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WESTERN HIGHER EDUCATION IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS

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Expansion and Internationalization of Higher Education in Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East

Series Editor: Hassan Bashir

This series is an interdisciplinary examination of the development of Western-style educational institutions outside Europe and North America. It welcomes approaches across academic disciplines, but most notably politics, economics, sociology, and educational theory, which focus either on the development of higher education in specific regions, or similarities and differences between educational projects between regions. Volumes in the series may choose to interrogate the history of the development of these branches and foreign campuses, the political impetus for their development, the sociological effects of the rise of foreign campuses in Asia and Africa, and/or the specific pedagogical challenges faced by practitioners in these institutions. This series particularly welcomes critical reflections about the role of these institutions as imperial projects or as expansions of Western hegemony, or, conversely, reflections on the relationships between universities and non-democratic regimes, including texts which engage with how the norms of academic life have been modified by the locus of education abroad.

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Western Higher Education in Global Contexts, edited by Mohanalakshmi Rajakumar

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Edited by Mohanalakshmi Rajakumar

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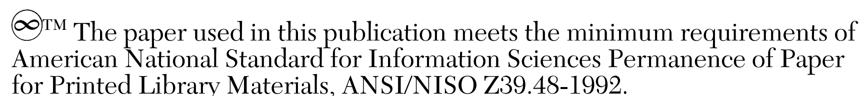
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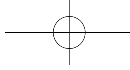

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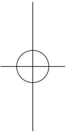

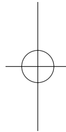

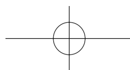

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1

WRITING CENTERS AND ACADEMIC PROFESSIONALIZATION IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Ashley Squires

The first American-style writing center in the former Soviet Union was founded in 2011 at the New Economic School (NES) in Russia. The Writing and Communication Center (WCC), as it is called, was created in order to serve the Joint Bachelor's Program in Economics, founded in the same year as a cooperative effort between NES and the Higher School of Economics (HSE). This program, which is entirely unique in Russia, functions very much like an honors program at an American university, offering a liberal arts education to students seeking degrees in economics. In its organizational model and pedagogical philosophy, the WCC looks very much like undergraduate writing centers in the United States, providing as its primary service individual consultation sessions to students on writing projects connected with their studies and their aspirations upon graduation, such as job and graduate school applications. The WCC also employs a mix of professional and non-professional staff. Experienced writing teachers work alongside peer tutors from both the United States (who come to Russia as part of an internship program) and from the Joint Bachelor's Program itself, which, as of the writing of this chapter, is made up entirely of Russian students.[1]

Since the founding of the WCC, several Russian universities have established writing centers of their own. Of the fourteen other writing centers that currently exist in Russia, all describe the types of services

you would expect to find at a university writing center in the United States: one-on-one tutoring sessions, master-classes, and online/paper resources on different aspects of academic writing. Many also describe pedagogical philosophies that echo the orthodoxies of American writing centers, including a sharp differentiation between their services and that of a proofreading or translating service. However, there is one very key difference: of these fifteen Russian writing centers, only the WCC at NES serves undergraduates as its primary constituency. The other fourteen were created primarily to serve the needs of *faculty* and graduate students preparing for research careers.[2]

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the development of writing centers in Russia, particularly with respect to this signal difference, in the changes currently underway in Russian academia. Driven by top-down, state-initiated efforts to improve the global rankings of native universities, Russian academics are under increasing pressure to publish internationally, which typically means publishing in English. Writing centers are therefore emerging to facilitate the professional development needs of Russian researchers. Those centers are, however, in the process of developing their own professional identity, much as writing centers in the United States have done. This identity is influenced by the model developed in the United States but reflects the very particular challenges of operating in present-day Russia as well as the disciplinary affiliations of Russian writing specialists.

PROFESSIONALIZATION: THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

The sociology and history of disciplinary formation and academic professionalization have typically been studied in the Anglo-American context, particularly focusing on the late-nineteenth century, when the modern disciplines were formed. However, comparative work on central Europe and Russia is available.[3] The term *professionalization* refers to a social process by which an occupation or trade is elevated to a level of cultural authority and honor stemming from practitioners' privileged access to the knowledge and skills associated with their discipline. Historians like Burton Bledstein (1978, ch.1) and Samuel Haber (1991, ix–xiv) describe professionals as a class of intellectual elites who stand between the occupational worlds of the worker, who must sell his labor,

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and the businessman who hires it. Professionals hold allegiance to a set of internally enforced norms and values rather than to the market. As Haber (1991) says, "[T]he tradesmen and artisans gave their customers what they wanted. The professional gave his clients and patients what he thought would be good for them" (xii).

