection for all consultants
- Giving more explicit rhetorical training to new staff as a way of leveling the playing field

## PROGRAMMING

- Developing programs that might help support students on specific applications meant for diverse community members
- Partnering with multicultural student organizations to create events that would serve them

## RESOURCES

- Obtaining & creating online & physical resources for students that would serve equity goals:
  - Tools for multilingual writers
  - Guidance on best practices for writing about race and difference
  - Information about navigating gendered language and pronouns
  - A storehouse of linguistically diverse academic writing as examples of what is possible

## PARTNERSHIPS

- Exploring the possibility of partnering with educational institutions in the larger Spartanburg community, perhaps providing support for local students in their college applications
- Partnering with offices on campus on building out trainings for our staff around equity issues

## PHYSICAL AND ONLINE SPACES

- Creating visibility for the linguistic variety of successful academic writing in our physical and online spaces
- Regularly meeting with Accessibility Services to reconsider needed changes to our physical space
- Creating more equitable access to information by building out our online space
- Making our commitment to equity principles visible in physical & online spaces
- Providing a range of tools for students with different learning needs

## ACCOUNTABILITY

- Seeking input from Wofford students to hear from them directly about what is and isn’t working for them in our programming