THE WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

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...FROM THE EDITOR...

This month's lead article is either one essay in multiple parts or multiple essays on a single theme—depending on your perspective. But it is certainly a conversation among colleagues on a subject we think about: what tutoring contributes to teacher education. If you want to add to the discussion with your own thoughts on this important aspect of our instructional effectiveness, please do join in.

You may also notice that one of the writers of our Tutors' Columns for this month sent us his essay from Bulgaria. Indeed, we are an international group.

And because with this issue we suspend publication for the summer (to resume again, we hope, with the September issue), please remember to send all conference notices and calls for papers at least a month in advance. (E-mail to me is fine.) Thus if you have a notice for September issue, please send it by August 1.

Until we meet again through these pages in September, I wish you a peaceful, productive summer, and may your biggest problem be figuring out how to spend all the left-over funds from your budget this year.

• Muriel Harris editor

...INSIDE...

Evolving Pedagogies: Four Voices on Teacher Change and the Writing Center:

- **Dale Jacobs** 1
- **Heidi Jacobs** 2
- **Chauna Craig** 4
- **Jennifer Bradley Danes** 6
- **Dale Jacobs** 8

Writing Center Ethics: "Student Agendas and Expectations for Writing Center Conferences (Part IV Again)"

- **Michael A. Pemberton** 10

Conference Calendar 12

Tutors' Columns: "Can Cross-Cutting Lead to a Burkean Parlor?"

- **Vladimir Petroff** 13

"Tutoring and the Zen of Car Repair"

- **Thomas J. Grau** 14

NWCA News

- **Al DeCiccio** 15

Evolving pedagogies: Four voices on teacher change and the writing center

1. Critical exile and the writing center

-Dale

As the four of us worked together in the Writing Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for a year, we realized we were all interested in the Center as a possible, and perhaps necessary, site of teacher change. Through our discussions, we have explored how teaching in the Writing Center has profoundly affected our teaching lives and the teaching lives of the other staff members. This essay is an attempt to move these discussions beyond the confines of our particular context in hopes of opening up a larger dialogue about the possible roles of writing centers in teacher change. But first I need to address the specific context of the Writing Center at UNL.

Our Writing Center is open during the school year to all members of the university community and is housed in the Department of English. It is staffed by Department of English Teaching Assistants, most of whom are in their first year of the Ph. D. program. These

Teaching Assistants teach one section of Introductory Composition and work one-on-one with students for ten hours per week in the Writing Center; as Writing Center teachers, they are given a one-course release with responsibilities equivalent to those of the traditional classroom. Students come to the Writing Center voluntarily, either for weekly appointments with the same tutor or as drop-ins working on a particular piece of writing; sessions generally run for fifty minutes. They can work on any type of writing, not just academic or course-related writing, and there is no evaluation or grading as a result of their work. The Writing Center operates as a confidential service which does not report to classroom instructors about students' attendance and/or progress. In other words, students who come to the Writing Center are treated as writers and our work is located at the borders of the university, connected to classes in many ways, but outside the institutional imperatives of grading and evaluation. Teachers and students sit together to talk about writing; the physical and mental proximity is much greater than it is in the classroom. Other than these changes, however, few new Writing Center teachers anticipate that teaching in the Writing Center will be any different than classroom teaching. However, there is a profound difference in working outside the institutional hierarchy of grades and formal class structures that affects relationships with students and approaches to teaching. It is this border space at which the Writing Center is situated that pushes students and teachers towards what Nancy Welch has called "critical exile" by allowing, even forcing, critical reflection not always possible when we are enmeshed in traditional classroom interactions. Teaching in both the classroom and the Writing Center forces teachers to step back and examine critically their pedagogical stances towards students. Writing center teaching causes a generative disruption of teacherly desires for order and stability and provides a space for critical exile.

In an article entitled "From Silence to Noise: The Writing Center as Critical Exile," Welch applies Kristeva's idea of critical exile to writing centers:

> I think we can enlarge our understanding of collaboration to include writing and reading with and against one's many internalized voices. It's with this understanding of collaboration that I'll explore the writing center as providing critical distance from, rather than immersion in, those social conversations—as a space of critical exile for students and teachers alike. (4)

Both here and in the rest of her essay, Welch helps me to think about the writing center as a space for reflection and self-examination. She concentrates on the student and addresses the teacher only in relation to her particular writing center students—rarely in terms of pedagogical self-examination and never in terms of connection to the classroom. The focus is on students and the writing center as a space for the negotiation of their complex locations through writing. Welch's theorizing is important to my thinking about both students and writing centers, but it is also useful to extend Welch's metaphor of critical exile from students to teachers. She writes, "exile means the creation of a space in which we can reflect on and intervene in the languages, conventions, and belief systems that constitute our texts, our sense of self, our notion of 'common sense' (4)." The Writing Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln operates as such as space for teachers, forcing a continual re-examination of teachers' locations and pedagogies by displacing them from the center of authority in relation to individuated students and by creating a critical distance for reflection and intervention between this experience and the experience of the classroom. The Writing Center, then, acts not only as a space for students to work with and against the voices that inform their writing, but also as a site for teachers to interrogate, reflect on, and transform the theoretical, personal, and institutional voices that inform their teaching.

2. "Whose paper is this anyway?:" How writing center teaching informs responses to student writing

-Heidi

Among many of my teaching peers, there is a recurring discussion about feminist pedagogies: what it is we do and can do in our classrooms to make

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Manuscripts: Recommended length for articles is ten to fifteen double-spaced typed pages, three to five pages for reviews, and four pages for the Tutors' Column, though longer and shorter manuscripts are invited. If possible, please send a 3 and 1/4 in. disk with the file, along with the hard copy. Please enclose a self-addressed envelope with return postage not pasted to the envelope. The deadline for announcements is 45 days prior to the month of issue (e.g. August 15 for October issue).

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them more "feminist." While we rarely articulate what exactly we mean when we talk about "feminist pedagogies," there is an assumption that it means a student-centered approach where we facilitate learning rather than direct it, where we create room for dialogue instead of lecturing monologues. And most of us think we do that. In our composition classes, there is also the assumption that we want students to express their thoughts and explore their own view points instead of mimicking what they think we want to hear. Again, this is what most of us think we are doing, and it is certainly what I thought I was doing until I began teaching concurrently in the Writing Center and in the traditional classroom.

In my three semesters in the Writing Center, I had several regular students who were taking a different section of the class that I was teaching. These students made me question whether what I was trying to do in the classroom was what I was actually doing. Was I subconsciously making students write the papers I wanted them to write? Were these really my students' papers or were they mine? Was I really encouraging them to speak? Was I really hearing what they were saying? My work in the Writing Center demanded that I address these issues in my own classrooms.

