

THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E T T E R

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...FROM THE EDITOR...

You've no doubt heard the aphorism that "To err is human, and to forgive is divine." Well, I've erred, and I hope you're feeling inclined toward the divine. Somehow, I managed to inadvertently delay Lisa Landolt's Tutors' Column until this issue. As will be evident when you read it, it should have been in the October issue, to be read aloud at a tutors' staff meeting held at midnight in a dark room, on October 31. Perhaps you'll save it for next year? Or perhaps some tutors will write a Part 2 for next year? Or think up a different ending to the tale? Or . . . ?

And then there's Error #2. On page 4 is the correct institutional identification for Tracy Turner, whose article appeared in the September issue of the newsletter.

But, on a more positive note, this issue is filled to the brim with conference notices, job announcements, and insightful writing about working with international students, melding writing center theories, hiring staff, and writing successful proposals for writing centers.

• Muriel Harris, editor

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International students and the writing lab

Our campus, like many others, has found that international students are becoming an ever-increasing proportion of the student body. As such, the Writing Lab, probably like many other labs across the country, is now working with more and more of these students from overseas, students seeking help with their essays and independent projects. The term "international student" is used here instead of the too general and misleading label "ESL." Following the lead of Jocelyn Steer, I use the term "international student" to refer to clients who have taken and passed the TOEFL, thus demonstrating a knowledge of grammar rules although not necessarily knowledge of the rhetorical patterns of American English; "international student" also refers to a student already mainstreamed into academic courses, taking classes for grades, unlike the ESL student who may be enrolled in English classes specifically designed to "bring up" the skills of the non-native speaker; and finally, "international student" describes a student who may be in the states temporarily, expecting to return to his or her home country with a degree from an American college or university (Steer 4). Although this definition may

seem pedantic and even limiting, our lab has found that more and more of our clients fit this category.

As a result, our lab has faced a philosophical problem. Since our lab is staffed exclusively with native speakers, we consultants have wondered, "Can we offer international students qualified assistance?" The answer to our philosophical doubts was provided by Irene Clark's book for training consultants and running writing labs. As Clark has explained, a writing lab of-

fers all students a non-threatening environment in which to practice ideas; and, certainly, what is a more suitable place for international students than a writing lab, especially since these students need to experiment with the English language at the academic level (73)?

Given the philosophical problem, what are some practical issues that we consultants have discovered when working with international students? Since we are struggling to serve this clientele, our lab felt we needed to do some self-examination to learn about our concerns and how to handle them. Taking a cue from Darlynn Fink's work with her own tutors at Clarion University, I asked consultants to fill out a survey which posed only two questions: please identify the major problems you have encountered when working with international students; which problem do you consider the most "menacing" and why (Fink 14)? Results of the survey were analyzed by four of the lab's consultants who, all together, have eleven years of tutoring experience. As they looked over the surveys, the consultants discovered seven major problems not usually addressed when consultants are being trained to work with international students.

What follows are the problems which the consultants discovered and how these experienced tutors have tried to solve them. The problems are presented, more or less, in the order they may occur as an international client enters a lab, signs in, and waits for help, clutching a draft.

Dealing with the anxieties felt by both consultants and international students

Mary-Jane Ogawa: While consultants are perhaps always a bit anxious about the best approaches to take in order to help the individual client with writing problems, this anxiety intensifies when we work

with international students (IS). International clients often give us the impression that they see us as "experts" with all the answers for their writing assignments. Often, in fact, IS want to write down our every word and even hesitate to join in a dialogue about their papers. We consultants explain concepts, grammar rules, ask questions . . . and then wait. Sometimes the pauses become so long that we again become anxious. Last term, for instance, I experienced several lengthy pauses in trying to establish a dialogue with a student from Israel. After a very long pause, I finally just asked if I were expressing myself clearly. He assured me that he had understood. But he said he had been in the states only three weeks and had to translate English into Hebrew first. So, it's ironic. . . . the writing lab is supposed to be a safe, non-threatening place where *both* consultants and clients can feel comfortable; it's not always that way when we work with IS.

Joshua Farrar: It's true; the IS do feel uncomfortable, so we need to make them feel at home by not correcting them all the time.

Susan Burr: I think social interaction is vital, too, but we need to realize that some cultures are slow to make close relationships so the clients might seem standoffish. We have to let the international clients set the tone.

Jason Chan: I think the IS feel like me when I go into the French lab, and the lab workers have this perfect French accent. I feel very anxious because I stumble over my own spoken French.

Keeping a perspective on the differences between the students' cognitive abilities and their language skills

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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).

Please send articles, reviews, announcements, comments, queries, and yearly subscription payments to the editor.

Jason: Although it's not always the case, I have to assume our clients are smart in their own languages since we are dealing with IS already accepted by a college and enrolled in academic classes. Because the students need to be at a good academic level in the first place to be in college, a consultant needs to see that the clients' ability in English does not mean they are unintelligent; we can't treat them like children.

Joshua: In fact, some students are better writers than I am in my own language, so I try not to talk down to them and hurt their pride. I try to keep explanations simple but not simplistic.

Susan: I try to focus on their ideas instead of how they are saying it.

Mary-Jane: I'm just impressed they write in English at all; I would not be able to do the same in their language. What a tremendous task!

Overcoming the clients' fear of reading the paper aloud

Susan: It's true that some labs do not have IS read their papers aloud since doing so makes the session seem like one on reading English instead of writing. But our lab does have them read so that they can hear the language.

Jason: But then if they are too focused on reading aloud they might miss their mistakes.

Susan: Yes, I've been flexible in the past about having IS read their papers aloud to me. In many cases, if students feel uncomfortable reading aloud, I will offer to read their papers aloud for them so they can hear how it sounds when read by a native speaker.

Mary-Jane: Initially, I acknowledge the IS's fear of reading a paper aloud;

after all, the space is limited in our lab and others might listen in. Besides, it often seems more important to establish rapport with clients than to get them to read aloud. But like many native speakers, IS do not think of writing as reader-based, so we try to gently convince all our clients of the many advantages of their switching stances from writer to reader of a text.

Being aware of contrastive rhetorics

Mary-Jane: Of course, no two cultures use the same rhetorical patterns.

Jason: True. We consultants have to realize that if the IS were to hand in the paper in their native countries, it would be what those professors expect, so we can't be ethnocentric. Instead, we have to realize that what American professors look for is different from what is expected in the ISs' native countries.

Mary-Jane: Sometimes our best approach with these clients who write using their countries' rhetorics is to explain to them the requirements of a sound academic essay as written in America (not unlike what we do for native speakers). And then we can provide the IS with the appropriate models/rhetorical "handouts" for such writing. In other words, I do a lot of modeling, especially showing how to structure a paragraph.

