[Bri, moderator] All right, so I'll just get started with a little bit of an explainer. My name is Bri Lafond, I am chair of OWCA’s Virtual Events Committee, and we are co-hosting this event today with OWCA’s Virtual Conference Committee in preparation for our upcoming virtual conference in 2024, which has the CFP proposal deadline coming up soon. First, I just want to take a moment to apologize for the confusion with the Zoom. Apparently, the correct Zoom link went out with the initial email, but the reminder email that you may have received today had the incorrect Zoom link embedded in it. I apologize for that confusion, and I hope that folks have been able to make it here through that follow-up email. The purpose of today's event is to talk through in general how to respond to and prepare a proposal for a conference CFP. We're going to use the OWCA Virtual Conference CFP as our example to build things from, but hopefully some of these principles and ideas will apply generally across conferences. I'm also hoping that some of you today may have some ideas that you were planning to propose for our conference and that maybe we can answer some questions for you and help you develop that into your own proposal. We should have time at the later part of our presentation today to answer questions and potentially look at things if you'd like. The first part of our presentation today is going to be more about how to approach responding to a CFP, how to develop a proposal, and that is the part of the presentation that we're going to be recording. We'll go ahead and turn things off once we get into the more individualized Q & A portion. We already had a question in the chat, and if you didn't get a chance to see that or if you've just joined us, the recording for today's event will be edited, captioned and posted to the website within a week or two. It just takes us a little while to edit the captions and get the video and everything put together. You will get an email on the OWCA listserv once that is posted and ready to go. I am going to hand things over to Erika to talk to us a little bit about the OWCA conference, and then we'll kind of get into things. Erika, go ahead.