For Louis Menand (2010), the two signal features of professionalization are "credentialization and specialization." Professions are by definition exclusive entities that control admission through instruments like licensing exams and dissertation defenses. Entrance into a profession is likewise controlled by other members of that profession. Doctors are educated by other doctors, lawyers by other lawyers. Graduation, hiring, and tenure decisions are made by academic departments, not directly by boards of trustees or university presidents, who, if they become involved, do so on the advice of practitioners and not based on their own judgment alone. Menand (2010) also recognizes that there are "contradictory impulses," at once democratic and elitist, at work in the concept of professionalism. In their ideal sense—not the use to which they are often put in practice—the traditions and values of professionalism support the aspirations of a meritocratic society: "You can't inherit your occupational status; you have to earn it through some credentialing process in which every entrant is treated equally." But professions are also exclusive, controlling the supply of credentials and thereby credentialed individuals in order to ensure high status and relatively high income for their practitioners (ch. 3. sec. 2).

Comparative studies of the professions have revealed key differences between the Anglo-American experience and that of continental Europe, particularly as concerns the relationship of the professions to the state. The late-nineteenth century establishment of the Anglo-American professions is largely characterized by efforts to combat *laissez-faire* entrepreneurialism by cajoling the state into regulating licensure and enforcing the right of professional organizations to determine who can and cannot practice. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, for instance, American doctors, represented by the American Medical Association, lobbied state legislatures and the federal government to restrict the rights of individuals to practice medicine without a license (Haber 1991, 319–59; Starr 1982, 79–145). The right to restrict entrance into a profession and the monopoly power over credentials held by such professional organizations was historically viewed as essen-

tial for ensuring high standards and protecting the public from quacks and charlatans.

Most developed European countries in the late-nineteenth century, however, had powerful—even autocratic—state institutions and relatively weak entrepreneurial cultures. As Kendall Bailes (1996) indicates, this tended to be the case in France and Germany as well as in Russia, where "professionals did not have to battle a strongly entrenched entrepreneurial ideal in the culture that limited the role of the state. The state already was interventionist and, in fact, helped bring into being most of the modern professional occupations" (43). In Russia, the tsarist state apparatus was responsible for educating and raising up the specialists it needed for administration, creating universities and technical schools for this purpose. The Great Reforms enacted after the Crimean War and the abolition of serfdom, however, opened up educational opportunities to a broader public (including women) and gave impetus to the rise of modern professions in Imperial Russia, particularly in medicine, law, and engineering (Iarskaia-Smirnova and Abramov 2016, ch. 19). But while loosely fettered markets were the primary challenge to the Anglo-American professions, in Russia, "the dilemma of the professionals was to free themselves from the tutelage of the state, while still using the state for their own ends" (Bailes 1996, 43). According to Harley Balzar (1996), "Each shred of professional autonomy had to be wrested from a resistant administration that was likely to seek to reimpose restrictions at the first sign of adverse consequences or 'irresponsible' behavior" (13).

The rise of the modern university and modern academic disciplines occurred in tandem with the rise of the modern professions. Professions require credentials, and universities are good at supplying them (Menand 2010, ch. 3, sec. 2). But the university faculty in the late-nineteenth century had to negotiate tensions between their duties as professionals and the demands of the market and/or the state. American universities, for instance, tended to resist instrumentalism in the service of industrial capitalism. Under the reign of Charles Eliot, president of Harvard from 1869 to 1909 and a shaper of higher education in the United States, the division between liberal education, which emphasized the formation of the citizen and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and vocational education emerged. By keeping them separate, Eliot "enabled the college to preserve its anti-utilitarian ethos in an

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increasingly secular and utilitarian age. [. . .] He thought that utility should be stressed everywhere in the professional schools but nowhere in the colleges" (Menand 2010, ch. 1, sec. 4).

Russian universities argued similarly for their redefinition as "scientific-teaching institutions" rather than vocational schools in their quest for freedom from excessive state control. "Professors who taught and trained future civil servants had a hard time arguing why the government should not treat them like employees, but professors who devoted their lives to pure research, which in turn was the only guarantee of effective teaching, could make a much stronger argument for academic freedom and university 'autonomy.'" Like their Anglo-American counterparts, liberal Russian professors believed in a civic role for universities, seeing them as a way of promoting positive social change while "avoiding the pitfalls of revolution from below" (Kassow 1996, 197).