Joshua: That's right, but I have found that I need to work at the sentence level since the syntax is not always like that in English, so I model the arrangement by showing that a pattern in English is S-V-O. I can show better than tell. And sometimes I let them read the rule in handbooks and explain it in simpler terms.

Not being too wordy when talking with international students

Joshua: I try to avoid being wordy by using specific examples and by writing out an example of a comma splice or run-on.

Mary-Jane: To avoid having to repeat and perhaps be too wordy, I try to remember the student's previous paper and tell him that he did it right there and to remember what he did in it for this current paper.

Susan: I have found that students will become overwhelmed not only by the new ideas and grammar rules, but also by having to translate all of these into another language. So, I try to talk as simply and clearly as possible, without talking down to the students. If I tried to explain the same idea in several different ways, as I often do for native speakers, I would probably be confusing the IS even more.

Jason: I also try to ask questions and draw out the answer from students; lecturing doesn't work.

Understanding the ideas of the clients

Mary-Jane: Often the clients and I do not share the same vocabulary, so I have trouble following them. If I do not understand, I rely on what I do for all clients—native speaker or not—I ask how the idea relates to other ideas in the paper. And if I am lost in a paragraph, I just look further to see the intention and then go back to see what should be coming next.

Susan: I found that having patience is best.

Joshua: Right, and if they are having trouble getting an idea out, I don't finish the sentence for them.

Susan: I also think it's important to

take time to listen to the IS; they do get frustrated when they can't get an idea out. I'll just say, "Don't worry. We can sit here all day if you want." I try to downplay their frustrations and not let it be a big deal.

Mary-Jane: And I also bring in the responsibility of the reader when it's unclear, modeling the audience for them. I keep saying, "I don't understand . . . tell me again; try for a different word."

Am I doing too much?

Jason: This is a question each consultant asks himself; after all, we have all been through the training where we've been told "NO proofreading!" But these are different students and need extra help with different needs. We find we have to change the parameters of judgment about what's appropriate for each client and what's not. I have found that I need to remember that IS clients are working from a clean slate that native speakers have had 12 years to fill in.

Mary-Jane: In fact, after many semesters I have begun to realize that our mission is the same for all our clients. We want to assist them in any way we can to improve their

writing. For IS, we apply many of the techniques we use to help native speakers. . . . with added patience and more role modeling. Are we doing too much? Not really. We can remind ourselves and our clients that we are all writers struggling to become better writers. Helping IS offers us consultants the unique opportunity to discover what we already know about academic writing and about people.

Susan: Well, I think you can't help enough; we should do all we can. I always try to think of how I would feel having to go to school in another country and write papers in a different language. I think if I were in that kind of situation, I would see the Writing Lab as a haven.

As the consultants' voices indicate, consultants are constantly evaluating their work vis-a-vis international students to see how their worlds and those of the international students function, focusing on the affective side of consulting and on the philosophy of a writing lab. As such, these consultants have discovered what Judith Powers stresses in her article "Bending the 'Rules'": the need for consultants to assume different perspectives for international students, slipping back and forth from the telling mode to the col-

laborative mode. Like the Shape Shifter on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, consultants alter and adapt in order to work with international students, not unlike what tutors do for all clients, accommodating the students' needs. But, in doing so, all consultants can do a better job with these special clients.

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Director of Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing Center Elon College

Director of Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing Center at a growing private college in North Carolina. Successful candidate will have Ph.D., with expertise in composition/rhetoric, and administrative experience in college writing programs. Tenure-track position in English Department at Assistant or Associate level. Send letter and c.v. by 1 November to Dr. Stephen Braye, Search Chair, 2312 Campus Box, Elon College, Elon College, NC 27244-2020. EOE

Correction

At the conclusion of Tracy Turner's article in the September issue of the *Newsletter*, the institutional identification was given as Texarkana. However, as Liz Buckley has explained: "Tracy worked for me here in the Communication Skills Center at what was East Texas State University and what is now Texas A&M University—Commerce." We like to think that our files, paperwork, and permission-to-print notices are all in order and correct. Well, that's what we'd like to think, but in this case, we're obviously wrong. Apologies to Tracy and to Texas A&M University—Commerce!

Expressionism and social constructionism in the writing center: How do they benefit students?

Writing center scholars have continuously attempted to construct the definitive theory for tutorials. In his essay “Writing Center Practice Counters Its Theory. So What?” Eric Hobson argues that this phenomenon grew from the “[early] writing centers’ practitioners [belief] that to ensure the writing center community a respectable place within the culture of academe they needed to work within [this] dominant descriptive paradigm” (3-4). In numerous essays, scholars document the development of theories and how these theories, in practice, may actually benefit students who patronize the writing center. In “Writing as a Social Process: A Theoretical Foundation for Writing Centers?” Lisa Ede illustrates this enthusiasm: “I believe that the time is right for those of us who direct or work in writing centers to place our work in a rich theoretical context” (5). She furthers her point by stating, “We can build not only on theories of collaborative learning . . . but on the work of those who have recently challenged us to view writing as a social, rather than a solitary and individual, process” (5).

Since the mid-eighties, many scholars have, as Pete Carino states, “attempted to relate tutorial practice to various process paradigms, such as expressionistic or cognitive rhetoric” (“Theorizing” 23). More recently, the “theory du jour” has been social constructionism, and many scholars have embraced Kenneth Bruffee’s collaborative groundwork, have jumped on Andrea Lunsford’s “Burkean Parlor” bandwagon, and have nodded collectively “This is it!” Others, such as Eric Hobson, Alice Gillam, Pete Carino, and Christina Murphy, have cautioned about such exuberance over any theory. As Murphy states, “Social con-

structionism provides us with a paradigm that explains a number of aspects of writing instruction; however, to argue that it provides all the answers, or even answers sufficient to warrant the devaluing of other theories and philosophies of education—especially the Romantic or humanistic—seems unwise” (36).

Indeed, tutorials are too complex to be examined through a single theory, and a close observation of tutorials can reveal the sometimes subtle manifestation of several theories in any one session, as Gillam demonstrates during a case study in her essay “Collaborative Learning Theory and Peer Tutoring Practice.” In this paper, I will examine expressionism—the rhetoric that sees writing as a process and places knowledge inside the individual writer—and social constructionism—the rhetoric that also sees writing as process but believes knowledge is produced within the dialogue of a negotiating group—to try to illustrate the overlap generated by the complexity of tutorials. Ultimately, I am concerned with how these theories, in practice, benefit students.

In “Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center,” Andrea Lunsford, looking for purity in collaboration, attempts to detail a collaborative environment devoid of traditional hierarchies. This environment, she argues, “calls for careful and ongoing monitoring and evaluating of the collaboration or group process” (6). Lunsford’s collaborative environment is absent of expressionism. However, at the same time she is constructing her Burkean Parlor—social construction at its purest form—Lunsford informs us that collaboration comes “in a dizzying variety of modes” (7). This variety contaminates her idea of a purely so-

cial constructionist tutorial. Furthermore, as Lunsford implies practice while constructing her theory, she feels “monitoring,” mentioned above, “calls on each person involved in the collaboration to build a *theory* of collaboration” (emphasis original 6).