[Erika, presenter] Thank you, Bri. My name is Eric Maikish. I am the conference chair this year for the OWCA, and I am really excited for you all to be here right now. I really wanted to present this event along with our committee to encourage everyone to submit a proposal to our conference, even if this is your first ever time submitting to a conference. The way that we're going to go through this is going to be a little bit informal. Basically, I'm just going to go through the CFP, talk a little bit about the different elements and also the different things that might be involved in creating a proposal. And then I'm going to… Bri and Dwayne happen to also be on our committee with me, they're going to help me chime in and talk a little bit about how you will build a proposal. Yes, Bri, if you can screen share the CFP for me, that would be great. Thank you. This is on our website, so if you are interested in presenting, you know submitting: you can find this online, on our OWCA site. And the proposal was created in association with all of our committee. This isn't a one-person show kind of deal. Let’s talk about what makes up the CFP and what are some of the things that you should be paying attention to. The first thing that I'm going to just note is that we are encouraging all writing center-related folk to participate. Maybe you think ‘Oh, I'm not a writing center director or coordinator, so I can't participate,’ and that is not true. All right. If you are a undergraduate or graduate student who works in the writing center or is interested in writing center research and pedagogy, we encourage you to participate. All right, you still have something valuable that you can offer. A couple of important deadlines. The proposals are due October 1; however, I will let you in on a secret that we will be extending this deadline until October 15. You do actually have about… I can't do math… three weeks until the proposal is due. You should have plenty of time if you are thinking about submitting. We like to let our group know that we will be notifying presenters by about mid-November whether or not they will be accepted. As you'll see later, when we talk about the CFP, one of the things that our committee and our association really likes to emphasize is this idea of revising and resubmitting. If you submit something, and we just don't have enough information, or, we want to know a little bit more about how it fits something in particular, we will invite you to revise and resubmit. It's not a no, it's just tell us a little more information. Our presentation materials are due in March, which we can also talk about at a later time. I want to first talk through how you look at a CFP and how you then think through what you might want to submit. Of course, the main chunk of text in a CFP is really our blurb, our discussion, our reasoning, what our thought process was for getting there. Sometimes they can be long, sometimes they can be short; we tried not to go too long with ours, but it gives some background as to where our thoughts are for this conference. What we started with is we cite some research, we provide some people who we've been looking at who were quoting things that have been happening. You can see here, we're starting from North, we have Harris, we've got some stuff from Praxis, we go through some of the pieces from the Writing Center Journal, and then also some recent stuff that has come out in the Chronicle of Higher Education, providing that context for where we're coming from. Of course, the big important part, potentially, the meaty, even more important part of the CFP is usually that last paragraph, which is that summation of what it is that we are actually looking for. With this in mind, we are inviting proposals that focus on the evolution and endurance of the writing center. How can centers answer Salem's call in her rebuttal to go further? How has the writing center evolved? And how does it continue to evolve? And how does the writing center endure in face of barriers, criticisms and misunderstandings. Ultimately, because as we cited from Harris earlier, we are looking for: how do we become vital? So that gives you a little sense of what it is. And then I think the probably more helpful section of the CFP in determining do you have a topic that fits this category, is, in fact, the Areas to Consider. And in our section here… I don't know why this spacing and the bullets look a little funky, but what we've done is we've provided essentially topics of consideration that still fit within this larger theme of becoming vital writing centers. Those entail the Administration, Writing Center Staff, Student Populations, Diversity and Social Justice, Questions of Value, the 21st Century, and of course, since we are the OWCA, Online Writing Centers. This to me is that key portion of the CFP, where you would sit and say: What do I have to say? What can I contribute in any of these areas? And as you can see, here, we've given some suggestions. From things like budgeting to employment to professionalization. If you are an undergrad and you became a tutor, how did you become a tutor? What kinds of student populations does your writing center serve? Thinking about what sort of accessibility and diversity exists in your writing centers. Other things like the questions of value: many writing centers are constantly fighting to show and explain why they should be there. And of course, things that are prevalent to the 21st century. We all have been dealing with generative AI issues lately. And things like synchronous versus asynchronous tutoring: that was a big explosion, obviously, during COVID, as well as just online via Zoom, and all these other web chat platforms. You have a lot of options. Now, depending on the conference, or the proposal, these areas to consider might actually be a bit more broad, or they might be a bit more narrow? It really depends on the theme of the conference. This is why getting a sense and a feel for what you are interested in, what you would want to contribute, and can you fit it within the narrative of the conference? I will say that as the conference chair, I am more along the lines of trying to find something that would be a bit more broad, that would be able to encompass a lot of different conversations. Because I think it's important to hear from a lot of different folk and on a lot of different topics. Sometimes if a conference theme is pretty narrow, it can be hard to find your way in unless you're already in that field and working in it. Or sometimes it can be really complicated or confusing? I think is it IWCA’s conference theme this year that was on the multiverse? Which, at first, I was very confused as to what that meant. Really understanding by looking through the areas to consider and reading through our blurb about where we are coming from. I'm going to pause there. Bri or Dwayne: if you have anything to add, please do.

[Dwayne, presenter] I was just going to say that when it comes to what you might want to propose, what I'm thinking about the areas to consider here… If you have an idea, and it doesn't necessarily fit within this, I guarantee if you think about a little bit, it'll fit. Because in running a writing center, there are so many things that you encounter on a daily basis that may be interesting or may be unique to your center that you feel like could be useful for other people to hear about or for you to discuss. It can be something that you do with your tutors in training that could be interesting. I've presented at a good number of conferences over the years, and one of the things that is always really interesting about a writing center conference in particular, is just the amount of diversity in terms of what is proposed. Some of the coolest things that I ever thought to employ came from conference sessions I sat in on. Again, as reviewers, we have a lot of us that are reviewers for this conference: we like to see unique. We'd like to see interesting perspectives. And even if you don't think it pinpointedly fits into one of these, I guarantee you that it probably does. And I say propose it. Throw it out there. I mean, again, as Erika said, you know, we do embrace the revise and resubmit. Let's say you throw in something that's half-baked, three-quarter baked: when you're getting feedback from us, it'll be fully-baked by the time it's time for conference.