In my first semester in the Writing Center, I was able to see, from my position of non-grading, non-evaluating Writing Center teacher, what first year composition students were dealing with and how responses from teachers were shaping and, at times, coercing certain types of writing. Suggestions from teachers on margins of papers that said, "expand here" or "more details here" or "need better conclusion" were not taken as advice from teachers as to how they could revise but were taken as direct orders as how to rewrite their papers. In the case of Katie, an extremely motivated and intelligent student who needed high grades to keep her track scholarship, she was consciously tailoring her papers to suit the topics suggested (but interpreted as assigned) by her teacher. At one point, Katie came to our session almost in tears because she had to write a paper on either frogs or the Rolling Stones. She ended up writing a whimsical story about frogs, a fictional tale that she made sound like her own experience. Due to the demands of her track schedule and her need for high grades, I saw Katie suppressing the topics that meant a lot to her. With her GPA constantly in front of her, she stayed within what she perceived as a safe realm of topics. Her composition class became a game of trying to write what she thought her teacher wanted to read instead of an exploration of topics that Katie wanted to, and indeed, I would argue, at some level, needed to write.

With Katie's experience unfolding all semester, I wondered, in responding to my students' writings on self-selected topics, if I were doing to my students what I saw Katie's teacher doing to her. In my classes, I saw drafts of papers coming back to me with only the changes I suggested and nothing more, though I repeatedly and explicitly stated that these were only suggestions. I began to wonder whose papers those were—mine or theirs? I vowed to do things differently in the semesters which followed. I went from writing detailed responses on student drafts to scheduling bi-weekly one-on-one conferences where the students and I could discuss what they wanted to do with the paper, what revision options they had, what directions they could take with the paper. We talked about questions we both had about their writing, and thus the response process for both the student and me became more dialogic and active. Increasingly, I found that their final papers were seeming more and more like their own, or, at least, were seeming like collaboratively revised papers which, still not ideal, seemed like a step in the right direction. The questions of evaluation, even though I decentered grades as much as I could, still lingered.

In my second and third semesters in the Writing Center, I worked with Jessica once a week for both semesters on assignments for two different English classes. In each semester, a tenuous triangle of learning formed between Jessica, her classroom teacher, and me. Our Writing Center attempts to remove itself from the evaluative nature of classrooms and focus more upon the student's own writing processes. Yet, despite our best intentions, I discovered working with Jessica, as with Katie, that her evaluating composition teacher was an invisible yet undeniable presence in our sessions by comments on Jessica's papers and by the grades on the page. As I got to know Jessica, I noticed that the grades and the teacher's comments were guiding the papers in ways that I would not have suggested knowing what I knew about Jessica.

The first assignment Jessica brought in was to write about a personal connection with one of the stories they had read in class. Jessica chose to write about a Tim O'Brien story because it helped her understand what her father, a Vietnam veteran, went through. As we talked and as she wrote, Jessica was quickly and deeply enmeshed in her family's history and realized for the first time that her father's experiences in Vietnam likely contributed to his alcoholism, his abusiveness, and other family issues. The following session, Jessica returned with her teacher's responses. Her paper was full of phrases such as "more here," "abusive how? More detail," "need topic sentence," and "better conclusion." Jessica diligently, and at times, emotionally, went through and added what was suggested. The conclusion and topic sentence were naturally difficult given the nature of her topic and how recent these discoveries were. I suggested free-writing about her topic—a skill she would use frequently in and outside of our sessions. After some time, she tacked on a generic topic sentence and conclusion that would suffice and received a grade she was

mostly satisfied with. In the following weeks, Jessica constantly returned, on her own, to this subject, re-writing that paper in other papers, free-writing about her father, connecting her father and her rocky childhood with other assigned topics. Throughout the semester, her teacher constantly referred only to the mechanics of the paper and seemed reluctant to view Jessica's writing about her father as anything more than an anecdote in a piece of literary criticism, something to be pruned and shaped. Her writing processes and the increasing complexity of her thinking and writing were never commented upon.

The next semester, Jessica worked mostly on one paper. The first draft of this paper was about how, unlike her "stubbornly pessimistic" father, she is "stubbornly optimistic" and even when things go bad (like crashing her car in front of thousands of people) she knew that things would somehow turn out fine. The comments on the various drafts wanted more about the downtown scene, what Lincoln looked like after the football victory of a lifetime, the possible romantic intrigue and above all else, the embarrassment she felt after crashing her car in front of hundreds of people. By April, however, when we worked on her final draft, her father and her thinking about her optimistic world view had been edited out as extraneous. The car crash had moved to the forefront and this paper had become a tale documenting "The Most Embarrassing Night of My Life." I wondered if Jessica had been able to discuss and articulate what she was trying to do with her paper if her teacher's responses had been different.

Having known each other for a semester, Jessica and I both knew that the real center of this paper was how different she and her father were. When I pointed out to her that her talking about the paper was still about her father, yet her writing and revisions were always about the embarrassment of crashing a car and blocking traffic for hours as thousands of people converge downtown, she pointed out her chances at an A in the course—a first for her in an English class. When I asked about incorporating her original topic, she constantly returned to her teacher's comments and suggestions, and spent several sessions inventing and refining similes describing the weather, how she felt, and the mayhem around her. I was distressed about what had happened to this paper over the semester—the topic so important to her had been edited down to a generic tale of social humiliation, a tale that could have happened to anyone. I was also surprised at what had happened to my sense of the Writing Center as a site of non-evaluation. Looking at her final paper one last time before she handed it in, I regretted that her teacher knew so little about her and that ownership of her paper had been transferred somewhere in the revision process.

Like Katie who needed high grades to keep her scholarship, Jessica dreamt of medical school and I was again, deeply conflicted about my role as writing center teacher. Was I an interpreter of teacher's margin comments? Was I a guide toward high grades? Or was I offering a space of alternative learning, offering encouragement and space to explore new things? Certainly, I wanted to be the latter, but what was I really doing? Ultimately, these reflections on Katie, Jessica, and their teachers made me wonder about the messages I was giving my own students. Though I always encouraged them to write about what interested them and explore their topics, and despite all my attempts to move discussions away from grades in my class and focus on processes, the fact that I would ultimately grade them and their work was always in the back of our minds. Is evaluation a question we can ever really dismiss or ignore? Even in a non-evaluative Writing Center?

Perhaps the most important lesson I learned from my Writing Center teaching and my work with Katie and Jessica is that to help them learn, I first need to know who they are. In intensely busy semesters, this can be difficult. I realized through conferencing, that it took me the same amount of time to read and write responses to a set of class papers as it did to meet one-on-one with them, and I found this process more fruitful for myself and my students. Additionally, conferencing lets me listen carefully to what they are saying or trying to say and to move students' individual histories and contexts to the forefront. Thus I take my cues as how to support and guide their writing from them, encouraging them, and reminding myself, to trust their insights about their own writing.

3. A challenging process: The evolution of identity and pedagogy in the writing center

-Chauna

As a first semester Ph.D. student at UNL, I was assigned one class in beginning composition and ten hours teaching time in the Writing Center. Having come from a master's program that seemed to emphasize writing more as product, I was elated to discover the relative freedom of process-based pedagogies that UNL seemed to encourage. Also, I'd never taught in a writing center before, and UNL's Center seemed a "perfect" place to put process composition theory into praxis.

