

Engaging Graduate Students throughout the Research Writing Process

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NAVIGATING THROUGH A PHD PROGRAM after comprehensive exams can be tricky, time consuming, and difficult--especially when a candidate is expected to persevere through much of the dissertation writing process on his/her own. The task of writing a dissertation requires extensive knowledge of one's area, interdisciplinary problem solving, and critical thinking (Graff, 2015), as well as ample knowledge of research procedures. All of these tasks are often the major components of coursework in a PhD program (Anderson & de Ibarrola, 2014). What gets left out of programs might actually be the determining factor in whether or not a candidate winds up completing his/her degree. It is our belief that how a candidate maneuvers through his/her own writing process and how the committee members respond to that process can either propel or hinder the completion of a candidate's dissertation. In this article, we will explore the connection between a professional songwriter's process and the collaborative creativity process of using tablet technology. We also consider how those processes could benefit graduate candidates and committee members in regards to research writing. Our hope is that this article creates a conversation about literacy practices, particularly writing, at the highest level of academia, and reminds both candidates and committee members that effective literacy practices need to be used in all levels of academics to keep students engaged in the research process.

The Effect of High and Low-Stakes Writing on a Graduate Student

Graduate students:

In our experiences in a doctoral program, we received strong guidance throughout coursework in the PhD program by consistently being asked what we were interested in researching; by being offered philosophical ideas and existing studies and strategies; and by reading and analyzing large amounts of published studies. All of the courses required us to write multiple papers, more often than not on a subject of our choice. Some of these papers were essentially small literature reviews, others were result write-ups for statistical data, and several were even miniature versions of a chapter similar to what would appear in a dissertation. While all of these assignments were beneficial to our growth as a research writers, the majority of them were counted as a large percentage of the final grade in a course.

Writing teachers would call these types of assignments high-stakes. In the words of Peter Elbow and Mary Deane Sorcinelli, “The stakes are high because it needs to be good and it bears directly on the course grade” (2005). Many of the professors offered to meet individually with us either in person or virtually to look at a draft of a paper and give comments on how we could improve the paper before the due date. This required writing a large portion of the assignment on our own, leaving us to navigate through the majority of the writing process before we even showed the paper to a professor. As relatively new writers of research, this left us with a great deal of uncertainty, even fear that we would score poorly or appear unintelligent. Early in the program, we both felt we did not have the skills, nor the confidence to become great academic writers. We had otherwise been used to writing creatively and using vivid words to paint a picture for our readers, since our jobs as English Language Arts educators focused heavily on the literary and poetry genres. Several instructors tried to improve our academic writing by telling us components of APA-style that were missing. However, we were still situated in creative writing and could neither transfer our skills to the academic genre, nor understand why those APA components were necessary and how to fix them. The well-meaning advice resulted in frustration and lower self-efficacy of our writing skills.

From that point forward, we made it a point to make the academic writing more effective by exploring rhetoric and writing pedagogies. We were still about handing a paper over to a professor until it was as polished as we could make it, but we had set goals to make this process easier for ourselves.

There were two professors that encouraged and required low-stakes writing in their courses. Low-stakes writing is “comfortable, casual, exploratory writing...for exploring and processing course material—and will not be graded” (Elbow & Sorcinelli, 2005, p. 192). In one professor’s course, we were encouraged to journal our thoughts on topics from our readings, conversations in class, and our personal experiences and beliefs about education. These journals became the source for revising and evolving the research ideas into something that was do-able; and because the journaling was low-stakes, we didn’t feel the need to be academically correct or to take the passion out of any personal educational experiences we wrote.

In summer of 2012, we attended a local writing project’s Summer Institute, which was directed by an English professor who also had a passion for learning about and writing pedagogy. At this month-long institute, we explored writing concepts with other institute members and practiced writing and sharing that writing every day. This institute encouraged the free-write style, similar to what we had done in our course journals, and showed us how to connect free-writing ideas together to create more formal pieces of writing. We practiced writing every single day and shared our writing with each other to revise and re-write until we were somewhat satisfied with what we produced. This practice of free-writing and sharing with

peers and mentors to connect and revise ideas was utilized when it came time to write the dissertation and laid the groundwork for understanding the creative processes we were going to investigate in our research. We had learned about process, used it, and reflected on different ways to move the process forward. By happenstance, we completed the Summer Institute only one month before we began the course where we were required to take the comprehensive composition examinations, and fortunately, we felt a much deeper understanding of academic writing at that point.

