Session Title: How a System Birthed Dialogs: The Place of Technology in Writing
                Centers
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Abstract:

The realization of how central technology is to our Center began as we undertook a collaborative project with a capstone computer science class at Evergreen to develop our web-based appointment system. This was a unique opportunity in that the discussion that resulted is not often held within the microcosm of a Writing Center community. Certainly, other instances of software development exist within writing centers – Oregon State University's efforts to create software for general writing center use, for instance – but this conversation afforded a unique opportunity to examine ourselves from a distance. What started as a theoretical idea evolved into a conversation about a very concrete project that changed the way the Writing Center operates.

Creating space for the discussion of how we should implement our new scheduling system has spawned a larger discussion of where we fit within the Evergreen community, as well as a more specific discussion of where technology fits within the confines of the Writing Center itself. However, that specific discussion brought to a head another set of crucial questions: what does a conversation about technology look like? Who should facilitate that discussion and be responsible for implementing and monitoring any agreed-upon outcomes? How can we best emphasize the place that technology has in our centers while still maintaining some degree of transparency? We attempt to answer these questions this year with the hire of an Information Technology Manager, dedicated not only to ensuring the availability of technological resources, but to opening and continuing a dialog about how technology reinforces our ideals, influences our everyday operations, and continues to improve the experience of students walking in the door. In many ways, the creation of our new appointment system has necessitated this position, but has also thrown into question how we perceive the importance of technology in our work.

But the largest question is one of continuity: now that we have created this hire, is it something that should continue? Is the hire's impact significant enough to warrant a continued line item in our biennial budget?

While describing our ongoing conversations about technology, we will move from the micro view of the scheduling system into the macro view of technology in writing centers, focusing particularly on how our conversation continues to shift from the perspectives of the Information Technology Manager and the Writing Center director. Throughout, the audience will be invited to participate, as our purpose is not so much to present a single point of view, but to reach a better understanding of how technology "fits in" to our vision and practical, daily interactions with others.