The student who most challenged my ideas and understanding of process composition theory was Lydia, a 20-year-old junior whose first appointment with me had a specific purpose: to complete an application for an editorial position on an undergraduate literary magazine. The session had a clear focus, and our goal had a deadline by which the application had to be finished and a set of guidelines. It was like helping a student complete an assignment, and we both understood our work together to be successful when

Lydia was accepted to edit the magazine. After that, she continued working with me weekly, only now she just wanted to write for herself at that point—poems, essays, idea logs, etc. I was delighted with this arrangement, and it wasn't long before I recognized how inventive Lydia was. One day she took the sheet that we usually hand out explaining what process logs are and wrote a parody of it because she didn't feel like doing an ordinary log. She wrote, "By regularly *falling off* [instead of "writing in"] your log during a session, you can become more conscious of what your questions and goals are, what you've accomplished, and what you still want to work on. Your log can also help you and your teacher to tailor each session in the writing center to your own needs." Not only was this her way of resisting the Center's terms and expectations, but she used the resistance as an opportunity for invention. In her "pre-session log *riding* [as opposed to "writing"]," Lydia free-associated about logs. Her list included *log cabin syrup, logos, logrolling, logophile, planing, lathes, quarter saw, log house,* and *Random House* which sent her to the dictionary to find further definitions of these. Each free-association was an opportunity for further associations, more text and context in her process of discovery. The further definitions provided new invention material, and soon Lydia was off on the beginning of a reflective essay about what it really meant to keep a log.

This for me seemed like a perfect process situation as I understood it, and Lydia was a "gifted" writer; her writing was always thought-provoking, the sessions always engaging. I felt creatively stimulated by her creativity. She loved words, and I felt a camaraderie with her because of it. But soon after that "log" parody experience, I felt a conflict arising between my role as classroom teacher and as Writing Center teacher. I first noticed the surfacing tension when Lydia told me she'd flunked her first composition class. I was stunned. Here was a gifted writer—the type I would want a whole class full of—who had no problem with fluency or development of ideas and a natural sense for language. How could she not ace a beginning composition class? She said she couldn't complete the kinds of assignments required of her—they bored her, and she went off on her own directions, creating and expanding but never finally closing a piece. (Admittedly, she was in a class not taught by the "newer" instructors trained in the idea of student ownership of writing topic, but this raised questions for me as to where the line between product and process really stood in our classrooms and in the Center.) The Center was a haven for a process-oriented writer like Lydia, but I wondered if I was doing her any favors by setting up a space so separate from the real demands of classroom expectations. Yet the Writing Center at UNL, in theory, was designed to meet a variety of student needs, including the need for writing time away from class demands. So I began to investigate what expectations I had of my classroom students that I had recently begun to feel so irritated about when Lydia started several promising pieces and resisted every effort to get her to "finish" something.

My obsession with this became so great that I asked advice in staff meetings about how to get Lydia to finish something. No one challenged my need for that advice; in fact, everyone had plenty of suggestions. I was aware that some of my fellow teachers were disturbed by Lydia's staying well past her session to continue working, typing on the computer or tracing etymologies of words in the dictionary to make links between text and context. She was *always* in the Center, and her omnipresence was, frankly, disturbing, especially because she didn't seem to *need* help. Some teachers raised eyebrows at the modeling clay she would sometimes bring in to visually represent some idea she wanted to write about. The session table was starting to look like a kindergarten play station, and I was beginning to feel embarrassed, unprofessional even. And despite the fact that my and the Center's theory was supposed to encourage student ownership of their processes and Lydia was always inventing and revising writing (which I would normally praise in a classroom), I found myself wanting to tame what I perceived as the unruly side of process composition in our sessions in the Center.

The blind spot of process-based composition is often educators' reluctance to talk about evaluation as it is inextricably related somehow to finished product. I had sneaked around that issue in my classrooms by setting up a mental code for how I would evaluate process—number of drafts, evidence of revision, etc. Then I knew I was doing my job. The "products" I looked at were evidence of writing and revising processes. I could congratulate myself at having managed that tension between process and product in the classroom and thus prove myself a "successful" convert to process composition teaching. I couldn't evaluate my success as a writing center teacher if there wasn't some finished product for both the student and me to hold as evidence of work accomplished. *I* couldn't evaluate *my* success. In the emphasis I was placing on my own needs as a first year Ph.D. student out to prove herself as "worthy" and "effective," I have to wonder where was my consideration for Lydia who had continued working with me because she didn't want to work for other people's deadlines. Here I was worrying about when she would "finish" something, bringing up the specter of a deadline, and not necessarily for *her* own good.

The student release form Lydia filled

out last spring to give me permission to use her work has been amended in her own handwriting to read: "If I ever finish anything you can have it." I was surprised to read that after having begun the process of re-evaluating my position as a Writing Center teacher. Lydia was fully aware of how "finishing" had become a focal point, and the words assert a measure of resistance to my imposition.

Re-reading my own teacher process log continued to make me question how I'd been handling the sessions which were supposed to be Lydia's and not mine. In one entry, I wrote "Lydia brought *Guide for the Advanced Soul* . . . looked at the preservation poem. Wow. Lydia always seems to have what I need when I need it—I love how that breaks down the false hierarchy of tutor and tutee. The best teacher is a good student." But obviously that wasn't the whole truth of my feelings. My log in response to her log-rolling parody day reads ". . .where exactly should a log roll to? Is it all process . . . infinite rolling like some Sisyphus task?" My choices in language revealed my growing frustration that we are all still ever in process. I was beginning to see process as a never-ending task of mythic proportions. I was beginning to doubt the usefulness and even the pleasure of process, though Lydia kept the faith.

That for me was the point at which I realized how much I was depending on some sort of product-based evidence to prove to myself and others that I was a "good" teacher, and that, as a result of this need to prove, I was quite possibly blind to all the ways my classroom students, my tutees, and I were working through our own processes, writing-oriented and otherwise. After all, as a student I had finished college in four years and started my master's degree at twenty-two, close to the age of Lydia who was still a long way from graduating and in no hurry to do so. I had worked under deadlines and had forgone the pleasure of meandering process to get the degree, to get the next degree, etc. Lydia's repeated references in her process logs to needing time, hating deadlines, feeling "ill" when forced to work at someone else's pace, were all comments I'd interpreted as parts of *her* personality and not, as I now suspect, a response to *my* anxieties.

Of course, the reality in a classroom is that grades come due. Deadlines are real and necessary throughout the semester to my own sanity, the students' development as university students and "real world" adults, even to Lydia's ability to achieve her own goals. But my teaching in the Writing Center challenged me to reconsider who I was, what I was doing, and what that phrase "her *own* goals" really means. Lydia's goal, as outlined in her first response to the question "Why did you come to the Writing Center?" was to write on her own without the pressure of external deadlines. My anxiety about being a Writing Center teacher, a doctoral student, etc. led me to attempt to change her goal to fit mine. Fortunately, though I'm no longer working in the Writing Center, Lydia has continued to meet with me. Now that I feel under less pressure to prove myself to my peers and faculty advisors, our sessions are again pleasurable and productive in Lydia's sense of the word.

