

## Book Review

# Cayley, R., Coll, F., & Newman, D. A. (2025). Writing Together: Building Social Writing Opportunities for Graduate Students. University of Michigan Press.

Reviewed by Matt Rahimian  
Huron University

*Writing Together: Building Social Writing Opportunities for Graduate Students* is a thoughtfully curated collection of 14 chapters and 142 pages exploring and explaining different strategies and practices used by writing centers to support graduate students in forming and sustaining writing groups. Accompanied by an insightful introduction on the book project and explanations on sociality, the volume not only outlines theoretical considerations but also offers a range of practical approaches that reflect the diversity of institutional contexts and student needs.

In the introduction, the editors present *sociality* as a foundational concept that informs the creation and facilitation of graduate writing groups. They define sociality as the intentional design of writing environments that foster interaction, connection, and mutual academic support. This theoretical lens advocates for the idea that writing is not a solitary activity, but a communal process enriched by dialogue, shared experience, and structured support. The editors emphasize that graduate student writing is marked by both variety and complexity, involving a wide array of academic tasks that often require sustained motivation and peer feedback. As such, fostering a sense of social connection can be instrumental in helping students navigate these challenges.

Throughout the book, the concept of sociality is explored and enacted through a variety of institutional case studies. Each chapter provides a window into how different universities have approached the task of creating and nurturing graduate writing communities. While some chapters offer rich theoretical reflections on the role of writing groups in academic life, the majority of them are more practice-oriented, detailing the logistics of recruitment, scheduling, facilitation, and program evaluation. This balance between theory and practice ensures that the book is accessible to a broad audience, including writing center professionals, faculty, administrators, and graduate students themselves.

This book offers two significant contributions:

1. It provides writing center practitioners with a range of strategies for applying sociality as a guiding framework to establish, manage, and evaluate graduate writing groups.
2. It offers rich case-based insights for scholars interested in writing center work and the collaborative dimensions of academic writing.

The editors summarize the themes governing graduate writing groups at different institutions into nine categories: building confidence among writers, providing care and support, navigating emotional challenges associated with writing, creating social learning sites, encouraging writing in communities, enhancing supportive communities, creating collaborative learning environments, creating reflection opportunities, acknowledging the existing isolating situations.

The editors then outline eight key considerations for organizing effective graduate writing groups: group size, program duration, group composition, meeting platforms, hospitality practices, facilitation models, funding structures, and modes of interaction. Each of these elements plays a crucial role in shaping the group experience. For instance, group composition can affect the dynamics of trust and participation, while the platform used—whether online or in-person—can influence accessibility and engagement. Attention to hospitality, such as creating welcoming physical or virtual environments, further underscores the importance of care and intentionality in fostering inclusive writing spaces.

Further, the editors stress the role of evaluation in sustaining these programs. Regular assessment not only helps in understanding what works but also provides evidence to justify the continuation and potential expansion of writing group initiatives. This emphasis on reflective practice encourages writing center staff and facilitators to adapt their programs to better meet student needs and respond to institutional goals.

By showcasing shared practices and diverse models of graduate writing groups, this collection serves as a valuable resource for writing center professionals seeking to foster community-oriented initiatives. Although the primary focus is on graduate students, the strategies and conceptual frameworks presented are readily adaptable to undergraduate contexts as well. For institutions looking to increase engagement, build writing confidence, and reduce isolation among students, this book offers a roadmap rooted in real-world examples.

The intentional emphasis on practical implementation is a notable strength of the book. The chapters theoretical explorations are minimized, opting instead to focus on what has worked in practice, what

challenges they encountered, and how they addressed them. This approach makes the book especially useful for those who are tasked with launching or maintaining writing groups and who require accessible, actionable guidance. At the same time, readers interested in the pedagogical and administrative rationale behind writing groups will find plenty of thoughtful commentary embedded in the case studies.

Furthermore, the book pays attention to the emotional and psychological dimensions of graduate writing. Writing at the graduate level can be a deeply personal and often anxiety-inducing experience. Isolation, imposter syndrome, and perfectionism are common challenges. Several contributors to the volume reflect on how writing groups can serve as safe spaces for students to share vulnerabilities, celebrate small wins, and sustain motivation over time. In this way, writing groups are presented not just as academic tools, but as vital forms of peer-based emotional support.

Some chapters also explore the professional development opportunities embedded in writing group facilitation. Graduate students who take on leadership roles in organizing and facilitating groups gain valuable experience in mentoring, program planning, and community building—skills that are transferable to academic and non-academic career paths. This emphasis on skill-building adds another layer of value to the writing group model, suggesting that such initiatives benefit not only participants but also student leaders.

While the book's emphasis is clearly on practice, readers seeking a more in-depth theoretical exploration of sociality and writing pedagogy might find the discussion limited. However, this is arguably a deliberate choice by the editors, intended to foreground concrete examples and make the content accessible to those working in resource-limited or non-academic settings. Even so, the theoretical touchpoints that are included—such as the emphasis on connection, collaboration, and community—are thoughtfully integrated and provide a solid foundation for those who wish to explore these ideas further. Additionally, each chapter can be read as a case exploring the topic of sociality at different institutions; therefore, they provide solid cases that can be used in theoretical discussions as well.

Overall, *Writing Together* is an engaging and timely contribution to the literature on writing center practices. Its focus on graduate student support, combined with a strong emphasis on community-building and inclusion, makes it a practical guide and a source of inspiration. Writing center professionals, faculty advisors, and higher education administrators will find it a useful tool for reimagining how institutional support for graduate writers can be structured. The book's emphasis on sociality offers a compelling reminder that writing is not merely an individual task, but a shared journey that thrives in supportive, well-designed communities.