After the revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks set about restructuring the entire society, placing all occupations under rigid state control and repressing all remnants of "bourgeois professionalism" (Abramov 2016, 84). By the 1930s, the old professionals began to be replaced by graduates of Soviet academies. The break with capitalist norms of professionalism was never absolute, however, as the new Soviet state required specialists it did not have and lacked the resources to produce. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, the state recruited professional advisors from abroad to oversee the development of industry and showed tremendous enthusiasm for Western management theories such as Taylorism. These individuals were regarded with suspicion, however, and in some cases brutally repressed during the Great Terror (Tzouliadis 2008, ch. 4). By 1941, according to Roman Abramov (2016), "Professional communities lost their autonomy; old professionals of the pre-revolutionary period were massively replaced by Soviet experts, socialized in Soviet educational institutions; and all professionals were at the service of the State, ensuring control over the population, ideological support of the regime and modernization of industry and military" (86).

The Khrushchev thaw and the onset of the Cold War saw a new demand for well-qualified specialists, and over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, higher education in the Soviet Union expanded at a breakneck pace, from 812,000 students enrolled in 1940–1941 to 5,026,000 in 1987–88. (A parallel expansion was underway in the United States.) The

Khrushchev period saw the tentative emergence of a professional culture, which included “elements of unselfishness, sincerity, responsibility, dedication to work, some contempt for bureaucratic hierarchies, and the demonstration of broad knowledge, beyond narrow professional knowledge” (Abramov 2016, 86–88). During the decades of late Communism, however, this emergent culture continued to be beleaguered by state repressions (particularly during the Brezhnev period) and corruption.

THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE ON UNIVERSITY PRIORITIES

The post-Soviet period of political, economic, and cultural liberalization was devastating for the professions. In almost all spheres, professionals suffered thanks to the closing of many institutions, brain drain, the collapse of the national currency, and spiraling inflation. University professors who survived this period (who did not leave the country or change occupations) have told me stories about waiting years to be paid any salary at all and having to cobble together multiple side jobs in order to make a living. As Abramov (2016) says, “Thus the organizational and professional base for the reproduction of a professional culture and identity of the Soviet intelligentsia was gone” (90).

Among the hardest hit professionals were engineers, teachers, and doctors. Other disciplines, however, were ascendant. Abramov (2016) cites real estate, advertising, public relations, management, and sociology as examples (91). Economics was also a growing field, aided in part by the emergence of a market for private colleges and graduate schools. While many of these were poor-quality diploma mills, some provided models for the reform of Russian higher education. The New Economic School, founded in 1992, was the first private institution of higher education in the former Soviet Union and the first “modern” (a euphemism for Western) economics department. In the account of Gur Ofer (2012), an Israeli economist and one of the school’s founders, the vision for the school was driven by the need to meet the demands of a market economy, but there was also a strong desire to create a true *profession* of indigenous economists that had never existed before in that region. From its inception, the flagship program of the school was its master’s

degree: "The choice of a graduate-level program was motivated by the intention to leverage the effort by 'training teachers'—future professors of economics for NES and, later, for other universities, but also professional economists who would provide the needed cadres for the country's transition to the market system" (17).

The introduction of liberal economics therefore became the vehicle for the introduction of various Western educational norms, traditions, and institutions into the Russian space, including, perhaps unexpectedly, writing centers. The reason for this is somewhat obvious: the new economics profession in Russia had to essentially be created from materials imported from abroad. At the time, there was an economics department at the famous Moscow State University (MSU), but it remained steeped in Soviet political economy and was not viewed as an effective vehicle for the introduction of the discipline as it was practiced in the West (Ofer 2012, 18). As Alexander Bikbov (2010) indicates, the deprofessionalization that was underway at the major state universities had the paradoxical effect of preserving the Soviet educational traditions and knowledge base even in the face of market reforms and liberalization (par. 8). In fact, 1992 also saw the exodus of many young faculty from MSU to create the Higher School of Economics, which is now the largest public university in the country (Ofer 2012, 18). The New Economic School was made possible through the participation of Western economists and foundations, including the Soros Foundation. The first NES professors were visiting faculty from Western institutions, but by the late 1990s, the school was able to recruit its own graduates to return with freshly minted PhDs. Today, the school has a mix of indigenous and foreign full-time faculty, most of whom hold doctorates from abroad.