One of her final "official" process log entries reads as follows: "I have the feeling that time in [the Center] is more about a refuge from thoughts that are too heavy . . . not that things here aren't, but I think that my letters (e-mails) contain more of what I need to write—shown by the fact that I write them. This is much needed down-time." Lydia had been "finishing" her thoughts in her own way. She'd written me e-mails from the Center, long pieces that I was again reading as just expressions of her growing friendship with me, not as the continuation of the ideas explored in the writing sessions themselves. I'd felt guilty that she was using Center time and resources to do e-mail, which only shows my limited sense of literacy and process when it didn't seem to reflect well on me, when it made my peers think I was letting Lydia "goof around."

I have only seen Lydia's work for what it was with distance from the Writing Center, distance from that first year of doctoral studies in which my need to prove my competency to my peers and professors was subtly violating my implicit contract with students. I have learned from that experience that process, like progress, is not anything that can easily be evaluated. Though I still struggle with the issues of evaluation and imposition in my composition classrooms, the unique nature of the Writing Center teaching situation provided me valuable insights into myself as a still-emerging teacher and process composition as a still-evolving pedagogy.

4. Uniting inner voices: Balancing the roles of classroom teacher, writing center teacher, and graduate student

-Jennifer

Before coming to UNL's Writing Center I had been both a classroom teacher and a tutor in another writing center. Unfortunately, although there were some connections between these two teaching experiences, for the most part I thought of them as separate. I did not look for ways to help them speak to and inform one another. I had also been both a full time teacher and a full time student but never both at the same time. For the first time I was trying to balance my own work as a graduate student with my teaching responsibilities in a freshman composition class and my teaching responsibilities in the Writing Center. It was a juggling act I was not used to performing.

During my Writing Center teaching that first semester, I began working with several graduate students on their dissertations. At first, I thought these sessions would be a nice diversion from the undergraduates I was encountering in my other sessions. The graduate students were experienced writers

and usually highly intelligent and motivated. But the sessions were more than diversions; they were exciting. They contained explorations and discoveries. While other students needed help understanding a professor's prompt or summarizing a reading assignment—trying to figure out what others wanted or were saying—my graduate students were asking their own questions and discovering their own answers. They were not doing the old academic dance of writing to an audience, i.e. the teacher, about something they already knew. They were researching a field to learn about its current discussions and were finding ways to add to, build upon, take in new directions that discussion. They were joining a discourse community.

These sessions helped me in two very distinct ways. First, I was a graduate student myself. I was just finishing my course work, and my dissertation was looming large ahead of me. Despite years of knowing that it was ahead and seeing many of my fellow graduate students survive the experience, I still had a deep dread of the dissertation. I pictured myself spending long lonely nights in the library, going weeks without talking to another soul, and praying for a burst of divine inspiration. My Center sessions, however, gave me a chance to see the process in action. I learned about approaches to researching, writing strategies, and interacting with a dissertation director. I also learned about time management, setting aside time for writing, and importantly asking and searching out answers to my own questions. The greatest contribution, however, was seeing that the graduate students did not have to work entirely on their own. In addition to official dissertation committee readers, they had the Writing Center to come to for response. Thus, my work in the Writing Center was dispelling the myth of the "independent scholar" that had long dominated my thinking about the dissertation. In "Revising the Myth of the Independent Scholar," Patricia Sullivan writes:

> The figure of the independent scholar has served graduate education as both its informing principle and its telos. One of the primary tasks of graduate programs is to train students in the methodological principles and procedures that will allow them to undertake independent investigation in their fields. These independent investigations culminate in the dissertation, an artifact that signals not only the students' right to assume a professional position in his or her discipline, but also, and more importantly, his or her ability to contribute creatively to its stores of knowledge. Nowhere, in fact, is the figure of the independent scholar encoded more visibly and prescriptively than in our definition of the dissertation as "a work of independent scholarship that makes an original and significant contribution to knowledge in the students field." This formulation, however, belies the inherently social nature of the dissertation as both a discursive event and artifact. As a genre, a process of inquiry, and a rite of passage, the dissertation might more properly be described as a work of collaborative scholarship (13).

As a Writing Center teacher, I was participating in the collaborative scholarship Sullivan describes by asking questions, clarifying hypotheses, and demanding connections and support. I reflected on these benefits in a learning letter addressed to the Writing Center Director as a means of informing her and me of my continued meaning-making within the Center. This text was written two-and-a-half months into my first semester of teaching in the Writing Center:

> My work with Jeff on his dissertation has probably been my most helpful work, both professionally and personally. For the first five or six meetings we worked on his third chapter. The sessions were quite productive, and I was happy when he reported his chapter was accepted without revisions by his chair. He was happy with himself and me. Since then he has been freewriting on his ideas for chapter four. He has needed me to respond to his general ideas and to help him make connections between his ideas. . . . Working with him on his dissertation, I . . . get a chance to see the process he goes through, and writing a dissertation seems immensely more doable and less frightening as a result. It also helps me see how helpful the Writing Center can be for graduate students. The regular appointments keep him working and setting deadlines for himself, and having a regular reader who is aware of the overall topic and the progress the drafts have made provides invaluable reader response.

By watching, talking to, and collaborating with these other graduate students in the midst of the process, other writers at work, I gained valuable reassurance that the dissertation is not a solitary struggle to prove myself in my field but rather a collaborative process that is not only immensely do-able but also potentially great fun and satisfying. I knew that I too was destined to use the Writing Center in writing my own dissertation, thus continuing the collaborative process.

More than reassurance, however, working with graduate students also led me to integrate my classroom and Center teaching. Being called a Writing Center teacher and thinking of my Center work as teaching rather than tutoring helped me integrate my teaching roles. Seeing the difference in excitement and energy between sessions where students asked their own questions and where others posed questions for them, led me to explore ways I could provide opportunity and incentive for students to ask their own questions in my composition courses. Seeing the way students responded to the individual attention and benefited from the questioning and clarifying that went on in the Writing Center, I increased the importance of conferencing in my composition courses.

But it was more than my teaching in the Writing Center influencing my classroom teaching. My teaching and my graduate studies were also coming together. I began to look for ways to test and expand current theory being explored in my own course work and to use my seminar papers and projects to inform my teaching. I began to see my teaching and particularly my classroom as a place for me to do research and to learn. As a result, during the second semester, after being interested in small group work in my writing classes and doing some reading about the topic, I decided to use my classroom to investigate and test my emerging theory. I examined the way students interact, negotiate, and collaborate in small writing teams through recordings, observations, participant-observations, and student writing, including process logs and self and group assessments. In other words, I used my classroom to test and contextualize the reading I had been doing in my course work on collaboration and writing. I let my students know I was doing the research and it became a way for us as a class to become co-researchers. It also recast my role within the classroom. In the students eyes I became not only a teacher but also a learner. Dixie Goswami and Peter Stillman point out that "teachers who cast themselves as learners redefine their roles in the classroom: they are part of classrooms that are 'learning communities'" (preface).

Thus I learned to become a student in my own classroom, learning both from my students as individuals and from the class. The Center had taught me the power of dialogue, and I finally realized that I needed to have an internal dialogue going on between the different roles I was playing. Just as I saw the importance of collaboration in writing the dissertation, I saw the necessity of collaboration and integration among my roles as classroom teacher, Writing Center teacher, and graduate student. It's as if the two sides of me finally began talking and working together.