The composition exams (comps) at the university required an intense amount of academic writing, as was expected, and that writing was essentially the legwork for Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of our dissertations. Comps were extremely high stakes, and while we were allowed to study together before the exam, communication or asking for any sort of assistance with writing during the exam was strictly prohibited. After comps, we registered for the dissertation in progress course, and were left on our own to begin writing our proposals. The support during the coursework of the program had shifted, and the responsibility of making progress on the research and our degree fell on us. Assistance was there, but we now had to specifically reach out and ask for it. The pace to achieve program goals was determined by our ambition and effort more than anything else. Fortunately, we now knew a significant amount about strong writing practices, about the writing process in general, and that knowledge helped deepen our understanding with our dissertation topics.

Professor:

The doctoral program these students attended is situated at a small regional, state university. The majority of the faculty are experienced teachers at the doctoral level who have opted to be part of a program that focuses on where students are situated in terms of their abilities and not as accomplished writers. The classes in our program are sequenced in such a way that students develop skills and understanding in conjunction with written skills. As a consequence, faculty work closely with students as mentors. For example, in my course, considerable class time is given to choosing topics, planning and peer review. The process is circular and in part student lead. My part is to guide, interact and encourage until a draft is written. It is at that time that I become the lead guide and work with each one until a draft of the quality expected is produced.

The majority of the students do not initially possess strong higher order thinking skills, nor do they write at the level often expected in a doctoral program. However because of the limited enrollment size and mentoring possibilities, I have found that our students have become solid writers and have produced dissertations of a high quality. Evidence of that is to be found in the number of graduates who have graduated from the program and accepted higher education positions in and outside our state.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this process is reflective journaling. The majority of my students are practicing educators. They often do not get the time or opportunity to reflect on what they do. The effect of this kind of teaching-style is to prepare students for exams and not to be concerned with the theory behind what they do. Reflexive journals allow the students to do this. It also encourages teachers to think about the needs of their learners and to realize that there is a direct connection between teaching and learning.

Learning to write is part of a process of coming to know the self and expressing that in a form of academic discourse. Like many institutions of higher learning, my university is increasingly encouraged to focus on content acquisition as opposed to critical and reflective thinking. We battle the push toward writing as a product.

Succeeding in a doctoral program requires perseverance and that is something that many students both here and elsewhere have not acquired. Doctoral programs are demanding. They require sacrifice and a great deal of work. They also call for the students to be open to criticism and the ability to go back and rework ideas. In too many cases students in our program meet these challenges only in a doctoral program.

For a number of reasons graduate students stall after comprehension composition examinations and do not begin the dissertation writing that is essential to achieving a doctoral degree, (Thompson, 1999). Significant components of the stall are the graduate student's solo journey that can begin with writer's formal and rhetorical knowledge of genre linked to their perceptions of knowledge-making practices in their respective disciplines (Kuteeva, & Negretti, 2015), the inability to navigate through all of the components of academic writing that a dissertation will require (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006, Paltridge, 2002, and Swales, 2004), and issues of coherent writing components in the discipline (Basturkmena & von Randow, 2014).

Applying Concepts from a Songwriter's and Pre-Service Teachers' Process to Writing Research

This section discusses components of themes that were created after collecting and analyzing data in two qualitative dissertations and how those themes are applicable to the completion of graduate level research. The first study explored a professional songwriter's process, use of critical thinking, use of creative risk-taking, and how those three elements interacted by collecting data through observations, interviews, and artifacts (Creswell, 2003). The data went through multiple cycles of InVivo coding (Saldana, 2009) and was then categorized and themed (Charmaz, 2006). Through the lens of Arts-Based Educational Research (Eisner, 2002), the themes were shaped into an ethnodrama (Saldana, 2011) that artistically connected the findings to the applications. The second study explored fourteen pre-service teachers use of tablet technology to provide reading, comprehension, and writing tutoring to kindergarten through tenth grade students as part of a diagnosis and correction of reading problems course. Pre-service teachers provided three sets of interviews, which were analyzed using Saldana's (2013) holistic coding methods and Giorgi's (1994) four-step analysis process. Ten themes emerged from two theoretical frames --Transformative Learning Theory ((Mezirow, 1978), and phenomenology (Husserl, 1970). The exploratory study connected teachers' technological, pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK) studies revealing positive shifts in the processing of innovative technology and literacy instruction.