The following decade was marked by national efforts to address the deleterious state of Russian education and to converge with European models. National accreditation and licensing systems were established, as was a unified entrance examination. In 2003, Russia signed the Bologna Declaration and agreed to undertake the reforms necessary to become part of the European Higher Education and Research Area. This included the official adoption of the bachelor/master degree system and efforts to bring the standards of education up to the European level. The internationalization of Russian institutions, however, encountered tremendous challenges and in 2012 was acknowledged to be, at

best, incomplete as a result of meager financial resources, the low intercultural and foreign language competence of most Russian faculty, and the low international integration of the Russian economy (Telegina and Schwengel 2012, 46–47).

The next stage of development was the initiation of Project 5-100 in 2012. This was an effort by the Russian government to get five Russian universities into the top 100 rankings by 2020 ("Project Overview"). The ranking lists targeted are those produced by Quacquarelli Symonds, Times Higher Education, and the Academic Ranking of World Universities. Twenty-one publicly-funded universities were selected through a two-stage process with a total of 57.1 billion rubles distributed among them. The current list of universities is as follows:

- Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University (Kaliningrad)
- The Higher School of Economics (Moscow)
- Far Eastern Federal Reserve University (Vladivostok)
- Kazan Federal University (Kazan)
- Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (Moscow)
- National University of Science and Technology (Moscow)
- National Research Nuclear University (Moscow)
- Lobachevskiy University (Nizhny Novgorod)
- Novosibirsk State University (Novosibirsk)
- Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University (Moscow)
- Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (Moscow)
- Samara State Aerospace University Named for S. P. Korolev (Samara)
- Saint-Petersburg Eletrotechnical University (Saint Petersburg)
- Peter the Great Saint Petersburg State Polytechnical University (Saint Petersburg)
- Siberian Federal University (Krasnoyarsk)
- National Research Tomsk State University (Tomsk)
- National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University (Tomsk)
- University of Tyumen (Tyumen)
- ITMO University (Saint Petersburg)
- Ural Federal University Named after the First President of Russia B. N. Yelstin (Ekaterinburg)
- South Ural State University (Chelyabinsk)

Increased research output and greater visibility for Russian scientific research on the international scene is both a goal in and of itself and a means to the ultimate end of the project. This is where writing centers have entered the picture. At present, the following publicly-funded universities have writing centers with public-facing websites:

- National University of Science and Technology (Moscow)
- The Higher School of Economics (Moscow)
- Tyumen State University (Tyumen)
- South Ural State University (Chelyabinsk)
- Tomsk State University (Tomsk)
- ITMO University (Saint Petersburg)
- Samara State Aerospace University Named for S. P. Korolev (Samara)
- Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University (Moscow)
- Kazan Federal University (Kazan)
- Baikal International School of Business (Irkutsk)
- Southern Federal University (Rostov-on-Don)
- Mordovia State University (Saransk)
- Tambov State Technical University (Tambov)
- The School of Public Policy RANEPA (Moscow)

Many of these are participating in Project 5-100, meaning that the formation of writing centers is being driven by attempts on the part of the state to increase the research productivity and prestige of these universities.

WESTERN INFLUENCE ON WRITING CENTER DEVELOPMENT

Like economics, the writing center model and the concept of "academic writing" had to be imported from abroad. The Writing and Communication Center at the New Economic School was established to serve students and support the curriculum of the Joint HSE/NES Bachelor's Program in Economics, which offers an American-style liberal arts experience to students pursuing a bachelor's degree in economics. The joint program differs from Russian undergraduate education by giving

students the ability to choose their own courses, which are taught in English and in Russian. Students must be able to take courses entirely in English after their second year. The joint program also serves as a funnel to Western companies with offices in Russia (major employers include Bain & Co., McKinsey, and Oliver Wyman) as well as PhD programs in the United States (recent graduates have enrolled at Princeton, the Wharton School, NYU, and the University of Chicago). In other words, this program functions within the traditions of undergraduate teaching in the United States, including as part of its identity a distinction from vocational training. (To the dismay of some of our students, no accounting classes are offered in this program.) The faculty who teach in it hold Western PhDs and are already well-integrated into their disciplines internationally. As such, the WCC serves the students and offers periodic proofreading assistance to faculty.