5. Generative disruption and teacher change in the writing center

-Dale

In order to think more about the Writing Center's place in teacher change, I conducted a number of interviews this year with all of the Teaching Assistants who worked in the Writing Center in the last academic year. Space does not allow me to discuss these interviews in detail, but I would like to allow a few of their voices to speak about the Writing Center.

What came across most forcefully to me in these interviews was that Writing Center teaching never lets you forget that students are individuals with specific histories, goals, and needs. For example, here is Shirley:

> The relationships that I've been able to establish in the Writing Center [have] made me see the value of having relationships with students in the classroom. And those relationships help students to motivate themselves and to motivate me and to feed so that the energy, it's like a two-way current thing that goes on. Whereas I think before I was in the Writing Center it was more, you know, even though I believe we were doing collaborative things and all . . . I really still think that there was that idea of the one-way current. I was the teacher and they were the students.

In the situation Shirley described, the teacher-student relationship becomes more active and reciprocal as the hierarchy of teacher/student is mediated and the locus of meaning is reflected from the teacher back to the student. It is a dialogical relationship, a "two-way current" that replaces the "one-way current" of traditional pedagogy.

Almost all of the other Teaching Assistants made similar statements about the Writing Center and its place in making them see students in more individuated ways. In response to the question, "Do you think your experience in the Writing Center has influenced the way you see yourself as a teacher?," Susan answered,

> I think so mostly because my work in the Writing Center has influenced me to be less obtrusive on my students writing in the classroom. It's helped me to know that I can turn the reins over to them, to let them have control over their own writing and ask questions more, ask them to do the thinking more rather than me doing too much pointing.

Here Susan uses the metaphor of "turning the reins over" to her students by giving them more agency in the writing and learning process. This is a move, like Shirley's, to a more student-centered learning environment, one that begins with a kind of intensive research into the history and location of each individual student. In response to the follow-up question, "Have your experiences in the Writing Center influenced the way you interact with students?," Susan goes on to say,

> I'm finding myself asking more questions rather than [pointing], but also I think that my work in the Writing Center helps me in some ways see all of the variance that goes into the students' writing and what they bring to my classroom. It makes me want to find out more about my students, both about their past experiences with writing, about their personal lives, about their own issues. It makes me more interested in finding [out] about them as people and talking to them more individually.

In response, Susan keys on the multiple subjectivities that students inhabit or, as she calls it "all of the variance that goes into student writing." Susan recognizes that these variances and this situatedness form the basis of learning. She is describing an intense ethnographic study of individual location that is often difficult within the institutional constraints of the classroom setting. Further, it is a move towards caring for our students and their learning.

It's important, however, that this kind of individuated relationship with students not end at the door of the Writing Center, but be translated into classroom practice. Another Teaching Assistant, Calvin, will help us to think about this transition. I asked him, "Do you think your experience in the Writing Center has influenced the way you look at yourself as a teacher?" He answered,

> I think it keeps me honest with myself. I mean, I think it's always easy if you call yourself a facilitator to slip up and to fall more into the gatekeeper role. I think the conferencing with your students, just like the conferencing in the Writing Center, keeps you focused on where the importance, where the learning is supposed to be going on and I always find myself monitoring myself in the conferences and the Writing Center, making sure the students are doing more talking than I am. That's helpful for me in terms of the classroom.

In this response, Calvin points to monitoring as an important function of the Writing Center in the teaching lives of himself and the other staff members. We need, as Calvin says, to be kept honest by our students, which is not easy to achieve in the classroom setting. The Writing Center, on the other hand, has a kind of generative disruption and a space for critical reflection on the ways we are disrupted built into it. Susan puts it quite succinctly: "I think that working in a Writing Center gives you time for intense study of your own interaction with students and your own interaction with students' writings that sometimes you don't have the opportunity for when you're working with large numbers of students." As a space of critical exile, the Writing Center provides for self-reflection in teaching practices, allowing teachers to see the ways in which their current practices in the classroom converge with or diverge from their interactions with students in the Writing Center. As Bernice says, "I think working in the Writing Center and having to do the process log at the end, I'm much more naturally and immediately aware of things that went on in sessions." Or as Bart says, "[Teaching in the writing center] has raised issues about, for example, what I can achieve in responding to student writing." He goes on to say that teaching in the Writing Center has "endlessly and frustratingly" complicated the way he views teaching. In other words, it has disrupted in a generative way his view of teaching and himself as a teacher. In all of these cases, teaching in the Writing Center has decentered these teachers, making them take another look at their own pedagogical practices in both the Writing Center and in the classroom.

Again, Susan puts the contradiction into concrete terms:

> I want to provide support for their writing, encouragement for their writing, offer advice as a more experienced, perhaps, writer, but that role, that metaphor gets complicated in my classes because of my role as evaluator. That expectation isn't in the Writing Center which in some ways makes the Writing Center experience much better for me because that doesn't complicate the situation as much. I can [leave] that part aside, that's not an issue, and so I work more in a mentoring kind of or, well, I guess, coaching or whatever, role, for an outside evaluator.

Susan is forced to think about the institutional limitations she faces as she attempts to initiate and sustain a student-centered pedagogy in her classroom. It is a process of continually evaluating and monitoring her pedagogy, being "endlessly and frustratingly" decentered, and seeking what will keep us honest as student-centered teachers. In these ways, the Writing Center acts as a site of disruption for teacher identity, moving teachers away from the centrality of their own authority and towards the centrality of student authority. Working in the Writing Center asks teachers to enter a space of critical exile and engage in an ongoing process of questioning both their assumptions and their pedagogical stances towards students.

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Record Keeping Program for Macs

Phil Tate, the writing center coordinator at Trinidad State Junior College, has generously uploaded his record-keeping system for Macintosh computers on his World Wide Web site: ftp://writing.tsjc.cccoes.edu/pub. Tate tells us, "It's the program we've been using in our writing center for the past year. It makes nice charts and graphs of usage and keeps records for tutors and students. I may sell it in the future, but for now it's free." For further information, contact him by e-mail: ptate@writing.tsjc.cccoes.edu

WRITING CENTER ETHICS

Student agendas and expectations for writing center conferences (Part IV again)

Did any of you notice (as I just did) that my last column—part IV in this series—was a partial repeat of what I'd written in part III? That's what happens when you wait until the last minute to put something together, and then you get computer files mixed up, and then you send the text from your home rather than the office where your text archives are kept, and then-o-well, you get the idea. Suddenly, I find myself a bit sheepish and a lot more sympathetic to the stresses, frustrations, and mistakes my own students make at this time of year.

My apologies. Take heart, however, in the knowledge that I've been a good deal more careful about the content of this column (which should have been published last month) and have resolved not to let such an egregious error happen again. And next time, I'm really, really going to take a draft of my paper to the writing center well before it's due and get someone else to look at it for me.