After reflecting on the research and the process of writing up research, we created five pointers that can be applied to graduate research writing (A) low-stakes writing is an integral part of the process, (B) trust is vital, (C) co-writes and conversation drive the process forward, (D) knowledge of the genre matters, and (E) small risk taking is critical. A connection to the research and an explanation of those points are discussed in this section.

Low Stakes Writing is an Integral Part of the Process

Students:

Throughout the data collection process for *A Professional Songwriter's Approach to Writing*, the participant brought up the concept of the "baby phase," his term for songs that had been drafted but that were not necessarily ready to be heard by the full listening audience. The songwriter knew songs in the baby phase still needed work and also needed to be shared with a trusted audience (i.e. his producer or family) so they could go through another phase of critiquing and revising by a different set of eyes to further develop and refine the work. Songs in the "baby phase" were nowhere near ready to be played on the radio and sometimes were not

even ready to be professionally recorded yet (Rodríguez, 2014). Writing in the “baby phase” could be considered a form of low-stakes writing because it is informal, not a final draft (Elbow, 1997), and helps the songwriter layout and organize elements of his song without having to fear the judgment of his radio audience.

Similarly, as part of the data collection process in *Transforming Literacy Instruction: Exploring pre-service teachers' integration of tablet technology in reading, comprehension and writing* (Juárez, 2014), the participant pre-service teachers were noted to frequently provide low-stakes writing assignments to students they tutored in the study to help grow their students' literacy skills. These low stakes writing assignments often consisted of labeling drawings or diagrams and providing explanatory data, writing reader responses to YouTube or other video feeds they had watched, or paraphrasing or summarizing books and e-books they had read. These low stakes, which were not critiqued or graded, helped the tutored students gain confidence and practice elements of their writing without having to fear the judgment of the red pen mark criticisms that often accompany their other teacher responses.

Low stakes writing strategies, which importantly provided the writing practice and critical, reflective thinking, and acquisition of knowledge we needed as we progressed through our doctoral program, are being more included in a graduate student's writing process or in college. (Neff, McAuliff, Whithaus, & Quinlan, 2012). While these strategies were provided in the reflective journaling in our coursework, and the dialogue and partner sharing we received at the Summer Institute, had not typically been included in our grade school learning or undergraduate learning process. We could not remember having many low stakes writing strategies, such as quick writing rounds, stop and jot, magnet summaries, or even quick writes as part of learning, that are currently being integrated into writing across the curriculum in secondary schools (*Write for Texas*, 2014). We found the low stakes writing experiences strengthened the building of our knowledge base, improved the amount and quality of our writing, and encouraged our self-efficacy, which was needed for dissertation process writing and completion.

Professor:

Candidates and committee members need to recognize the value of text that is still in the “baby phase” and the value of low stakes writing strategies. Often this is helpful when a student begins to plan out what they want to write about. To become a craftsperson is a process and often begins with reflection and passion. A low stakes approach encourages students to journal reflectively, talk amongst themselves in small groups about their initial ideas. By their very nature these ideas are often fragmentary and incomplete; but by sharing at this level students are able to gain confidence and construct collaborative networks outside of the fear of being formally evaluated by their instructor. Let me stress this is a learning process that might be compared to a benevolent apprenticeship.

When candidates allow themselves space to journal and document their thoughts and apprehensions, attempt to layout a section in a chapter, or practice labeling and elaborating on drawings or otherwise responding to videos or books, learning is occurring and concepts are being sorted and organized (Elbow 1997). Although committee members do not need to see every thought that flows through the graduate student's brain, they do need to be willing to look at writing in the “baby phase” when the student requests it or when the student appears to be stuck. By looking at the thoughts documented in this form of low-stakes writing, candidates and committee members can work together to shape and refine the written ideas into something more suited for the academic style of writing.

Trust is Vital

Students:

A theme that developed from understanding the songwriter's "baby phase" and connecting that to categories that triangulated in the data, was *R-E-S-P-E-C-T My Comfort and Privacy*, which revealed how important both mental and physical comfort were to the songwriter. While the songwriter directly mentioned his preference of writing in a comfortable space, (natural light, soft chairs, coffee tables, casual clothing), the answers to his interview questions and analysis of observations indirectly revealed that he also valued mental comfort. Mental comfort is, in essence, the concept of trusting whom you are working with and knowing they will add value to the process. The songwriter spoke of the small group of people that he allowed to listen to the "baby phase" of his music and stated his reasons for them being in that group revolved around the fact that each of them added a positive element to his songwriting process. He also stated he strongly preferred to not share his "baby phase" writing with his listening audience or with those who had no experience in songwriting because their critiques would tear the writing apart before it was even put together (Rodriguez, 2014).