Writing centers have existed in the United States for more than a century, and in order to understand how the professional identity of writing centers is being adapted and transformed at other Russian universities, many of which were influenced by the NES WCC and the outreach efforts of its administrators, it is important to understand the contours of that professional identity in the US. According to Neal Lerner (2010), the roots of this model reach back into the 1890s, when they were leveraged as part of an effort to individualize and humanize writing pedagogy during an era of "mass instruction" delivered by way of "lecture, memorization, and recitation" (3). This inaugurated the era of the "writing laboratory," a space in which students would work on written assignments under the supervision of a skilled teacher, who was there to provide individualized feedback. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the identity of writing labs was often defined in contrast to the larger field of composition, particularly the teaching of composition in a classroom setting. In the 1940s, some first-year writing classes were actually replaced by the laboratory method (Lerner 2010, 3-4).

This first epoch in the history of writing centers coincided with a sharp increase in the number of individuals seeking bachelor's degrees, particularly after the G.I. Bill made post-secondary education available to working-class men returning from war. These new students became objects of professorial and administrative concern since they were perceived as underprepared for college-level work. Writing centers

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seemed like obvious solutions to the problem of bad student writing. However, the work of remediating such students was low prestige, regarded with ambivalence by many academicians who feared that broader access to higher education diluted university standards. It became important, therefore, for writing centers to leverage their more idealistic vision as an alternative to teaching writing in the classroom against the image of the writing center as a remedial space (Lerner 2003, 55–58).

That stigma, however, proved inescapable and was ultimately fatal to writing centers in the 1950s, when colleges and universities began to scale back programs and courses for underprepared students. As Lerner (2003) suggests, the emergence of community colleges enabled four-year schools to offload the so-called fundamentals (62–63). When Writing Center Studies finally re-emerged as a fully-fledged specialty within the larger and also newly professionalized field of rhetoric and composition in the 1970s, it boasted its very own journals, conferences, and symposia. But writing centers still struggled to avoid becoming perceived as sites of punishment for problem students. The most cited article in all the writing center literature is Stephen North's "The Idea of a Writing Center" (1984). Beginning with the words, "This is an essay that began out of frustration," the article is a passionate attempt to set straight those who "misunderstand" the work of writing centers:

> Let me be clear here. Misunderstanding is something one expects—and almost gets used to—in the writing center business. The new faculty member in our writing-across-the-curriculum program, for example, who sends his students to get their papers "cleaned up" in the Writing Center before they hand them in; the occasional student who tosses her paper on our reception desk, announcing that she'll "pick it up in an hour;" even with the well-intentioned administrators who are so happy that we deal with "skills" or "fundamentals" or, to use the word that seems to subsume all others, "grammar" (or usually "GRAMMAR")—these are fairly predictable. But from people in English departments, people well trained in the complex relationship between writer and text, so painfully aware, if only from the composing of dissertations and theses, how lonely and difficult writing can be, I expect more. And I am generally disappointed. (433)

Institutionally, many writing centers around the world are well situated in departments of English and Rhetoric and Composition, but North gave voice to a grievance as well as a professional aspiration that continues to define the attitudes of many writing center workers today: the need to be defined by what we are *not*, the need to define what we do as a departure from what our colleagues are doing, the role of the writing center consultant or tutor as fundamentally different from the role of the composition teacher, even though many writing center administrators wear both hats. From my own position, though I am capable of thinking critically about these exceptionalist claims, I do still define my role as WCC director and teacher of first-year writing in entirely different ways, and I differentiate those roles by keeping my office hours—during which I am supposed to be meeting with students in my class—separate from my writing center hours. I believe the feedback I give when I grade a student's work is fundamentally different than when I am tutoring and that my ethical and pedagogical responsibilities change when I shift from one role to the other. I insist that the difference matters even if my students frequently find me eccentric.