Anyway, this month's topic is coverage—how many pages and how many rhetorical issues in a given draft are attended to in conference. This issue is sometimes a matter of dispute between students and tutors. Students often expect that when they bring a draft of a paper into the writing center for a conference, the entire draft and all of its attendant problems will be discussed, leaving them with a comprehensive and clearly defined list of items that need to be "fixed" before turning the paper in. They are just as often disappointed when they discover that their one-hour conference has barely managed to scratch the surface of their papers—when they spend much of the time developing a clear thesis, for example, rather than working quickly through each page of the draft in a search for correctable errors. One of the most common complaints I see on student evaluation forms in my writing center is "Not enough time to discuss my whole paper," and this complaint is just as frequent among students who have signed up for hour-long conferences as those whose conferences were only a half hour.

The percentage of a paper draft that tutors can cover in a given conference session is linked to the total number of pages, the complexity of the content, the number of problems in evidence at various levels, the stage of the writing process the student happens to be at, and the amount of time remaining before the paper is due. The more pages there are in the draft, the less likely it is that a one-hour conference will be sufficient to get through them. The more abstract, detailed, complex, and immersed in disciplinary discourse the paper, the more time it will take to work through each page. (It's surprising in some respects how few students seem to realize this. Some of the conference evaluation forms in my files are from graduate students complaining that their tutors were unable to get through all thirty-five pages of their dissertation chapters in an hour-long conference.) Further, the more problems in a paper, the more time it will take to address them; the earlier in the writing process a paper is brought in, the more time can (and should) be spent on developing content and attending to higher-order discourse issues; and the closer the draft is, timewise, to the final due date, the more important it will be to focus on only those parts of the paper that can be revised effectively in the time remaining. A tutor's agenda for a writing conference will be based on a rapid assessment of all these issues and a dynamic, sometimes shifting, evaluation of the rhetorical priorities for the paper under consideration.

Because students are often unfamiliar with writing center pedagogy and practice, and because they often have expectations and agendas for conferences that conflict with those of their tutors, they may express dissatisfaction with the way their tutorials seem to be going, and this sets the scene for an ethical decision on the tutor's part. How forcefully should tutors stick to their own programs for tutorial conferences when students offer resistance? Does it depend on the degree of resistance? The nature of the resistance? The length of time that the resistance persists? Should tutors try to make a case for their own conference agenda and stick to it no matter what (based on the value and innate worth of their own "expert" opinion), or should they gradually give way to the student's agenda (based on the belief that there is little to be gained by a clash of wills over what should be discussed)?

Once again, let me put forth a few scenarios for you to consider from a tutor's perspective. When should you defer to the student's agenda in these cases, and how would you arrive at that decision?

1) An undergraduate student comes into the writing center with the draft of an eight-page paper on the history of the guitar. Fortunately, you have an hour-long appointment with him, so you are able to read through the entire draft together and consider the paper as a whole. The one aspect of the

paper that strikes you most strongly is how uneven the paper is—largely because of the exorbitant (and to you, unnecessary) detail in some sections and the lack of any detail in others. For example, when talking about one of the changes in the guitar's design, the student wrote, "The four course guitar expanded from 52 cm. to 92 cm. when an additional course was added. The width and depth of the guitar grew as well. In the earliest models, the fifth course was added in the treble position; in the Baroque period, the course was moved to the bass position. . . ." Since most of the paper's focus seems to be on a single period of the instrument's development, other periods are only mentioned briefly and developed sketchily. When you begin asking about the organization and development in some parts of the paper, the student stops you and says, "Look, I'm not really interested in that. What I want to know is whether or not my transitions between paragraphs are okay. Teachers always nail me for my awkward transitions."

2) A graduate student from the anthropology department visits the center, bringing a chapter of her dissertation. Her chapter is about twenty-five pages in length, too long to read through entirely in an hour appointment, so you suggest reading through about the first five or six pages together and then talking about what you've read. She agrees. As you read through the first few pages, you notice a few ESL markers, mostly an occasional misuse of the indefinite article and several inappropriate word choices, but you think the most obvious problem with the text you are reading is that it has no clear connection to the stated thesis. While the chapter title is "Local Variations in Japanese Honorifics," the bulk of what you are reading is an extremely detailed description of the Japanese Tea Ceremony. You suspect that this information may eventually lead to some tie-in with the importance of ritual and ceremony to the use of honorific titles, but there is nothing anywhere in the text you can see that hints implicitly or explicitly at that connection. When you pause after the first five pages and comment on the seemingly tangential nature of the text to the subject matter, the student bristles and says, "The tea ceremony is a very important part of Japanese culture and history, and it is very important to my paper! I don't want to talk about that! I want you to tell me where my grammar mistakes are!"

3) An undergraduate student from a first-year composition course wants to discuss the draft of a paper he has written about whether gays should be permitted to serve in the armed forces. He believes very strongly that they should not, and the argument he presents in the paper draws almost completely from biblical and religious sources. The organization of the paper is clear and straightforward: after introductory remarks about the currency of the issue and the "don't ask, don't tell" policy promoted by the current administration, each paragraph cites a biblical passage and offers an interpretation of the passage that either condemns homosexuals or describes the military in ways that support his thesis. When you suggest that he uses a rather narrow range of reference materials and that they would probably not be considered appropriate academic resources for an argumentative paper such as this one, he says, "Everyone's sources are narrow to some extent. People use references that support their points of view and ignore the ones that don't. That's all I'm doing. Besides, as a Christian, I believe that the Bible is just as reliable and academic a source as any other text—better, in fact. Rather than criticize my sources, you should tell me if the logic and writing in my paper are reasonable."

4) A senior in an upper-division communications course brings in a draft of her paper on the economic impact of a change in the local cable TV system from coaxial wire to fiber-optic lines. She tells you that her paper is due the following day, and she just wants to make sure that the writing "hangs together." She shows you the assignment sheet when you ask for it, and you review the sheet briefly before the two of you begin looking over her eight-page text. From what you can see, the writing is clear, the information about economic consequences is well-researched and detailed, and the organization of the paper is generally well-focused, though it could use a little sharpening. Unfortunately, you also realize that the student has completely ignored two of the stated requirements for the paper: a description of the cable company's plans for implementing the change and a brief discussion of why the cable company believed the change was necessary in the first place. When you point this out to her, she blanches and says, "Oh my gosh! I didn't even see that! I don't have time to do all that research and add it to the paper by tomorrow. Can you just help me with what I've done? Maybe the instructor won't notice I have parts missing if the rest is good enough."

Michael A. Pemberton
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Call for Nominations for the National Writing Centers Association Board

We will need to elect two at-large board members and a community college representative. Each term is for two years. Please contact the people you nominate and be sure they are willing to run.

Please send nominations (including name, both institution and home addresses and phone numbers, and e-mail address) to Paula Gillespie, NWCA Secretary, 5918 N. Santa Monica Blvd, Whitefish Bay, WI 53217 or e-mail to paula.gillespie@marquette.edu by July 1, 1998.

Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

Sept. 25-26: Pacific Coast Writing Centers Association, in Pullman, WA
Contact: Lisa Johnson-Shull, WSU Writing Center, Avery Hall 451, Pullman, WA 99164-5046; phone: 509-335-7695; fax: 509-335-2582; e-mail: ljohnson@mail.wsu.edu

Oct. 8-10: Rockey Mountain Writing Centers Association, in Salt Lake City, UT
Contact: Jane Nelson, U. of Wyoming Writing Center, Center for Teaching Excellence, Coe Library, Laramie, WY 828071; phone: 307-766-5004; fax: 307-766-4822; e-mail: jnelson@ uwyo.edu.