This individual theory building, though Lunsford sees it as collaboration, also resembles expressionism. Though the knowledge that each person appropriates may be socially constructed, the actual conveyance of the “individualized” theories, whether written or verbalized, will contain the individuals’ idiosyncracies of style and perspective.

Lunsford’s attempt at a Burkean Parlor writing center is courageous, but she seems to imply expressionism at the same time she denounces it. Lunsford’s theoretical parlor may have some benefits for students, but without an illustrated, model tutorial, we are left with speculation. As Gillam states, “What’s missing from [Lunsford’s account] are particular, ‘contextualized’ illustrations of the relationship between theory and practice” (41).

In addition, tutorials framed in purely social constructionist theory, as Lunsford advocates, could lead students to become too dependent on a group and not able to function or write on their own when required, such as on essay exams or in instances when time does not allow a visit to the center.

Lisa Ede, like Lunsford, appears to want expressionist theory dismissed from the writing center. In moving for dismissal, Ede evokes Bakhtin’s concept of language that:

lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in

language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and personal language . . . but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (11)

If we look at this passage in relation to collaborative learning, we can see Lunsford's Burkean Parlor at work. However, we can also see expressionism at work. The appropriation of words and making them "one's own" relates to my point made earlier about an individual appropriating socially constructed knowledge and conveying this same knowledge to another with his or her own "expressive" intention. I would argue, as Peter Elbow does, that all knowledge is strongly inflected with one's unique personal perspective even though knowledge is appropriated from others.

Prior to appropriation, both participants in a tutorial session maintain individual language/knowledge. Language/knowledge "exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts," and by "cross-appropriation," both consultant and student come away with new knowledge, but again "one's own," individualized interpretation or understanding of the knowledge constructed by the two. However, Ede seems to ignore this aspect of tutorials. Murphy warns that Ede's, and Lunsford's, puristic notion of collaboration "will replace a concern for developing the individual's voice and unique powers; and consensus will become the greatest measure of truth" (32).

In contrast, Bruffee's "collaborative learning reinforces [his] contention

that writing center theory's roots are to be found in practice" (Hobson 4). Bruffee's "conversation" is about students learning. However, social constructionist theory, "the perceived mainstay of writing center theory" (Hobson 4), as Bruffee conceptualizes it, subordinates the individual. A representation of a tutorial in Bruffee's "Conversation of Mankind" illustrates this "side-stepping" of expressionism:

The tutee brings to the conversation knowledge of the subject to be written about and knowledge of the assignment. The tutor brings to the conversation knowledge of the conventions of discourse and knowledge of standard written English. If the tutee does not bring to the conversation knowledge of the subject and the assignment, the peer tutor's most important contribution is to begin at the beginning: help the tutee acquire the relevant knowledge of the subject and the assignment.

What peer tutor and tutee do together is not write or edit, or least of all proofread. What they do together is converse. They converse about the subject and the assignment. They converse about, in an academic context, their own relationship and the relationships between student and teacher. Most of all they converse about and *pursuant* to writing. (emphasis original 10)

Bruffee's conversation compels the student to take an active stance in the tutorial. The student is accountable for, is, perhaps, obligated to, contribute to the session. However, at times, it is possible for this conversation to "break down," especially considering pronounced cultural differences. In this case, there are two methods a consultant can apply to help the tutee acquire relevant knowledge of the subject or assignment. First, the consultant can ask probing questions that help the student access the knowledge. Or the consultant can use a direct method of tu-

toring and tell the student what he or she needs to know in order to continue.

In either scenario, expressionism plays a role. In the first situation, the consultant has knowledge, and though that knowledge is socially constructed, he presents the knowledge in an individualistic manner or discourse, even if that discourse resembles or was influenced by others. In the second situation, the student has an individualized understanding of the knowledge and can only convey it thus.

Though knowledge is perhaps constructed in a social setting, does not each participant in the conversation come away from the meeting with an individualized perception of that knowledge? Though participants may agree on constructed knowledge, does not the individual convey information founded on the socially constructed knowledge to others in his "own" language or write in his "own" style? As we look at these theories, do we see the emergence of expressionism through social constructionism, or is it the other way around? Do individuals with their "separate" knowledge and experiences form the group and its collective knowledge, or does the group's knowledge "create" the individuals' knowledge and send them on their way? Specific answers to these questions are likely not possible; however, we should realize that expressionism and social constructionism do not form a binary, that perhaps the two are inseparable when determining the construction of knowledge and how that knowledge is shared.

Looking at these dynamics from the writing center's point of view, we must, as Carino argues, "consider that few [individuals] have learned to write well without ever having done the things writers do in the writing labs: talking about writing, discussing risks, making and recovering from false starts—in short, collaborating" ("What Do We Talk About" 36). On the other hand, Runciman, though endorsing

collaboration, argues that “the writer [the individual] is the one who must finally make such decisions” (29).

What is important to note is that often in writing center scholarship expressionism and social constructionism seem to form a dyad. But in applying practices that include both expressionistic and social constructionist aspects, even in unidentifiable overlappings, the tutor can benefit students’ individual learning process. In fact, I would argue that almost any tutorial practice contains overlapping aspects of the two.

By asking questions, students become expressive and seize control of their texts. In doing so, students obtain an individual understanding of their writing and the writing process, and being able to converse about writing, their confidence increases, since they “learn” how to discuss writing. Consequently, students feel more comfortable within the present discourse community and may be less apprehensive in entering another community.

Another social constructionist or collaborative method that illustrates some influence of expressionism is Jay Jacoby’s notion of “informed consent,” which enables students to attain a higher understanding of the writing process. Informed consent allows students “an understanding of their actions, alternative actions and their respective consequences” (Jacoby 141). In the practice of informed consent, consultants “must be sure that the decisions [students] make are [the students’] decisions . . . that [students] can justify on grounds that are important to them” (Jacoby 141), which ensures student autonomy.

Jacoby’s informed consent appears to appropriate Diane Morrow’s idea of informed consent, which Jacoby compares to Donald Murray’s “response theory of teaching” (143). In practice, mutual participation “obliges [students] and [consultants] to take active

roles in the decision-making process” (Jacoby 143) and alludes to social constructionism. But most of the action remains with the students as individuals. They “must honestly elaborate their intentions . . . , be prepared to explore alternatives, and be responsible not only for making decisions, but also for explaining them” (Jacoby 143). The consultants’ only responsibility lies in being “sure that writers are informed of and understand the choices open to them, and that [students] have made those choices freely” (Jacoby 143).