According to Menand (2010), the key characteristics of a professionalized body of knowledge are transmissibility and non-transferability:

> The transmissibility is what makes it possible for the professions to monopolize the production of future professionals. Professions reproduce themselves by passing professional acquirements along from one generation to the next. People with JDs educate future JDs. The non-transferability of the credential, though, ensures that competence in one profession can never be exercised in another profession. Lawyers cannot treat patients in a hospital and physicians cannot represent clients in a courtroom. People with doctorates in English do not get to decide who deserves a doctorate in sociology. This non-transferability of expertise is the balance wheel of professionalized economies: it prevents excessive claims to authority being made by well-educated people. (ch. 3, sec. 2)

That these principles are at work in the contemporary field of English should be clear to anyone who wrote a dissertation in literature and then tried to get a tenure-track position in rhetoric, and vice versa. Writing centers, too, while drawing their staff from these fields, will tend to insist that even experienced writing teachers undergo special

training before being allowed to work there, and some experience as a writing center consultant is usually a minimum prerequisite for administrative positions.

MODERN CHALLENGES FOR WRITING CENTERS

Specialization will always tend to produce the narcissism of minor differences, and we can point to examples of this in the ways that writing centers have historically differentiated themselves from other kinds of academic programs. But for a discipline to sustain itself, this differentiation is necessary and even healthy. Writing center specialists are tenurable in many institutions and have their own journals and conference panels largely because they have managed to assert a coherent professional identity. The cornerstones of writing center pedagogy, as distinct from classroom pedagogy, include many practices that have proven to be intellectually sound. Writing centers have strong norms about authorial ownership, for instance, and train consultants to practice Socratic questioning and non-directive forms of instruction to avoid violating academic ethics, to make sure that the text that leaves the encounter is the best work that the *student* is capable of, not what the consultant would write if she were the author. These skills are transmissible to a bright undergraduate but must be developed within even experienced teachers—especially those who have strong ideas about what constitutes good writing—before they can be truly effective in a writing center.

Due to the relationship between writing centers and the American field of rhetoric and writing, centers in the U.S. have historically had difficulty dealing with writers for whom English is not a first language. As Paul K. Matsuda (1999) argues, compositionists in the middle of the 20th century tended to ignore second-language issues, leaving non-native speakers and their problems to specialists "in another intellectual formation: second-language studies, or more specifically, Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)." This "disciplinary division of labor," as he calls it, was defined by the "values of the two intellectual formations that sought, especially during their formative years, to establish their own unique identities as respectable professions or academic 'disciplines'" (Matsuda 1999, 701).

Matsuda (1999) dates the emergence of TESL (now called TESOL for "Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages") as a professional identity to the creation of the Michigan English Language Institute in 1941 (701–06). Charles Fries, who submitted the proposal for the institute, helped combat the attitude that "anyone whose native language was English was qualified to teach English to nonnative speakers," arguing that such teaching required a particular skill set and immersion in a codified field of knowledge that had its roots in applied linguistics. Fries's "oral approach," however, addressed the needs of students learning to *speak* English and did little to address writing. "Partly due to the dominance of Fries's view of applied linguistics, the study of written language or the teaching of writing to ESL students did not attract serious attention from applied linguists until the 1960s, and intensive English programs did not pay much attention to the teaching of writing beyond grammar drills at the sentence level" (703). This disciplinary bifurcation—in which writing at the college level was taught by compositionists with little training or interest in the needs of language learners while the language needs of multilingual students were taught by linguists who had little training or interest in teaching students to write at the college level—created a gap that American higher education has been wrestling with ever since.

We can see the dimensions of this conflict in the sort of language that was used in articles on ESL writing in the writing center literature, especially as this issue became a subject of special attention in the early 2000s. Susan Blau, John Hall, and Sarah Sparks's article, "Guilt-Free Tutoring: Rethinking How We Tutor Non-Native-Speaking Students" (2002) and Sharon Myers's "Reassessing the 'Proofreading Trap': ESL Tutoring and Writing Instruction" (2003) both from *The Writing Center Journal*, are symptomatic of a common sentiment among writing center workers during that period: that ESL tutoring actually created ethical problems. Blau, Hall, and Sparks (2002) describe reports from staff members in their center that they constantly felt they were breaking the rules in ESL consultations and that the gaps in students' linguistic knowledge disrupted the egalitarian and collaborative ethos of the writing center. The technique of open-ended Socratic questioning, for instance, "is grounded in collaborative learning theory, assuming that in an ideal collaborative session, the tutor and client build knowledge together, sharing power and insight. Clearly, however, in a session be-

tween a NES tutor and a NNES client, the relationship (not the individuals) is unequal: the tutor has information that the client doesn't about the discourse conventions of the tutor's native language" (32). They make suggestions for modifications to these encounters, but they do not fundamentally question whether the conventional practice of writing centers works for second-language writers. Myers (2003) goes further in suggesting that the writing center consultation is a place where students can actually acquire language and allows that more direct teaching may be necessary (51–70). In more recent years, we have seen more interdisciplinary work that attempts to integrate the insights of compositionists and TESOL specialists. Ben Rafoth and Shanti Bruce, for instance, who combine expertise in writing center and writing program administration with interests in ESL/ELL teaching (Rafoth holds an EdD in language teaching) are the authors and editors of several books, including *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* (2009), *Multilingual Writers and Writing Centers* (2014), and *Tutoring Second Language Writers* (2016), that succeed in crossing that divide.