Oct. 23-24: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in Milwaukee, WI
Contact: Allison James, Hawley Academic Resource Center, Simpson College, 701 North C St., Indianola, IA 50125; phone: 515-961-1524; fax: 515-961-1363; e-mail: james@storm.simpson.edu

April 15-18: National Writing Centers Association, in Bloomington, IN
Contact: Ray Smith, Campus Writing Program, Franklin 008, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405; phone: 812-855-4928; e-mail: wrsmith@indiana.edu; http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/ecwca.

National Writing Centers Association

April 15-18, 1999
Bloomington, Indiana
"Writing Center 2000: Meeting the Challenges of the New Century"

The NWCA Conference will be held in conjunction with the East Central Writing Centers Association Conference. A call for proposals will be issued in Fall, 1998. For information: write Ray Smith, Campus Writing Program, Franklin 008, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405; e-mail: wrsmith@indiana.edu; 812-855-4928; http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/ecwca.

The Learning Assistance Association of New England (LAANE)

Call for Proposals
October 30, 1998
Burlington, Massachusetts
"Accountability in Developmental Education"
Keynote Speaker: John E. Roueche

Proposals are invited in the following program areas: instructional theory and practice; program administration; management and supervision; student populations; contexts and learning environments; and text, technology and learning materials. Proposals are due MAY 1, 1998. If you intend to submit a proposal but require a few days after the deadline to complete the form, please let us know. For proposal forms, membership application, and registration information, contact Mary F. Leslie, Director of Developmental Skills, University of Maine at Augusta, 253 Augusta Civic Center, 46 University Drive, Augusta, ME 04330-4910. (207) 621-3151, LESLIE@Maine.maine.edu, http://www.uma.maine.edu.

TUTORS' COLUMN

Can cross-cutting lead to a Burkean parlor?

Writing tutors strive to find a path between the "Storehouse" and the "Garret" to the "Burkean Parlor." While the first model views students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge by the tutor, the second one reverses the trend, emphasizing the fact that the students are the containers of knowledge to be opened by the tutor. The Burkean Parlor writing center introduces collaboration and all its benefits in order to alleviate the rigid antithesis the former two types establish. Although many paths lead to this last oasis of writing, I am concentrating on one of them—cross-cutting. It sounds like separation or slicing, but it draws people together.

Cross-cutting recognizes the diversity of identities every one of us has. It uses this fact to create a relationship between otherwise unconnected people and after that employs this cross-cutting for nourishing mutuality. A writing tutor may also be a football lover, a fisher, a mathematician, a cook, a plumber. A student may be also a paragliding fan, a movie enthusiast, a poetry reader, a swimmer, a dancer. Why not then predispose the students by starting with: "Did you see the swimming contest on the sports channel last night?" instead of with "Is your thesis underlined as it should be?" A sensitive, flexible, collaborative tutor cherishes closeness; an authoritarian, restrictive one stifles it. The student might think: "If this tutor likes sports as I do, he must not be that bad after all, despite the fact that he is a tutor and will mark my nice paper all over again." Such an atmosphere where the students feel they face a human being with similar ideas breaks the ice and sets the stage for real work.

Academically stated, tutors use the overlapping salient social categories—e.g., liking sports—to connect the different identities of themselves and their clients. In other words the cross-cutting transcends the social category boundaries without breaking them. The transcendence decreases the resistance on the behalf of the clients and guarantees flexibility on the behalf of the tutor. Moreover, the interweaving of social categories ensures greater trust and collaboration because the tutors do not endanger the identity of their clients but use it. This recognizes the individuality of students on one hand, and this very recognition illustrates respect for it on the other. Both the recognition and the respect ensure opening students to the suggestions of the tutor, which is the main aim of tutoring.

Tutors can multiply the effect of cross-cutting if they find more than one salient social category. In such case, they can form even more stable relationships with their clients that can evolve into friendship and trust. Such multiple cross-cuttings may increase the willingness of tutors to assist students and decrease the resistance of the latter to consider the suggestions of the former. If both a tutor and a student like photography and hitch-hiking, for example, they can share their experience and as a result feel their emotional worlds overlap. What can be more conductive to effective tutorials than the feeling of closeness that the garden of mutuality grows? What can be more conductive to efficient tutoring than the feeling of security that grows from the emotional closeness cross-cutting breeds?

You might wonder what happens if there is no overlapping salient social category between tutors and students? In such cases tutors can show genuine interest in a social category that students perceive as important, exciting, necessary, funny. If a student likes gardening, the tutor might ask before a tutorial, "Have you planted the flowers you mentioned last time?" as a greeting. Such true appreciation of a student's individuality creates a sense of positive self-esteem within the student, who will be more willing to pay attention to the suggestions of tutors. Beware the danger though—if students feel tutors are not genuinely interested in their emotional world, they will nut-shell themselves with mistrust, anger, and resentment. The client might think: "How could this tutor pretend that he is interested in animals when I see he is not?"

But do not get too enthusiastic about the cross-cutting model—it is time and effort-consuming. It takes more than one tutorial to know that this particular student is interested in theater. If the tutor does not like theater, it might take even a longer period of time to find mutual interests, if there are any. Time is not the only constraint though—effort is also. It is not easy to look for an overlapping area of interest because it requires patience, concentration, self-motivation, and care. To find a mutual social category means to enter the mental universe of another person, which resembles a trip to an unknown planet. You are not guaranteed what you will find and whether you will like it.

Despite the time and effort-consuming nature of cross-cutting, I think that it is a valuable way of understanding the diversity of people's mindsets. Such knowledge is advantageous in tutoring because it enables both tutors and clients to be-

come better writers—the task they gather for.

Vladimir Petroff
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Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

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Tutoring and the Zen of car repair

My father is a jack of all trades. He can fix or build anything he puts his mind to, even things he understands little. This is a great advantage for me. All I need to do is hint I am having a problem, declare I don't know what to do for it, and then watch him work. Even though this seems a perfect way to meet all my needs, I am unable to do many things without his intervention.

As a kid, I would "help" him in the garage with various projects: rewiring a fuse box, building a cabinet, or tuning an engine. My instructions were, "Hand me the pliers," or "Hold this end while I measure the other," or my favorite, "Point the light here." I quickly learned to get out of his way and let him work on the problematic project. However, today when he talks about a three-quarter inch conduit, sunken hinges, or carburetors, all I hear is doohickey, dillibobs, and whatchamacallits. The only thing that matters to me is to get whatever is wrong corrected so I can be on my way.

I remember one attempt of his to teach me by way of example. My car needed some doohickey fixed. Up goes the hood, and under crawls my dad. I hear, "Hand me the 3/16th wrench and point the light here. Now see, Tom, by turning this dillibob here and replacing the whatchamacallit bracket there, your problem is solved." One, two, three, my dad was done. Down went the hood, and up came the face of satisfaction. I was left in complete wonderment as to how he fixed it without breaking a sweat.