Correspondingly, the trust factor also revealed itself in the pre-service teacher/student collaborative creativity process of co-writing books after they explored videos, images, and e-books with tablet technology. As a result of the mental comfort acquired through the shared process of researching using tablet technology together, teacher and student reached a space of adding value to what has been found and extending that further. The two were able to co-write other versions of existing fiction and non-fiction texts in shared book making (Juarez, 2014). This process occurred after just a few of weeks of reading e-books, and finding relevant images and videos corresponding to the content knowledge and skills the students were exploring/learning about and then beginning a collaborative creativity or writing process.

Professor:

The issue of trust can be transferred to the research writing process as well. Instructors need to trust in the process and be willing to look at "messy" or "raw" writing. It's helpful to think of this as another step in the process of becoming an academic writer. Candidates often believe that becoming a good writer is an individual process; but in fact much excellent academic work is collaborative. As students move through the initial stages of low-stakes writing, the instructor needs to be present to the extent of fostering a context of trust and to stress the importance of thinking of this as a series of *mis-takes* not mistakes. Thought of in this way, the instructor encourages the student to become a partner in a process built on deep learning and experience on the part of the teacher, and the passion and quest for understanding on the part of the student. Both can bring experience, inspiration, and thoughtful critique to the process and when combined with a willingness to collaborate, the seeds of a process of mutual trust can be planted. It is at this point that students are to be able to trust their professors won't rip apart their writing for a power trip and also need to be able to trust that their committee is there to help, not hinder the process. Resultant negativity found in comments to address errors can result in anxiety and avoidance of writing, while the opposite – positive comments can result in greater confidence and ease in writing (Bomer, 2010).

Co-Writes and Conversation Drive the Process Forward

Students:

During the data collection process of my dissertation, I had the chance to observe co-writing sessions, where a songwriter sits down with another songwriter(s) and they create music

and lyrics together. The co-writes of my participant had a very informal, relaxed atmosphere and took place in the comfort of his family member's home. The participant sat adjacent to his co-writer and myself, his iPhone on the table with the VoiceMemo app open and guitar in hand, her laptop on the table with a blank Word document open, my notebook open in front of me. The songwriter played a beat he had put together the previous day using an app on his iPad as his co-writer read phrases from her lyrics journal "...don't tell me. Show me. Don't tell me, love me. Get to know me...words are cheap..." and evolves as she throws out lines while the participant continuously strummed his guitar and suggested the song have "some element of hope."

After approximately three to four minutes of verbally "massaging" her original idea, the co-writer delivered a cluster of sentences that ended with "Just get over here and love me." I scribbled down the co-writer's line and continued jotting notes on the visual I was observing while she continued verbally working with the "get over here and love me" line. Several more minutes elapsed as the co-writer contributed more possible lines and the participant commented on them, steering them back to something more up-beat. I scratched the words "Come on and love me" in my notebook and decided to share the line. The participant tested out the line with the melody he already had going and it happened to fit, becoming the hook of the song. After a solid eleven minutes of attempting to come up with something usable, we finally had one line. One that was dramatically different from the mood of the co-writer's first thoughts. All three of us worked together to shape the co-writer's original diary notes into a useable line. The revision continued throughout the entire process with each one of us verbalizing a thought, a possible line, and the others working to "massage" or "mold" that line into something useable.

There was never a physical stopping point where we decided to revise, it just came about in the flow of things. A large chunk of the revision was done through conversation and through sharing opinions of a specific line. The participant mentioned after the observation that there were quite a few phrases that went through his head during the process that he chose not to share because he felt like they would not get us anywhere. I had many lines scribbled in my notebook that I didn't bother sharing, such as, "Off for the night/This feeling's kinda right," namely because I didn't feel like they fit with the direction the song was moving. At other times, when I or another co-writer shared, the original line was molded until it fit with the melody the participant had been strumming.