Because the writing center model was imported into the HSE/NES joint program in the form of American-trained specialists, the WCC has carried a lot of this disciplinary baggage. Teaching within the Humanities and Languages Department remains split between English instructors trained in TESOL and composition/literature PhDs trained in traditional American English departments. The WCC attempts to bridge this divide, employing American compositionists alongside TESOL specialists, offering consultations in both Russian and in English, and advertising the writing center as a space for language learning. Other Russian writing centers, however, are more squarely situated in the language teaching disciplines, particularly English for Academic/Special Purposes (EAP/ESP). While American compositionists have tended to universalize their subject matter to the point of failing, at certain points in their disciplinary history, to fully appreciate the significance of differences in language and in writing cultures, in Russia, the teaching of writing, especially academic writing, is nearly synonymous with the teaching of the English language. This may be because, as Irina Korotkina (2014) argues, there is no tradition of academic (as opposed to literary) writing in Russia, the communication of knowledge for public and professional audiences having largely been suppressed by the state during the Soviet period. Writing centers in Russia have the special

challenge of communicating a Western standard of academic writing in English without reference to any equivalent in the native language. Preliminary data collected by Anna Oveshkova (2017), however, indicates that writing centers are in demand. A survey (conducted in Russian) of 538 university faculty, school teachers, and researchers in the Russian Academy of Science indicates that 69.3 percent of respondents need professional writing advice “often” or “from time to time.” Only 9.1 percent say they never need it. 79.2 percent of respondents say they would use the services of a writing center, and a majority (54.4 percent) of those say they would be willing to pay for such a service. (Thirty-five respondents said they would only use such a service if they were charged a fee, suggesting that they see a relationship between cost and quality.)

Like American writing centers, Russian writing centers have been established to solve a problem: faculty in Russia need to be able to publish in international journals in English, but the future success of these centers may depend on their ability to develop a larger, more holistic vision that transcends their immediate utilitarian purpose. Initial steps have been taken to establish venues for sharing knowledge and practices and developing a set of professional values that will cut across institutions. In 2015, the NES WCC, the Academic Writing Center (AWC) at HSE, and the Academic Writing University Center (AWUC) at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST MISiS), held a symposium on “Establishing Effective Writing Centers” that attracted thirty-eight potential writing center administrators from across the country. That year also saw the creation of the Russian Writing Centers Consortium (RWCC), which aspires to become an affiliate of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA). Writing centers have been a feature of the annual conference on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) hosted by NUST MISiS and the British Council.

In representing their services to the public, Russian writing centers are adopting the rhetorical move of defining what they are versus what they are not. American writing centers have developed an identity as spaces where writers at all levels can come and develop, not as remedial warehouses. Russian centers must represent themselves as educational services rather than as commercial ones. The website of the NUST MISiS writing center features an animated video (in English) explaining the importance of learning communication skills in order to participate

in a global academic community. It presents the case of a researcher who wishes to send her article to an international journal. The first and most logical step, it suggests, might be to send the article to a translation agency, "But here's the thing," the narrator says, "it's a one-time article treatment, and it won't teach you anything. You will not be prepared for future writings, discussions, or projects which are bound to come if the article is successful." The Academic Writing Center, he continues, is the better option because "we're not simply going to edit your article or other scientific and technical documents but help you use efficient written and spoken academic English yourself. We'll get you prepared to move on to the international level." The video is supported by a mission and policy statement that describe the AWUC as an "instructional service. We do not edit or proofread for you." Similarly, the website of the Academic Writing Center at HSE features a graphic that announces, "We do NOT correct mistakes; we help YOU improve your writing!" The Vision of the AWC, it says, is not simply to help produce strong documents but to "empower HSE's faculty and assist them in developing their academic literacy" (NUST MISiS Writing Center 2018). These two writing centers have very clearly adapted major philosophical and methodological elements of a student writing center, emphasizing process-oriented approaches, developing the independence of the writer, and promoting learning rather than just "fixing," and applied them to their faculty.