By allowing students to make choices necessary to improve their writing and by realizing that the dynamics of language play an intricate part in the tutorial, consultants help students negotiate the learning process and develop their critical thinking skills. Furthermore, by realizing the different aspects of learning and writing, consultants improve their own understanding of the writing process. Both student and consultant walk away with an individualistic understanding of the tutorial and the writing process, an understanding we might call expressive despite Lunsford’s strictures against expressionist theory in the writing center.

These dynamics are also present in Alice Gillam’s case study of Kari and Suzanne. Kari brings in a draft of a paper in response to Anna Quindlen’s essay, “Death Penalty’s False Promise: Eye for an Eye” (1988). Kari’s assignment “is to write a critical response to Quindlen’s argument against the death penalty” (Gillam 45-6). As the session progresses, we witness Kari’s struggle in finding the “middle ground” between her “own voice” and what she believes the instructor is expecting from her. Gillam details the complexity of a tutorial and how different theories—if only fleetingly—manifest themselves during practice. Discussing Kari’s draft, Suzanne begins by asking Kari “about the assignment and her work so far” (46). Kari’s response reveals aspects of expressionism: “What

I did was I analyzed her opinion and then what I felt . . . I’ve never had any experience thinking about it, so I just wrote how I feel about capital punishment” (46). We notice that Kari expresses how she feels about capital punishment, an intuitive approach to the assignment.

However, as the discussion unfolds, Gillam points out that “we see . . . that Suzanne and Kari’s collaboration is not atomistic” (46); it includes Quindlen’s text and Kari’s teacher. Thus, we also witness social constructionism at work. This overlap is also evident when we witness Kari’s explanation of how “Quindlen ‘repeats’ what was in [Kari’s] head” (47). Consequently, the expressionism—social constructionism binary collapses as Kari interprets her meeting with her instructor to Suzanne. We continue to see Kari’s struggle as she tries to model Quindlen’s style, but Suzanne guides Kari toward a more individual style.

Finally, the revision that Kari presents is her own; she has found “her own answer” as Gillam puts it (50), even though her voice is somewhat dominated by Quindlen’s discourse. We observe Kari’s appropriation of “academic discourse” both verbally and in writing. And as Gillam explains:

[I]t is possible to argue that Kari’s ‘lie’ [the simulation of Quindlen’s style] served a useful developmental function and that her struggles to construct an argumentative position for herself required her to simulate an authority she did not feel. Playing the role of someone who has knowledge of the opinions about public policy issues may have been legitimate practice for constructing authority and knowledge in future academic writing tasks. (51)

Here, Gillam recognizes the intricate part social construction plays in the writing center. But through her language, Gillam also illustrates how expressionism is active during a tutorial.

Quindlen's style, which Kari has appropriated, represents a model for Kari, but her writing also modifies Quindlen's. And Kari leaves this assignment with her own understanding, her own knowledge of the issue and the writing process.

The role of the writing center is to assist students in becoming better writers and thinkers as individuals. Thus, tutorials can not be held to a collaborative purity. We must also consider the diversity of the student population—whether cultural, ideological, or perhaps even a referral who does not want to be involved in tutorials. Add to this diversity the variety of learning styles tutors encounter and we can see how combinations of these campus demographics challenge the success of and require flexibility in a tutorial. In other words, because of such diversity, there is not a definitive tutorial, so as Hobson asks, how can there be a definitive theory? The art is in the ability to work within theory without worry-

ing about its purity to help empower students so that they can find their own voices within a larger community. Intriguingly enough, most tutors know this intuitively, but theorists sometimes forget it.

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Writing Center Director University of Kansas

KU Writing Consulting: Student Resources DIRECTOR responsibilities include: establish and direct a university-wide, writing across the curriculum (WAC) writing center; conduct workshops; develop student materials; research writing-related issues; act as liaison to other campus writing services.

Application deadline: October 17, 1997 for first consideration. Review of applications will continue until the position is filled. To apply, send a letter of interest, contact information for three references, a detailed resume and a mission statement for the proposed center.

For complete position description and application information contact Ann Volin, Writing Consulting, 4004 Wescoe Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-2476. Phone (785) 864-4232; e-mail: writingc@falcon.cc.ukans.edu EO/AA Employer. We will be glad to send the addition materials via e-mail if you wish.
<http://falcon.cc.ukans.edu/~writingc/index.html>

Writing Lab Director Texas A&M—Commerce

Non-tenure. Begins August 1, 1998. Required: doctorate in composition or rhetoric (in hand by May 15, 1998); familiarity with hardware and software for writing lab; experience in a writing lab or skills center; demonstrated excellence in teaching and ability to work well with diverse audiences. Teach one or two courses per semester and one course in the summer. 12 mo. contract. The director works with tutors and graduate students and Academic Advising, supervises installation and maintenance of computers and software, and coordinates instruction and testing in Basic English.

Applicant must have United States citizenship, citizenship eligibility or authorization to work in the U.S. Deadline for applications: Nov 25, 1997. Letter of application, c.v., 3 recent letters of recommendation, and transcripts to Gerald Duchovnay, Head, Dept. of Literature and Languages, TAMU-Commerce, Commerce, Texas 75429-3011. Individuals from underrepresented racial, ethnic, and gender groups are encouraged to apply. TAMU-Commerce is an AA/EOE employer.

TUTORS' COLUMN

A vampire in the writing center

When he first came in the Learning Mall, I noticed something seemed different about him. He looked ominously around the room as if to prey on his next victim. He hovered around the Writing Center for awhile and finally made his descent on the handouts when I stepped away to help a student on a computer. "Can I help you?" I asked, slightly amused at his audacity to help himself to whatever he wanted. I instantly caught the smell of something not quite right, like a shady dimension of him he thought he could hide.

He sat down in the chair next to my desk, perched and ready to attack. He told me he needed grave help. He was needy. Weak. Thirsty for knowledge, he acted as if the Writing Center were his last hope. Information existed as a life-blood for him. An ounce of drama in his

voice, he conveyed that without the information, he would surely perish. I felt a twinge of sympathy and genuinely wanted to help. He seemed to suck in every word, "Oh thank you! Thank you!" Then he seemed to beg, "Can I have some more?"

He thrived on the information and rarely paused before pouncing again for more. He siphoned more and more help from me, often making me feel as if he took it without my permission. I explained I could not give him anything more, feeling drained by the conversation and wondering if I had already crossed the line of giving too much. "You must learn to help yourself," I told him. He acted as if I had cut off his supply and reiterated how needy he truly felt. He looked insulted and acted as if I had provided no help at all.

"Why won't you help me?" He seemed to enjoy toying with me as he tried every trick. "It is so easy for you. I bet you have a lot more to give." He accused me of withholding the information on purpose in a sly attempt to coerce me into giving him what he wanted.