This kind of process happened repeatedly throughout the entire session. One or more co-writer would throw out a line, the participant would "test" the line to see how it fit into the melody, and either the participant or the other co-writers would tweak the line until it fit into the song and flowed with the other lines and story we were trying to tell. This kind of revising required an intense amount of listening, returning to the top of the song, and listening again. We were constantly moving from a subjective viewpoint, being inside the song, focusing on a single line, to an objective viewpoint where we acted as listeners hearing the song for the first time. We questioned what made sense, what kind of visual we had created, what both male and female listeners would want, as well as the multiple meanings our phrases could take on (Rodríguez, 2014).

This process also occurred with pre-service teachers and students through use of daily journaling, collaborative reading, and collaborative researching. The students appeared to get non-threatening feedback as they wrote alongside their teachers. The similar impact to the songwriting process happened while teacher and student used the iPad to read and have fun conversations about the pictures, videos, and e-books. Students' written responses flowed more

quickly and easily after having time to talk about their observations. The theme that emerged was collaborative creativity or the willingness of the student and teacher to create new pieces of writing together from ongoing dialog or conversations that moved the writing forward (Juarez, 2014). In many ways we feel that writing this article represents a full circle collaborative creativity experience that flowed from the trust and conversations that were forged during our dissertation writing experiences.

For example, there were points in the write up of our dissertations, particularly Chapter 5, where we would get stuck because we did not know what my Chapter 5 was supposed to look like. To move ourselves forward, we first looked at examples of Chapter 5's from doctoral candidates who had graduated the program within the past two years. We modeled the paragraphs after theirs, but still did not feel like we were getting anywhere because our topics and approaches were so different.

We decided to meet at a coffee shop inside a bookstore so we would be free from the distractions of home, yet still relaxed enough to let the words flow. Prior to our meeting, we had exchanged our Chapter 4's so we knew where each other stood in our writing. We began with casual questions about Chapter 5's in general. "What goes in a Chapter 5?" "I don't really know. I know we're going to have to connect it to our field, to talk about future research, but I don't really know how to do that." We continued talking and taking turns asking and answering questions, all of which was recorded using VoiceMemo. We then went home and typed up our conversation. From those conversations, we picked out major points we thought should be discussed in my Chapter 5 and then sent those off for a committee member to view. We knew our Chapter 5's was not at the level they needed to be, but we had finally moved forward.

The relaxed atmosphere of the coffee shop, combined with the collaborative conversation that we audio recorded concerning the components of writing we both needed to incorporate in Chapter 5 of our dissertations helped move our academic writing forward in ways we had not previously anticipated, practiced or been accustomed. The lessons we learned from taking the initial or "baby steps", learning to trust others with sharing our writing, and following the processes from low to high stakes resulted in relaxed conversations that helped us to find our way to completion of the dissertations, which were ultimately the main achievements sought have implications for similarly situated graduate students who find themselves slowing or not writing what they could be to finish their doctoral programs.

Knowledge of the Genre Matters

Students:

Having a high-quality chapter example to mimic provides a starting point for the budding researcher. In the field of composition, these high quality texts that are visited over and over while learning to write in a specific genre are referred to as "mentor texts" (Calkins, 2007, p.?). While each dissertation written is unique, certain patterns of "vocabulary and rhetorical features" (Paltridge, 1997, p.6) are present in research writing, arguably making this type of writing a genre of its own. Transition words and phrases, as well as structural patterns from a research writing mentor text can be utilized in a variety of research areas. Providing candidates with an example helps fill in holes and gets the process moving. This also happened with the pre-service teachers and the students they tutored. Two byproducts of knowing the genre and improving content learning through the use of mentor texts were self-generated learning and greater skill building and confidence in writing (Juarez, 2014). For example frequent observations often occurred during tutoring as pre-service teachers forged assignments to build knowledge for their students, then the students would research and obtain high quality mentor texts in content areas

in science or social studies to use as foundation support or writings to mimic as they created new material.

Self-generated learning occurred when throughout the use of tablet technology a student would conduct research through self-directed interest and curiosity. The pre-service teachers found that students extended their learning without being given assignments to continue researching and writing. Increasingly, the self-generated learning occurred in non-fiction writing from synthesis of materials located, pictures and videos that were found and observed and a new enthusiasm to write about these findings. Another extension of use of mentor texts gained from knowing and learning about the genre was greater skill building and confidence. Mentor texts in creative fiction and non-fiction would often spur student writers to text more mentor texts, especially using e-books to expand and building on their growing knowledge of content and genre. Using mentor texts gave the students greater confidence to see themselves as writers and to develop and grow their writing identities.