[Erika, presenter] Yeah, great. Thank you, Dwayne. I definitely would agree: I think that even if you're not sure, I would encourage you to still submit the proposal, and we can always send it back to you with feedback, and you will revise and resubmit. You know, really, it might be pretty… I will say, it's probably rare that we will actually reject something that really just completely doesn't fit with what we're looking for or maybe isn't appropriate. But there's really a great opportunity for you to take this and kind of put your own spin on it.

[Bri, moderator] I was just going to add, and I think we'll be able to build on this a little bit more as we talk about session types, and maybe the rubric, how we evaluate things, because we try to be as transparent as possible as an organization about how we are considering these things. As Dwayne was mentioning, we think that everybody has something to contribute. It's just a matter of thinking about also the context of the conference and the particular values that OWCA is trying to cultivate in its conference. And I don't want to get too far down this road, because I think it will be helpful to talk through session types and why they are structured the way that they are. And that may also help you to structure your idea and how that can fit or work within the context of OWCA’s virtual conference.

[Erika, presenter] Perfect Bri, let's move on to session formats then. We as a conference committee and group really have intentionally decided to structure the proposal submission and the conference in two formats: one asynchronous and the other synchronous. Just to briefly explain the difference if you are unsure: our asynchronous presentations are those that are essentially prerecorded and are available to all conference attendees throughout the conference as well as a little bit before. They’re usually about ten minutes in length, not more. They are ideal for presenting research, showcasing a particular technology or program, or maybe outlining a technique or approach that you have used in your writing center. The way that we see these asynchronous presentations is more along the lines of what I think those of you who've been to conferences, I would say, maybe pre-COVID, where it's the traditional: I'm going to write a paper, and I'm going to read it for ten minutes, or I'm going to make a PowerPoint, and I'm going to present the slides for the next thirty minutes. That is really what we see these asynchronous formats for. They are really just you telling us and sharing with us this information. They're prerecorded, they're available to conference attendees. We do have a time during the conference live, where those who have submitted asynchronous presentations have a chance to discuss with conference attendees, share a little bit synchronously as well. That's not required, but it is available for all, and it gives a chance to network, brainstorm, share more information. So, say Dwayne submits an asynchronous presentation, and I really want to learn more about what Dwayne said: I can chat with him during the conference, during that session, and get to hear a little bit more about it. Again, the asynchronous is really designed for just sharing that information with a group of people. In contrast, our synchronous sessions are really meant to highlight that interactive conversation and activity moment. We’ve tried to define what these might look like this year. Things like a General Workshop, a Roundtable Discussion, Research Networking opportunities, or Professionalization Forums. That’s not the be all end all list. I think that was just kind of what we came up with. But again, all four of those really emphasize this idea of interactivity and collaboration or conversation. A workshop would briefly introduce the topic, and then have actual activities that you want participants to do. Whether it's doing some writing or working in a group, producing something, having a conversation. A roundtable is a collaborative discussion led by a moderator with specific questions or prompts. This one really needs some sort of detailed plan of how you would use… whether it's just an open forum like this, or you're going to have breakout rooms, how you'll manage that, what questions you want your participants to discuss. The Research Networking and the Professionalization Forums are new this year to OWCA. It came on really, as a result of some of the topics and areas to consider for our theme and our desire to expand the opportunities for the conference. The Research Networking is allowing people to create that collaborative connection to share feedback on certain projects. I could see this proposal being like, maybe you have a specific… I'm going to take AI because I was just working on something for my tutors. Maybe you are working on some sort of paper on AI use in writing centers, and you want to collaborate with others. Maybe you propose a Research Networking opportunity on that. The Professionalization Forums, a little similar this actually, but maybe in a different sort of manage. Essentially, how are we sharing our knowledge of how to make it in the writing center world? I don't know how many of you are on the writing center listserv, but there have been tons of emails just in the last two days about salary for job positions. Just thinking about this idea of how do we really present these best practices and professional skills to undergraduates and graduates and others, so we're all really on the same page with a lot of stuff and we're not gatekeeping anything. The difference again, between that asynchronous and synchronous is that synchronous really has an intentional, interactive, collaborative component: it is meant to have these conversations back and forth. Whereas the asynchronous is just really someone chatting at you sharing that information. You'll notice that the synchronous gives an opportunity for either forty-five or seventy-five minutes. There is a length that you can choose, depending on how long you think you will need for your particular activity. Dwayne or Bri, anything to add?