There are, however, many potential sources of incompatibility between the American writing center model and the Russian higher educational environment. Korotkina (2017) has identified the following specific challenges: "the generally poor command of written English among researchers, the traditionally low status of teachers of English in non-linguistic universities, and the lack of academic writing methodology in the native language along with the national tradition of rather incomprehensible writing" (1). Korotkina's assessment and its emphasis on language suggests that the fundamental problem is not just the English language skills of Russian researchers but the over-identification of the very concept of academic writing with the English language. This is, in many ways, a global problem, as the language comes packaged with a host of Western educational values and traditions to which natives of other countries are supposed to conform. In countries like Russia, where models for teaching writing in the native language are either

non-existent or have become irrelevant to modern communication needs, the teaching of writing, particularly academic genres of writing, has become synonymous with written English.

Korotkina (2016) argues that a tradition and methodology of teaching academic writing in Russian must be established and points to writing centers as potential sites of development of a "meta-linguistic, translinguistic" approach:

> University writing centers are essential. They can provide substantial assistance and develop a new tradition of academic writing in Russian which will fully comply with international standards of scientific communication. This will raise the quality not only of foreign but of Russian publications by our scientific-pedagogical faculty and in the final estimation raise the rating of Russian science and Russian scientific journals. Centers should tactfully but effectively address the problem of introducing international norms for writing scientific text into the practice of our scientists. Their work will be maximally effective; they will work in both languages using a unified methodology for a unified result that will not only allow us to raise their effectiveness and the quality of their work but will overcome interdisciplinary and interdepartmental barriers and, as a result, the most rapid and wide distribution of academically literate and scientific texts in Russia and abroad [translated by the author]. (83)

Korotkina's call suggests that the professional identity of Russian writing centers will have to drift away, at least somewhat, from TESOL and EAP/ESP in order to become multilingual sites for the development of native and international norms. This would seem to point to the creation of a Russian equivalent to the American field of rhetoric and composition. That field has historically been problematic for English language learners in the United States because in its catholicity it had trouble imagining that the field's methodologies might not work for everyone, and the move to incorporate insights from the field of language teaching was slow. In Russia, as is likely the case in other parts of the world, the perception that writing is a language-specific task may create problems from the opposite end of the spectrum. Korotkina's remedy would require the creation of infrastructure for the training and credentialing of specialists who can do this pioneering work. As I have shown, there is a precedent for this in the field of economics, though

significant resources would be required in order to replicate that success.

The emergence of American-style writing centers in Russia has been driven by the traditional relationship between the academy and the state, a relationship which has existed at least since the days of Nicholas I. Specifically, writing centers have been established to serve specific state ends related to the international integration and prestige of Russian higher education. At the same time, some of these centers have succeeded in carving out an identity for themselves with reference not to the utilitarian ends of churning out publishable papers but of advancing a set of academic values and claiming a sovereign territory for their expertise. This is a critical moment of opportunity for Russian writing specialists that will determine their future going forward, but they will have to struggle in a context of scarce resources, poor national infrastructure in their discipline, and the inherent top-down-ness of the system.

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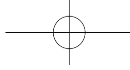
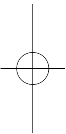
NOTES

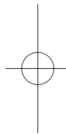
1. The activities of the Writing and Communication Center are described in Bollinger (2016) and Squires (2016). The official website of the NES WCC is wcc.nes.ru.

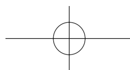
2. The activities of other Russian writing centers are described in Korotkina (2014) and Korotkina (2016).

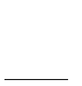
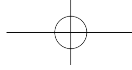


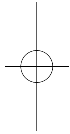
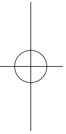
3. See, for example, Balzar (1996), Abramov (2016), and Iarskaia-Smirnova and Abramov (2016).

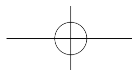
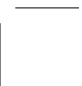






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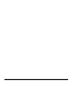
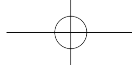

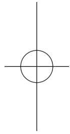
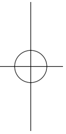

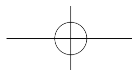
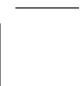

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