When he finally grew tired of trying to suck information from me, he got up to leave and warned he would be back. He seemed to circle the room one last time before he finally disappeared. The visit left me feeling weak. I felt violated and exposed. As an information vampire, he may have been the one doing the sucking, but he left me feeling more like the sucker.

Lisa Landolt
Peer Tutor
Tarrant County Junior College—NE
Campus
Hurst, TX

Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

Nov. 7-8: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in Kansas City, MO
Contact: Shireen Carroll, Dept. of English, Davidson College, P.O. Box 1719, Davidson, NC 28036.
Phone: 704-892-2012; fax: 704-892-2005; e-mail: shcarroll@davidson.edu

Feb. 26-28: South Central Writing Centers Association, in Oklahoma City, OK
Contact: Kevin Davis, East Central University, Ada, OK 74820; e-mail: kdavis@mailclerk.ecok.edu

March 6: Northern California Writing Centers Assn., in Belmont, CA
Contact: Marc Wolterbeek, English, College of Notre Dame, 1500 Ralston, Belmont, CA

94002-1997. Phone: 650-508-3708; e-mail:

Mwolterbeek@cnd.edu

March 6: CUNY Writing Centers Association, in New York, NY
Contact: Steven Serafin, Writing Center, Hunter College—CUNY, 695 Park Ave. New York, NY 10021. Phone: 212-772-4212; fax: 212-650-3953

March 7: New England Writing Centers Association, in New London, CT
Contact: Theresa Ammirati, Dean of Freshmen, Connecticut College, New London, CT 06320; e-mail: tpamm@conncoll.edu

April 2-4: Texas Association of Writing Centers, in San Antonio, TX

Contact: Lady Falls Brown, 213 English Dept., Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409-3091; e-mail: ykflb@ttacs1.ttu.edu

April 18: Mid-Atlantic Writing Center Association, in Largo, MD
Contact: Richard Profozich, Writing Dept., Prince George's Community College, Largo, MD 20774-2199.
Phone: 301-322-0598; e-mail: rlp@pgstumail.pg.cc.md.us

May 8-9: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Youngstown, OH
Contact: Sherri Zander, Writing Center, One University Plaza, Youngstown State U., Youngstown, OH 44555. Phone: 330-742-3055; e-mail: sdzander@cc.ysu.edu

South Central Writing Centers Association

Call for Proposals
February 26-28.
Oklahoma City, OK
Keynote speaker: Lisa Ede

You may propose a single presentation or a three-presentation panel. Other presentations proposals are also welcome. Workshops, discussion groups, and roundtables are encouraged, as are other formats. Be creative! What kind of session would YOU like to attend? Deadline is December 1, 1997. Inquiries and proposals to Kevin Davis, East Central University, Ada, OK 74820; e-mail:kdavis@mailclerk.ecok.edu

New England Writing Centers Association

Call for Proposals
March 7
New London, CT
Keynote speaker: Nancy Welch

For information needed in the proposal, contact Theresa Ammirati, Dean of Freshmen, Connecticut College, 270 Mohegan Ave., New London, CT 06320; e-mail: tpamm@conncoll.edu. All proposals must be postmarked by Monday, Dec. 1, 1997. Decisions will be announced by mail in mid-January.

Texas Association of Writing Centers

Call for Papers
April 2-4, 1998
San Antonio, TX

This conference will be held in association with the 1998 Conference of College Teachers of English (CCTE), a Texas organization. Deadline for submissions is Nov. 1, 1997. Submit 3 copies of each paper and 3 copies of a 100-word abstract; limit the papers to 9-10 double-spaced pages (15-18 minute presentation); put the author's name on the title page only; submit only papers, including creative writing pieces, that have not been read or published elsewhere. Send to Lady Falls Brown, 213 English Department, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409-3091; e-mail: ykflb@ttacs1.ttu.edu

CUNY Writing Centers Association

Call for Proposals
March 6, 1998
New York, NY
Keynote speaker: Lil Brannon

Proposals are due Dec. 15, 1997. Notification Jan. 15, 1998. Please include type of presentation and title; name(s) of presenter(s) and position(s); institution, address, and telephone; three copies of the proposal (maximum 250 words); equipment needed; e-mail address; 2- or 3-line abstract to be used in the program. The Conference Committee will not consider proposals longer than 250 words, or those not conforming to the above format. Send three copies to Steven Serafin, Writing Center, Hunter College—CUNY, 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021. Phone: 212-772-4212; fax: 212-650-3953.

Director of the Writing Center Colorado State University

This tenure-track position entails administering the campus Writing Center, working as a member of a team on the Online Writing Center at Colorado State University ([http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/Writing Center](http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/Writing%20Center)), teaching and advising graduate and undergraduate students, and conducting scholarly inquiry. Teaching load is three courses per year on a semester system.

Send a cover letter, curriculum vitae, evidence of teaching

strengths, a writing sample (10-20 pages), and letters of recommendation to: Mike Palmquist, Chair, Search Committee, Dept. of English, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523

Applications postmarked by November 14, 1997, will receive full consideration for the position. Inquiries concerning the position should be directed to Sue Russell at (970) 491-1898 or srussell@vines.colostate.edu

WRITING CENTER ETHICS

The ethics of choosing and hiring tutors (Part 1)

Tutors are the heart and soul of a writing center. They perform one of the most challenging and cognitively demanding tasks that might be asked of any teacher: read student texts quickly and carefully, and then make accurate, insightful assessments of the student's most immediate writing needs. Tutors must draw upon their own problem-solving skills and years of accumulated experience to perform these tasks well, and they must also draw upon all the training they have received to convey the substance of these assessments to students without being overly directive or controlling in conferences. The best tutors in a writing center are truly gifted individuals and a joy to work with, but they do not just magically appear, nor do they necessarily arrive with the skills they need to do their jobs. They must be found, they must be hired, they must be trained, and they must be supervised. I believe that the means by which these administrative functions take place and the ways in which they are enacted at different institutions make up important aspects of a writing center's ethical context. Hiring policies (institutionally mandated or self-selected), budgetary limitations, and the criteria used to determine qualified tutors all help to shape what *kind* of writing center a writing center is and therefore what kind of ethics it must necessarily adopt. Part of what I plan to do in this month's column and the next is to describe some of the administrative contingencies we all must face and to characterize some of the direct or indirect ethical effects they have.

Existing policies

Some campuses will have very strict guidelines about who can be hired to

work in the writing center, while others will be a bit more flexible. State regulations and campus policies may set, peremptorily, the specific job classification of tutorial positions, and these classifications will just as often impose a narrow range of potential applicants (i.e., work-study students, graduate students, undergraduates, etc.). Rules about who can be hired for tutorial positions will have subsequent effects on the kind of tutor training required, the number of "experienced" tutors working in the center, and the number of hours that tutors can be scheduled to work each week.