[Dwayne, presenter] I was just going to say in the synchronous sessions, you can- and we had some people last year, do some breakout rooms and that kind of stuff, which again, can work really well. But it doesn't have to necessarily be that. I've done synchronous sessions where I've presented material, given people access to Jamboard, which I think is a Google application and said, here's some prompts, go forth, and do this activity for ten minutes. That allows for interactivity, and you can, as the person or if you have multiple people leading the session, say, Okay, I'm going to read out so many people's responses, get people to elaborate more on their points. That kind, I'll be honest with you, for me as an attendee, and as someone who reviews, that's one of the things that I look for. If you're going to do synchronous, it's got to have that really good interactivity that's going to be fruitful for everyone, and it's going to lead to really good discussion.

[Bri, moderator] Yeah, and I would say, my main feedback here would be to really think about the affordances of technology and what you're able to do within that space. One of the reasons that we really have emphasized and divided into asynchronous versus synchronous, is during our first conference, our initial conference in 2021, we didn't really think through this. And it did seem a little passive: why are people showing up just to hear someone read their paper now, when we could just have that as recording and people could review that at their leisure? When you're thinking about how to put together, how do I make this interactive? How do I get it to fit? I think Dwayne's already brought up a good point: you can think beyond the platform, but think about how you are going to ensure that other people can access it. Think through: what are some fun or innovative things that you can do in the timeframe to have people think outside the literal Zoom box? We’re all in our little rectangles right now. How are you going to be able to engage and build engagement across the attendees?

[Erika, presenter] Great, thank you, Bri and Dwayne. Moving along, because I want to get through all of this and have time in case people want to chat with any of us about their ideas. I will just briefly touch on the fact that OWCA prides itself on its accessibility. We do have accessibility requirements for both the asynchronous and synchronous presentations. I'm not going to go through them right now. You're welcome to review it. We have helped, we outlined everything you need to do and when it's due. We will actually also have an event in mid or early March that talks about how you can create these accessible materials and you can kind of troubleshoot with us. That way you can have a sense if you're not sure how to handle this. Great question, Amy. Right now, I do not, and I apologize. But like Dwayne said, I think in our case, I think a lot of the abstracts are just… I think I can talk you through some of the good things. I don't know, if I'm going to be able to pull up one that is successful. But Bri, if you would mind moving along?

[Bri, moderator] Yeah. And I was going to say to Amy, we’ll potentially reach out to… because we did have some members, OWCA board members who proposed things last year. We'll see if we can get one of them to volunteer. If they’re okay with us circulating that, and we can potentially include that when we send around the recording information.

