

## Professional Tutor Spotlight: Dr. Lauren-Elise Kadel



This month's Professional Tutor Profile focuses on Dr. Lauren-Elise Kadel, a writing tutor in the Academic Success Center since Spring 2014. She studied English and French as an undergraduate, and earned her Master's in English from Villanova University. She recently finished her Ph.D. in English at Temple University.

Her dissertation was on using African-American literacy narratives in the first-year writing classroom. Dr. Kadel is committed in her research to helping international students work on their transition to college or graduate school.

We interviewed Dr. Kadel to learn more about her background, interests, and advice she has for students.

INTERVIEWER

Tell us a bit more about your research interests and how these connect to writing.

KADEL

I am particularly interested in writing center research and literacy practices outside of the classroom. In the future, I would like to further study teacher development.

INTERVIEWER

What do you do outside of tutoring?

KADEL

In my free time while writing my dissertation, I started expanding my repertoire to keep up the writing habit. Now I'm writing more consistently and trying out different types of writing, which I didn't have as much time for all those years I was in school. I'm also working on a project that I hope will turn into an academic book (or two), some research ideas, a blog on teaching writing, and short stories. When there's time, I also cook complicated meals and do yoga as I'm thinking about my writing. It helps to "work out" the obstacles.

My father is an international ballroom dance instructor, so I act as his partner for some demonstrations and weekend classes. I'm also travel a lot and keep a travel journal, which helps fuel my writing later.

My stepmother is from China and is currently writing her own autobiography. I am assisting her with the editing, and helping her distinguish her voice from her translator's. It's tricky to figure out what should change without having access to the original text in Chinese, but we are making progress.

INTERVIEWER

What is your favorite aspect of tutoring?

KADEL

While I've been a tutor here, I've had the opportunity to grow professionally in ways I think also benefit students. At first, it was mostly about the passion for the work itself because I enjoy helping students with their writing, whether as an instructor or tutor. Now that I've settled in, it's mostly about the connections I make with students and thinking about ways to support their learning process and larger goals. To do that, we have to really listen to students so that the feedback we provide is best suited to serve the student, and give feedback that also helps later as students enter professional life.

INTERVIEWER

What is one piece of advice you frequently give to students?

KADEL

There's so much that goes into writing papers, from research and organizing sources, to synthesizing and articulating an argument. We can help at any stage in the process, and even when you don't know where to start.

Some of the best sessions I have are brainstorming sessions before a student commits one word to the draft. Don't feel like you need a polished or even finished draft to make an appointment.

INTERVIEWER

What is the best piece of advice you've ever received about writing?

KADEL

"Start anywhere." I spent so much time in college planning everything before I wrote, I didn't have as much time to actually write the paper! You don't need the perfect hook or even to have figured out your introduction at all in order to start. When I was first writing a long project, someone told me to start with whichever part I felt most compelled to write and then to switch only when I thought I did that part justice.

INTERVIEWER

What would you say to a student who is reluctant to come in to the ASC?

KADEL

Give it a try and also keep coming back! Tutoring works best when you develop a rapport with some of the tutors. They get to know your writing better and we really are invested in your long-term success as students. Now that I've been here five years, I can tell you how rewarding it is to work alongside a student throughout their time here.

INTERVIEWER

Any final thoughts?

KADEL

Transitions are times that foster challenges that help you to grow. These include major transitions like moving to a new country or across several states for college, or attending graduate school for the first time, to more minor ones, like taking more courses in your discipline or starting to apply for jobs. There are even noticeable shifts in the way you see yourself as a writer and student, and your motivation for succeeding.

We at the Academic Success Center are here to support you in this process, so a lot more goes on in sessions than what is on the page in front of us during a session. We hope to help you grow as students and learners when we have the opportunity to meet with you. Because tutoring is collaborative, you help us in that process.