Occasionally it will be difficult to judge where the line is drawn, administratively, between firm campus policy and long-standing tradition. The former cannot be changed directly by writing center directors; the latter probably can be. Is there a formal campus policy in effect, for example, that mandates the use of graduate students rather than undergraduate students in tutorial roles? If not, can this policy be changed, and should it be changed? Answers to these questions will be deeply immersed in ethical assessments of campus needs and student needs, and rarely will it be possible to make unequivocal judgments about what is best.

Consider the situation at the University of Illinois. At present, the Writers' Workshop is staffed entirely by graduate students, and they are compensated for their work through a TA stipend. The decision to staff tutorial positions with graduate TA's was made before I arrived at the university to direct the center, and it was made—as far as I can tell—to meet political, practical,

and programmatic exigencies. The center was created in conjunction with a new upper-division WAC program, and it was intended to meet the needs of junior and senior level students who would soon be required to produce writing that was deeply situated in the discourse of their particular disciplines. It was felt, therefore, that undergraduate students would be less able to meet the needs of these advanced students than would graduate students. Secondly, the writing center was also created in conjunction with a new graduate program in writing studies, and the center was seen as a good way to provide training to these graduate students in writing instruction and the application of current writing theories. Thirdly, the center was seen as a potential source of additional funding to help support graduate student TA's in the humanities—particularly the English department, which wrote the initial proposal to fund the center. The writing center is financed by recurring funds from the college of Liberal Arts and Sciences, a regular allocation not tied to any particular department, and humanities departments from all over campus regularly look to the writing center, and to me, as a kind of "cash cow" that can help subsidize their graduate students' educations. Though I have not (until recently) been put under any pressure to hire a certain number of English TA's (in fact, I usually make about a third of my staff non-English graduate students), all the paperwork for writing center appointments is handled by the English department, and my special connections to the department (as an assistant professor) make it easy for me to find English TA's with an interest in working in the Workshop. As long as I continue to

hire graduate students of one sort or another, I suspect everyone will be happy, but I know I could expect a great deal of resistance if I tried to use some of my tutor money to hire undergraduate students instead.

Budget

Considering whether or not to hire undergraduates as tutors raises budgetary questions as well. Simply put, given a fixed budget, the more tutors that are hired, the less they can be paid overall. Full-time tutors are generally more expensive than graduate students (because of the benefit packages that accrue with full-time status), graduate students are generally more expensive than undergraduates (who can often be hired at minimum wage or slightly above), and paid undergraduates are more expensive than undergraduates who are tutoring on a volunteer basis or as a required component of a class they happen to be taking. In addition, there are always slight variations among tutors, even those with the same general academic status. Tutors with more experience or who have worked a greater number of hours may be paid at a higher scale than less experienced tutors; some tutors may, for one reason or another, be scheduled to work a greater number of hours each week than others.

I feel a lot of pressure to expand the services I offer in the writing center, since we have about 2000 conferences with students each semester, and this strains the capacity of the writing center to its limits. My budget allows me to hire eighteen graduate student TA's, and I use them to staff one large writing center in the Undergraduate Library and two smaller satellites elsewhere on campus. If I had more tutors, I could certainly use them, but I can't afford to pay for any more graduate students. That leaves me with a tough ethical choice. Is it in the best interests of the student body for me to downgrade the tutorial positions, hire undergraduates instead of graduate students, and expand the total number of tutor-hours that writing center conferences

can be made available? Or is it in the best interests of the student body for me to keep the same number of tutor-hours available I have now, staff the center with highly-qualified graduate students, and bite the bullet when it comes to student complaints about not being able to get an appointment? In oversimplified terms (and not intending to demean the value of undergraduate peer tutoring), will quantity or quality constitute the more ethical choice? Not an easy choice to make.

Tutor qualifications

That said, let me now turn to the issue of the qualifications tutors must have to get hired. Once again, there are wide variations in the ways different institutions construct their minimal requirements for tutors, depending on many of the variables I have already mentioned. Tutors may be required to complete specific coursework, to have a minimum GPA (overall or in specified courses), to submit faculty recommendations, or to demonstrate writing proficiency by providing representative writing samples. They may need to be students in a particular major, or they may only need to have a sufficiently impressive résumé with related work experience. The specific requirements for the positions will likely be a dynamic construction, created from a mixture of institutional mandates and arbitrary policies established by the writing center director (cf. Yarmove; Puma; Benson; Wallace; Moore). The ethics of each policy-related requirement should be examined carefully by those involved in hiring tutors, but even more important, perhaps, is the need to examine the far more complex ethical assessments that lead to actual decisions about who gets hired and who doesn't. Writing center directors will frequently have to make their final decisions among an equally-qualified pool of applicants, and they will do so based on a complex assessment of personalities, individual strengths, and writing center needs. As Judith Kilborn points out, though, even the most time-tested selection procedures can lead to unpleasant results. Recounting her ex-

periences with three of the tutors she hired for her writing center at St. Cloud State University, she explains that the one who looked best "on paper" turned out to be "an abysmal failure" while the one who appeared to have some personality quirks became "an excellent tutor" (3, 5).

Next month: Equity issues, tutor training, and tutor supervision

Michael A. Pemberton
University of Illinois
Urbana, IL

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- Kilborn, Judith. "Lefse, Popovers, and Hot Cross Buns: Observations About Three Tutors." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 13.1 (September 1988): 1-4, 12.
- Moore, Elizabeth. "The Tutor Test: Basis for Hiring." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 10.5 (January 1986): 11-12.
- Puma, Vincent. "The Write Staff: Identifying and Training Tutor-Candidates." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 14.2 (October 1989): 1-4.
- Wallace, Ray. "The Writing Center's Role in the Writing Across the Curriculum Program: Theory and Practice." *Writing Center Journal* 8.2 (Spring/Summer 1988): 43-48.
- Yarmove, Jay. "Interlock: A Proposal for a 'Cosmopolitan' Writing Lab." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 11.10 (June 1987): 8-9.

ECWCA Conference Date Change

The East Central Writing Centers Association, originally planned for April has been changed to May 8-9. Mary King will be the keynote speaker. Proposal deadline is January 15. For more information, contact Sherri Zander, Writing Center, One University Plaza, Youngstown State U., Youngstown, OH 44555. Phone: 330-742-3055; e-mail: sdzander@cc.ysu.edu

Proposing a writing center: Experts' advice

Our school needs a writing center. Although a few restricted services provide support directly to small categories of students at our state research university of 26,000, our office, the writing-across-the-curriculum, professional-development service which assists faculty as they incorporate writing into their programs, has been the primary academic writing support for our school.¹ Without direct writing support for students, however, many of our faculty have expressed reluctance to incorporate writing systematically into their teaching. It is true that, for some teachers, support of a writing center is a way to avoid addressing writing issues with students; for others, it is convenience; but, notably, several faculty have indicated to us that a writing center is an issue of justice for them. They fear that incorporating writing extensively into their curriculum without support will penalize students who, though capable scholars, are weak or apprehensive writers. Despite such a pressing need, over the last decade five proposals for a writing center have been rejected.