[Erika, presenter] Alright, so moving along. And to submit a proposal, we do have a Google form. The form asks you to submit the working title. It doesn't have to be the final title. Don't worry. The session format: we do ask why you've decided to choose this format. You're choosing asynchronous or synchronous, and then within synchronous, what exactly are you looking to do? We asked for the reasoning because we found that it's helpful to know why you've chosen this. It is really encouraging you to think intentionally about your decision here. Because again, we do want to really emphasize that idea that there is that active collaboration. We have a whole bunch of topics or categories: basically, which areas to consider does your proposal fall under. It does not have to fall under just one, it can be multiple. But we're going to use that more to understand where we are when we start to organize things. And then the abstract either can be written, it can be 500 words, or you can also submit an audio and video abstract, which is five minutes or less. Our platform has allowed you to do either. In terms of the proposal, it's just a brief Google form. If you do have any questions with it, you're welcome to reach out to us and let us know. I'm going to talk briefly about the proposal scoring rubric, which is on the bottom, Bri. As Bri mentioned before, we are transparent about our practices, and why we've chosen to accept things and whatnot. This is our proposal rubric. We have a few questions that we ask our committee to look at. There are at least two committee members who will read through each proposal and provide answers to these questions. The decision is made from there. If they disagree, then I am brought in as the sort of tiebreaker, basically. I do make sure that we have no conflicts of interest to keep things fair and scientific. Some of the questions that we consider are: is the focus of the proposal clear and innovative? It's a scale of one to four. Are you presenting new ideas? Do you have a clear topic? Are you drawing new connections? Like Dwayne said, you can kind of go out of the box here. Is it something that's just been the same old thing? Or are you presenting a new spin on something? Would this proposal contribute to varied perspectives and interpretations of the conference theme, aka the endurance and evolution of the writing center, and writing center work? The writing center work one is obviously really important. While we've had some presenters before, who will submit proposals about writing, like teaching writing, we do want to make sure that the proposals and the conference are about writing centers. If you have something that is about teaching writing, if you're able to spin it to connect to writing centers, that's fine. But you do need that writing center connection. Obviously, that connects with the conference theme because that's what the conference theme is entirely about. Is the proposal already situated in an existing body of research? Or does it have the potential to be? Here we're looking to see are you citing any sources in your abstract? Do you mention any sources or things that you're working with? Who have you considered in this particular project? Or if you haven't, do we as a committee have a sense that yes, you could be? That we can let you know that you should be including? Does the proposal address diversity, inclusivity, and/or offer perspective from an underrepresented group or institution? Yes, no, or somewhat? Essentially, do you have that piece attached to it? It's not a requirement, I will say, but it is a positive. We are hoping that we can offer these diverse perspectives, whether it's from diversity, inclusion or accessibility. But it doesn't always have to, or if it if it doesn't, does it have the potential to be applied to a certain group of people as well? For synchronous sessions, we do have an additional question: does it provide that active participation? Those of you who do submit synchronous proposals, we are actively looking to see. Did you outline for us how you are going to have participants converse or work on a project or something like that? As we mentioned earlier, we have a yes, no, and an invite to revise and resubmit. I will say that last year, we didn't have anyone that we in the initial stages said no to. Either it was a yes or invite to revise and resubmit. Again. The no is really for exceptional things that maybe don't have IRB proposals, if you're doing human research, tutor research. Or if they're like completely irrelevant, which we have yet to see one of those. The revise and resubmit. We will give you the feedback from the committee as to what we are looking for in order for it to become a yes. You have lots of opportunity to basically be accepted. We are of the mind that we would like to have as many people as we can rather than reject everyone. Dwayne and Bri: anything to add about any of that? Otherwise, I think we could open it up to some questions.

[Bri, moderator] Just keep in mind, this is the rubric: this is what we use. You aren't going to… if you do get a revise and resubmit, it's not going to be away from these categories. It will be, oh, here's some other places where maybe you've missed, a field of research or a conversation that's not being engaged with, or we're not seeing exactly what you mean by your active participation section. This is what we use. Really pay attention to like these categories as you're developing your proposal.

[Dwayne, presenter] And I would just say to just keep in mind that our goal is not to say no; our goal is to say yes. I joke with people that I try very hard not to be reviewer two, although I have noticed that occasionally I am that person. But realistically, we want to say yes to these proposals. We want to see the cool ideas that you have and the cool things that you're doing in your centers. Just I would say for me, the one thing I like to see a specificity. The more specific you are and the more details you give me, the more I can see what the session is going to look like. In a lot of cases, I get excited because this is a cool proposal. I'm going to go to this session because I want to see how this is going to flesh out.

[Bri, moderator]And I was just going to say, I think we're going to go ahead and stop recording so that we can have more of an open conversation.

[Erika, presenter] Well, I was going to say before, if anyone has any generic questions before you might have any specific questions to you. If you have any generic questions, you can ask them now, then we'll stop recording, and then we'll take some personal specific questions if you have stuff about your own presentations. You can either unmute yourself or you're welcome to drop them in the chat. We'll give it about a minute or so.

This is where I want the Jeopardy music to play. All right, well, I think we're good. So yes, Bri, we can stop recording.