Similarly, long continued hours of online reading, researching and writing in educational research, both theoretically and practically, provided us with the foundational and extensive knowledge not only to speak, but also to write authoritatively in our dissertations. Repeated reading and analysis of the research genre gave us confidence regarding academic writing.

Professor:

Another step in building skills and mutual trust is to refer students to mentor texts. It is beneficial to have a mentor text for each chapter, for example ‘What does a high quality literature review look like?’ By providing mentor texts for Chapters 1-4, students are able to delineate a basic structure for those chapters, but more importantly, the students can use the mentor texts as a guide for how to build up to the culminating chapter five where the student is given the freedom to address the issues of the study and make suggestions about its importance, application, and ideas for future research. For many students this is like jumping off a high diving board. They need to know they are not being abandoned and that they have support from their committee. Because dissertations format and structure can vary from institution to institution, it is beneficial to direct students to superior quality dissertations from the same area in the same department. However this is done, the object is to provide a starting point that allows students to build the formal writing skills necessary to succeed in dissertation writing.

Small Risk Taking is Critical

In the analysis of the songwriter’s process and my participation in that process, I realized how important it was to take small risks in order to build confidence in one’s writing abilities. Risks in the study included throwing out a line, sharing ideas about how the song should be shaped, playing a tune that wasn’t fully sorted out yet, and similar low-risk tasks. Although each of these small risks did not seem vitally important at any one specific moment, they added up to play a significant role in the overall picture of the process.

In the context of the teacher and learning experience, the pre-service teachers let down their need for authoritarian/disciplinarian and revealed a co-learner/co-writer experience. This step was a critical piece that moved students to gain the trust and confidence to express their likes and dislikes. The small step of risk taking in self-disclosures by both teacher and student of their researching preferences was key to moving the knowledge forward, and proved to be an important catalyst in the collaborative creativity process. The risk taking was a critical component in reaching out to write together.

Similarly, taking small risks with wording and writing is extremely important to the beginning researcher. Allowing risks in a trusting environment helps build the researchers’

confidence level and clarify misconceptions. Appropriate educational environments must consider students and teachers risk-taking attitudes as risk taking ordinarily cannot happen in an environment where students feel unsafe (Sharma, 2015). In developing a risk-taking disposition with our dissertation studies, we learned that our writing proved to have positive and impactful learning experiences freeing us explore possibilities. But we also stress that taking small steps can include writing academically in the social science fields to expand the range of writing styles and functions so that academic writing like music can be more experimental and innovative; should include personal, narrative, and literary elements and not just conventional prose (Casanave, 2010). Writing qualitative inquiry studies in our dissertations particularly offered us opportunities for experimenting, even in small ways, with our writing. Including song lyrics, theatrical performance cues, and personal narrative stories of the participants were three ways we ventured into risk taking and providing more non-conventional prose writing into dissertation writing.

Despite the constraints of hierarchy, power, and convention in doctoral programs and dissertation writing, other research-based ideas for promoting small writing risk taking behaviors besides low stakes writing strategies elaborated in this article include creative writing which includes flow and rhythm (Rodriguez, 2014), infodoodling (Brown, 2014), and multi-modal presentations in visual literacy utilizing technological tools (Juarez, 2014).

Conclusion

Writing is possibly the single most important skill a PhD candidate will have to develop and refine during his/her program. However, requiring candidates to only write high-stakes assignments can hinder their growth as writers of research and hold them back through fears or inability to put what they know on paper (Elbow, 1997). After reflecting on our own processes of writing a dissertation and guiding the dissertation writing process, five pointers were developed: (a) low-stakes writing is an integral part of the process, (b) trust is vital, (c) co-writes and conversation drive the process forward, (d) knowledge of genre matters, and (e) small risk-taking is critical. Although listed singularly, these elements work in tandem to create a writing environment that encourages graduate students to take small steps toward completing a larger goal. Utilizing effective writing strategies through the program and research writing process could prove to be beneficial to all parties involved. We encourage you to take this information and start a conversation about how/if these pointers are applied and to discuss how writing activities and assignments at your own institutions are keeping graduate students engaged in their writing practices all the way through the graduate program.

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