To energize this year's effort, we sought the input of consultants. A session at the 1996 Midwest Writing Centers Association conference in Minneapolis provided the forum. Dr. Sandra Zerger of Bethel College and I developed a presentation to report our quantitative and qualitative findings from a study of faculty attitudes about student writing.² The process of writing the conference paper functioned as a self-assessment for us. So did the development of demographic materials that we shared with our audience. Benefiting from those opportunities for reflection, Sandee and I turned the session into a

think tank in order to seek input from our unsuspecting audience of 20 writing-center specialists and tutors.³ Given their expertise and the information about our situation we had shared with them, what advice could they give to help us design the most appropriate proposal for a writing support service for our campus? We were not disappointed with the insightfulness of their suggestions. Nor were we disappointed with the fate of the proposal. The news has been positive: our school will have a writing center this year, thanks in no small measure to the input of these specialists.

Listening to the experts

Even before we knew the fate of our own writing center proposal, I believed that the specialists' recommendations could be of such value to those who propose, evaluate, or re-organize writing centers that I decided to convert our consultants' questions and observations to maxims for others to use. I include those here along with commentary on how we applied the suggestions to our proposal.

1. *Know your environment.*

Through our research report and demographic summary, Sandee Zerger and I apprised our audience of our understanding of the school's environment. Our specialists' inquiry in response to our think-tank questions regarding goals, structures, and services for our writing center prompted us to reflect more about race, class, gender, and special challenges faced by members of our student population, affirming for us the need to propose a university-wide service.⁴ Heeding their suggestions to think of "environment" as beyond our immediate school, I

asked Anne Farmer of our office to research the services available at our conference (Big 12) schools and in our regents system.⁵ Our argument for a writing center was buoyed by these data, which revealed that ours is alone among the conference and regents schools in not having a student writing service.

2. *Understand why you don't have a writing center—REALLY.*

Our specialists urged us to reflect on causes of the failure of our past efforts. Funding, as such, was not the major reason for rejection we knew. Rather, the administrators' reticence has been to fund what, in their perception, constitute remedial services. Because their prior knowledge of student writing services was likely to be of 1960-vintage "labs" and of writing as taught under the current-traditional paradigm, we had to anticipate that those would be the experiences that would influence their decision making. Consequently, now we emphasize the non-remedial nature of a center when we visit with administrators. By drawing analogies with the administrators' own academic writing processes, of the benefit they gain from colleagues' and reviewers' feedback as they write for work and publication, we can help them understand how all students, especially those preparing for graduate work, could benefit from such a service.

3. *Identify existing services.*

This center, the specialists suggested, would most easily become comprehensive if we were to join our efforts with existing services. In addition, current writing-across-the-curriculum projects that serve students—a pilot Writing Fellows program in an interdiscipli-

nary course and research paper writing workshops—could become part of the new writing center’s services. Our WAC service would continue to consult on such projects, but the responsibility for student contact would shift to the writing center.

4. List barriers to people’s valuing a writing center.

The greatest barrier, all agreed, has been our name. Although mandated to be a faculty-development WAC office, we were named The Writing Center.⁶ The consequence was that students and faculty alike assumed that, if “The Writing Center” existed, our school must have a writing center. Further complicating our quest for a student support service was the fact that, because our name precluded identifying a student service as a “writing center,” we had to label a service intended for students as a “lab,” which, of course, perpetuated the medical metaphor of writing support being a remedial service that fixes the grammatically challenged.

After a decade of requests, this year we were permitted to change our WAC service name to Writing Consulting: Faculty Resources. That name change at once emphasizes the absence of student writing support at our school, allows us to employ a vocabulary that focuses on the need for a writing “center” rather than a writing “lab,” and permits a name for the proposed student center—Writing Consulting: Student Resources, for example—that could be parallel to our own.

5. Describe the theoretical grounding for such a center.

We explained to the specialists that our own mission statement is solidly grounded in WAC principles which recognize the value of writing both as a tool for learning and as a means of discipline-specific communication. Our writing-across-the-curriculum efforts have been ongoing for over a decade. The specialists encouraged us to develop a writing center grounded in that work, especially, they noted, because

students have a great need for a writing center in an open-enrollment institution such as ours.⁷

Extending from the potential of a writing center/WAC relationship, the specialists made the one recommendation that we considered to be unwise at our school. The specialists argued that the student writing support service be an extension of our own office. Politically and economically, however, such fusion of the two services is likely to be detrimental to both. We agree, nevertheless, that a close association is ideal in order to maintain a consistent theoretical perspective. To that end, we proposed that our office and a writing center remain independent of each other but share a supervisor in order to maintain an autonomous but complementary operation. A name for the writing center that is parallel to our own would emphasize the independent but complementary association between the writing center and our WAC service.

6. Identify your goals.

The specialists expected us to develop goals for a writing center based on both theory and practice. We agreed that a writing center at our school should be driven by WAC principles and should provide writing-for-learning and writing-in-the-disciplines enhancement for the entire university. The consultants also suggested pragmatic goals, ones tied to a school-wide theme or mission in order to publicize the center and make its value more apparent to administrators. We decided to work with our school’s recent, well-publicized goals of recruiting National Merit Scholars; consequently, our proposal emphasizes “high-end” services as well as those appropriate for the general student population.

7. Identify stakeholders.

Think of writing and stakeholders creatively, the specialists said, for the broader the stakeholders the greater the support for such a service. We had thought primarily in terms of academic writers across the spectrum of the uni-

versity—graduate and honor students as well as average and struggling students. The specialists, however, encouraged us to broaden the support base across campus and into the community by inviting participation from journalism and creative writing programs as well as offering services to the local citizenry.

8. Think in terms of a learning community.

The single most productive suggestion for our specific proposal was the encouragement to talk of the center as being central to an entire “learning community” rather than as a benefit to a particular group.⁸ In the past, our administrators have viewed writing centers narrowly, as remediation underserving of funding at the “flagship” school of our state’s system. Focusing on the entire learning community instead of on students with learning deficits was the specialists’ strategy for combating that misperception.

Our thinking in terms of the learning community has increased the number of stakeholders in the proposal: our superiors have come to regard a writing center as supporting faculty and honors students as well as the general student population. As the understanding of potential benefactors of this service spreads, additional administrators are coming to see how such a service could serve their goals. For example, the multi-based aspect of the service attracted the attention of a student services specialist who wants to include a satellite center as a portion of a major dormitory renovation.