I realize I will never have the same talents as my father. In fact, my interests do not lie in anything resembling mechanics. So, I am content simply to hand him his tools, to hold his light, and to pretend to listen to his instructions in his attempt to teach his ways. All I'm after is the end product: a fixed thingamajig.

Like father, like son. In the writing center on the campus of Metropolitan State College of Denver where I work as a requirement for my Writing Tutor course, I started out attempting to teach by way of example. "We'll place a comma here," and "Do you think this is a good word for what you're attempting to say?" and my favorite, "Can I write on your paper?" Students' papers become better, but, just like me, the students leave not knowing how to fix mistakes on their own. They may leave happy to have corrected papers, but they also may leave confused as to how or why.

Today, in class, I heard for the umpteenth time about making the students do the work. (I was consoled somewhat to hear a collective "Oops" escaping from the rest of the class.) My "pencil-happy frenzy" may lead to a satisfaction on my part, but the students learn very little, if anything at all, by my rewriting their papers. The drive to be self-motivated in prewriting, writing, and rewriting weakens each time students have papers "fixed" by an overly-eager tutor. Soon, tutors reinforce the students' expectations of having someone else do the work. By blankly staring when asked a probing question, by willingly handing over their papers, and by sitting idly while the tutors do the work, students disengage—all in order to have what they view as a painless and productive session.

Avoiding grabbing the pencil and scribbling my way to a "better" paper has been hard. I desire to help as much as possible. Unfortunately, I tend to explain along the way as I rewrite "my" paper. To avoid that trap, I now ask probing questions, refer to handouts or handbooks, give personal examples, and encourage students to diagnose problems and prescribe solutions without my supplying a quick answer to "fix it." For me, the struggle lies in knowing the corrective solution, watching the students squirm for options to the mistakes, and, if all fails, allowing the students to make the wrong decision for their papers. Somehow though, I wish my dad had done this with me.

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Tutoring Manual

Capossela, Toni-Lee. *Harcourt Brace Guide to Peer Tutoring*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1998. Soft-cover, 252 pages.
(Order from Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 6277 Sea Harbor Drive, Orlando, FL 32887-6777; 1-800-782-4479)

This new manual for training peer tutors includes twelve chapters on topics such as what peer consultants are; how to analyze an assignment, find a focus, and organize and develop a draft; how to correct surface errors and work with teachers' comments; and how to consult in a virtual writing center. The second half of the book reprints 22 articles by composition scholars such as Kenneth Bruffee, Peter Elbow, and Mina Shaughnessy, and writing center scholars whose work has appeared in the *Writing Lab Newsletter* and the *Writing Center Journal*.

WCenter Archives and Search Engine

To find the archives for WCenter listserv postings, go to:

http://www.ttu.edu/wcenter/

A search engine will soon be available at this site. For further information, contact the List Owner, Lady Falls Brown: ykflb@ttacs.ttu.edu

NWCA News from Al DeCiccio, President

As you prepare for some deserved reflection and relaxation, I want to apprise you of the business the NWCA Executive Board will be conducting. First, at regularly scheduled MUD meetings, the Board will be working to resolve the issues involving accreditation so that you may have an informed and balanced proposal to consider when you return to your work in the fall. Other issues, such as planning for the NCTE and CCCC conventions as well as the NWCA conference, will also be part of the Board's summer agenda. And, as Paula Gillespie writes elsewhere in this newsletter (p. 12), nominations are needed for Executive Board positions that are being vacated.

It will be a busy summer for the NWCA Executive Board, and you can be assured that your administrations will be busy this summer as well. In this last column, I want to share with you a concern that Jeanne Simpson (in her essay in the September 1996 issue of the *WLN*) and later, Joe Law and Christina Murphy, brought to my attention: the possibility that college and university administrations may outsource writing center work.

We have already seen that, in order, ostensibly, to be more efficient, effective, and accountable, college and university administrations have been about the business of making internal reallocations. For those of us who work in the writing center, this continues to mean conflating resources having to do with providing support to students perceived to be in need: second language support, reading and writing support, mathematics, technology, and science support, and support for the learning disabled. Academic support service centers now house all of these support services, and the question of expertise has become even trickier for writing center workers to negotiate.

While this administrative move means that many centers have had to come to terms with being mainstreamed, some centers have resisted, preferring to stay on the margins and uphold the "idea" of a writing center. In either case, writing centers must be vigilant these days because in the name of efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability, it is not hard to imagine administrators strategizing the ways to out-source this work as has already been done with food service, maintenance, and, yes, if we think about the advertisements companies such as Sylvan and Kaplan have placed in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, even developmental writing. Indeed, because administrations are asked to be fiscally prudent, entrepreneurs are assiduously looking for ways to make their products useful (and cost-effective) to colleges and universities.

The dangers to writing centers are palpable. There are increasing reports of writing centers being eliminated. (Consider the example of Twila Yates Pappay at Rollins College). The future of writing centers is even muddier when one considers that an administration will be able to report on how the delivery of the same services can be rendered more quickly and effectively by out-sourcing those services. Moreover, the savings may make it possible for that same administration to provide compensation increases, much-needed support for faculty development, and even course-load reductions. Indeed, it may be difficult to support the traditional position of those who believe in the idea of a writing center in the face of this model that can give results to trustees, cut back on expenses, and deliver more to the academic community.

The point of this is to consider the consequences we will face if outsourcing becomes a reality. I hope you will complicate what I have presented by providing models (either to me, to the NWCA Executive Board, or to WCenter) that may help avert the elimination of writing center work in the face of a move to become even more efficient, effective, and accountable by out-sourcing that work.

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Director, Writing Center and English for Graduate Studies
Claremont Graduate University

The Director is responsible for both the Writing Center and the English for Graduate Studies program and for teaching three sections per year of English for Graduate Studies and writing courses for international students. The Director will conduct English-language assessments of all incoming international students and complete written evaluations of students enrolled in the English for Graduate Studies course. Administrative duties include hiring, training and evaluation of tutors and adjunct faculty for both units; joint tutor orientations organized with writing center directors from the undergraduate Claremont Colleges; overseeing both in-person and online tutoring services; coordinating The Writing Center's writing and teaching skills workshops; developing budgets for both units; maintaining a web site for both units; writing semester reports on student use of Writing Center services; and publicizing The Writing Center's activities to students, faculty and staff.

Qualifications: Minimum of M.A. or M.A.T. in TESOL, English, Rhetoric and Composition, or related field (Linguistics, Education, etc.); Ph.D. preferred. At least three years of college-level teaching experience, primarily in an ESL environment. Knowledge of English language assessment techniques. Exceptional teaching skills; experience teaching writing from process-oriented perspective. Administrative experience that includes the hiring, training, and supervision of employees. Writing center or learning center experience preferable; excellent writing skills required. A record of ongoing professional development activities within TESOL, writing, or related fields. Understanding of the distinctive nature of graduate education and of the language and cultural issues related to teaching international students.

Application Procedure

The following materials should be sent to Claremont Graduate University, Human Resources Department, 150 E. 10th Street, Claremont, California, 91711: Cover letter detailing experience applicable to the position; Current CV; A minimum of three letters of recommendation that address the applicant's teaching and administrative skills.

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