9. Finance creatively.

Our specialists were more concerned about finances than were we because we strongly believe that, initially at least, the university should demonstrate its philosophical commitment to a center with its financial support, whether through direct monies or endowment funding. Several in the group noted that, given the university’s lapse in establishing a center, the cutting-edge concepts necessary for grant

funding would likely be lacking. An alternative would be to tap into the broadened funding opportunities permitted by a diversified stakeholder base: corporate-college collaboration, fee-for-service work, interdepartmental funding, credit-bearing tutorials and courses, and credit-bearing professional courses for tutors.

10. Consider your political options.

The specialists' own writing services illuminated the variety of potential homes for writing centers—departments, student affairs, student government, and academic affairs. Their discussion at once clarified our commitment to having the student service housed with the Provost—as an academic agency rather than student service—and to the alternatives available to us. Ensuing discussions about how to situate the center within our school's political structure have helped other campus agencies to think about how such a service could meet their needs. Such a broadened awareness of the potential of such a service can only benefit the prospects of a writing center.

Proposing a writing center

The conversation with the specialists affirmed for us the value of yet another submission. The resulting proposal described a comprehensive service we foresee as a "rich, flexible mix of services, which extend beyond the confines of an office, . . . [to] reinforce writing at [our school] as being University-wide rather than merely confined to a specific venue."⁹ July 1, 1997 the proposal was funded. The services of the writing center will eventually include class sessions, workshops, and programs at several sites; one-on-one and group consultation; expansion of the Writing Consulting: Student Resources web site¹⁰; research on student writing; a Writing Fellows program; and writing groups for fun, collegiality and support.

The center will start modestly, however, at a dormitory renovated as an honors living-learning residence community. While searching for a director

(full-time professional staff), our WAC staff will meet with representatives of existing tutoring services to develop a network of resources, and we will meet in workshops with faculty and students to explore ways they can incorporate the services of a writing center into their teaching and learning. After all, having been reminded for over ten years that no such services exist, they will need time to think of the possibilities of such a service. Until a director is appointed, initial services of the center will be limited, both because of our obligations to our existing WAC service and in order to give the director the opportunity to shape the writing center. But, for political reasons, the center must have visibility soon; therefore, this next year our WAC staff will extend some of our services to, and through, the new writing center site. Enrichment workshops on academic and work-related writing that we offer across campus will be offered from the living-learning dormitory. We will also work with honors faculty who are teaching tutorials for dorm residents to provide course-specific writing consultants who will work from the writing center site in the dorm.

Considering the process

Even if a writing center had not been funded, I had come to value the process we used to refine this year's proposal sufficiently to share it with others. Fortunately, I can now write of the procedure, which I think of as a program-review without a program in place to review, with the extra confidence of knowing that it yielded a writing center.

The process of self-assessment and consultation with outside specialists allowed us to re-see our situation; it stimulated reflection and discussion that clarified our numerous options; it helped us review our priorities; and it gave us insights into how best to approach our audience. Despite the exercise being for our purposes primarily, with the specialists acting as trouble-shooters for us, I think that this process was also beneficial to the specialists.

Our inquiry encouraged them to exchange information about writing center theory and practice; the think-tank format facilitated idea generation; and the participation of tutors with teachers and administrators for this common purpose of providing input brought forward a rich variety of viewpoints on pertinent issues. By being able to focus on our case, the consultants had a unique perspective from which to appreciate the strengths of their own services, to reflect on their understanding of theoretical and practical writing center issues, and to converse with peers about their reflection. Given the consultants' apparent enthusiasm for the task we laid out for them and our satisfaction with the quality of the input, I'll use the trouble-shooting format for conference sessions again.

At our school this year, several exemplary projects—day-care expansion, technological upgrading, an advising service, and a teaching excellence center—competed for ever-shrinking funds. We are, of course, euphoric that a ten-year-old dream has been realized with the funding of a support service for student writers. Whether or not the center had been funded, however, our staff has appreciated knowing that we submitted not only a carefully considered proposal but one that was enhanced by the input of twenty conscientious consultants who collaborated to advise us in how to develop a proposal for a writing center.

Pat McQueeney
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS

Endnotes

¹ Intercollegiate Athletes receive full-service tutoring; American ethnic minorities studying Freshman-Sophomore English qualify for a tutoring service sponsored by the English Department; students of teacher-clients of Computer Assisted Instruction in English may use the CAI lab, which relies on Writer's Workbench to provide diagnostic information without the support of writing tutors; and Supportive Educational Services provides tutoring and counseling to approximately 300 students who meet federal need guidelines.

²Dr. Zerger used sabbatical leave from Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas to collaborate with us on researching the Liberal Arts faculty's perceptions of students' writing. Her quantitative research yielded essential contextual information as did her input on an early draft of this paper.

³Twenty writing center specialists and tutors provided suggestions as part of Sandra Zerger and Pat McQueeney's session, "This is Chemistry, Not English Literature: Supporting Writing Across Campus" at the 1996 Midwest Writing Centers Association conference in Minneapolis, October 4, 1996. Unfortunately, we do not have everyone's name to share. We encapsulate their suggestions in appreciation of their efforts.

⁴These are the think-tank questions, which the group divided into small groups to answer: What should be the goals of a writing center at this school? What should be the professional configuration of such a center? What services might such a center offer? For what level of students? What

might be the support function of a WAC consultation service to/in this center? Who should be hired as tutors? If tutors are cross-disciplinary, how might they be trained?

⁵Big Twelve information collected includes institution and enrollment, name of writing center service, number served, contact person, which services are offered (tutoring, workshops, computers, internet access, on-line consulting, resources, courses). A chart summarizing the information is available by contacting writingc@falcon.cc.ukans.edu. Ask for Writing Centers of the Big Twelve.

⁶The archives do not reveal why "Writing Center" was chosen as the name. It is possible that the founders did not know that "writing center" is a generic term for a student writing support service. Clearly, the founding documents provided for the eventual expansion of services to include university-wide, discipline-specific tutoring, but when the tutoring component of our services did not materialize, our name became a point of confusion.

⁷Currently, any graduate of a state high school is guaranteed admission to any state regents institution. A modest enrollment requirement will go into effect at the turn of the century. The upcoming restrictive enrollment is even more reason to emphasize how strong students can benefit from a writing center.

⁸The "learning community" stance was the insightful suggestion of Margaret Weaver of Southwest Missouri State University.

⁹This proposal was co-authored by James W. Hartman, Director of Writing Consulting: Faculty Resources and Pat McQueeney. It is informed by the suggestions of the MWCA writing specialists and by the research of Writing Consulting student assistant, Anne Farmer.

¹⁰Writing Consulting: Faculty Resources has begun this web site with a grant from the Hall Center for the Humanities. Its URL is <http://raven.cc.ukans.edu/~writestd/index.html>.

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