

THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E T T E R

Volume 23, Number 3

Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in one-to-one teaching of writing November, 1998

...FROM THE EDITOR...

This month's newsletter starts a two-part series that will continue into next month's issue: reviews of a new book published by NWCA Press, *The Writing Center Resource Manual*, edited by Bobbie Bayliss Silk.

The book is an important contribution to writing lab publications, and because of its intent—to cover a huge variety of topics of concern to writing lab administrators—each reader will dip into the book for different reasons.

To give you a sense of the range of goals the collection serves and the range of situations in which it will be useful, we offer four perspectives on the book this month. Next month you'll find several more. Each reviewer contextualizes the review within his or her setting and offers us a view of how the book is relevant to that particular setting. So you are likely to find some reviews more useful than others. But I hope we all agree that this book is a major contribution to our bookshelves—one of those books we'll return to again and again and will continue to learn something new each time we dip into it.

• Muriel Harris, editor

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Writing center counselor training and the ESL student

Robin Scarcella, in *Teaching Language Minority Students in the Multicultural Classroom*, writes that "the number of students who lack English proficiency (aged 4 to 18), estimated to be 3.6 million in 1978, will rise to 5.2 million by the year 2000" (1). Of course, most of us who work in university writing centers realize that the number of ESL students is rising; what we are grappling with is how to best meet the needs of this unique population. Although we would ideally send all ESL students to specialists, many campuses do not have ESL programs at all, or the services offered by the ESL specialists may be cost-prohibitive or too limited to meet the needs of the entire ESL population. So mainstream writing centers simply must step in.

Fortunately, once peer tutors receive training and support materials are made available to them, they can adequately serve the needs of most ESL students. I've seen it happen at my university. And although I cannot profess to have all (or probably even that many) of the answers to the exact way to best train students as ESL tutors, what follows is at least a start.

My writing center's counselor training is comprised of a series of one-hour sessions over six weeks. This past year we added a section dealing with the tutoring of ESL students. The main point we tried to make is that counseling ESL students should not intimidate counselors since so many of the writing problems that ESL students face are those all students confront. To underscore that idea, we retained the same counseling steps we describe in "regular" counseling sessions, but modified them to accommodate the

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Editor: Muriel Harris; Asst. to the Editor: Mary Jo Turley, English Dept., Purdue University, 1356 Heavilon, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1356 (765)494-7268. e-mail: harrism@cc.purdue.edu mjturley@purdue.edu

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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.

needs of the ESL student. Here are our additions:

Step 1: Establish rapport.

ESL students need to feel included rather than excluded and to feel that their writing counselor has empathy for their struggle with English. Particularly helpful strategies include showing interest in the student's country, his/her experiences in America, and sharing one's own struggles with a foreign language. We do discuss in the training session possible cultural differences in order to sensitize our counselors to these. For example, men from middle-eastern backgrounds may not wish to have a woman sit next to them, or may not wish to have a woman counsel them at all. To the extent that it is possible, such requests should be honored.

Step 2: Prewriting.

Often students come to a writing center with only an assignment. For the ESL student, a counselor might discuss with the student how prewriting in the student's language might or might not help in the generation of ideas. The theory is that in the search for ideas the energy one must expend thinking in English might be better used for generating ideas and making connections. As Alexander Friedlander has written, "planning and preliminary considerations of a topic can be enhanced if ESL writers understand that using the language of topic-area knowledge can have a positive effect on their planning and writing" (124). In my conversations with non-native speakers, I have found corroboration for this idea; they note that some ideas just pop out in English, but that other times it's easiest to jot down ideas and establish an organizational strategy while working in their native language. However, a counselor should never *require* that the student prewrite in his/her native language; it is simply an option that might be explored. However, the actual composing should be done in English rather than as a translation, partly for the experience, and partly to aid in the actual fluency of the writing.

Step 3: Diagnosing student writing.

This step concerns diagnosing a particular piece of writing, but with ESL students we may or may not have to diagnose the language interference problem, as well. Some volunteer the information up front (for example, when you ask why they have come to the Writing Center, they respond that English is not their native language) and other times the professors have made this determination, but some students just haven't given it a thought. This makes identifying an individual as ESL quite tricky, especially since some students may resent the label. So in terms of diagnosing someone as ESL, counselors should first decide whether or not the ESL determination would actually help in the counseling session. If it would, then make that diagnosis only with solid evidence from the student's papers (such as verb tense errors, subject-verb agreement errors, errors with idioms, prepositions, articles, etc.), and even then present the idea tentatively (as in, do you speak a language other than English? Do you think that that language has affected how you write in English?). The source of my caution comes from an experience last semester: a student who has a Hispanic name told me that he had felt insulted when a professor had simply assumed that English was not his first language. The student was born and raised in America and had never spoken any language other than English. I assured him that the professor probably had seen something in the student's writing to suggest ESL problems (but, in fact, none existed). The point is that counselors should not jump to labels too quickly or unnecessarily.

But beyond the ESL determination, a writing center counselor must be more specific in regards to what problems, in particular, the student is having. For ESL students, we try to narrow as much as possible the types of errors made: verbs, prepositions, problems in use of idiom, articles. Such a list proves especially helpful to the writer

by providing a focused plan of attack. I also include in my diagnoses comments about what the student is doing well.

Step 4: Establishing priorities.

In general, we encourage our counselors to cover content and organization issues first, but for an ESL student one needs to ask if this system is necessarily valid. For instance, if you can't even understand what the person is trying to say, then the "surface errors" have become the top priority. Indeed, the student may need to be referred to an ESL specialist if possible. But if the student has moderate problems with English, and yet he/she doesn't understand how to compose an essay, then the counselor should begin by explaining the basic structure of an essay, just as he/she would with any writer. After all, one cannot presume that an ESL writer even knows how to write an American-style essay, nor that the writer has ever been taught about writing as a process. This is an extremely important point to make to counselors. When S. Jones studied two ESL writers and their writing processes, he determined one to be a "poor" writer and the other a "good" writer, but noted that the poor writer's problems stemmed from a lack of education in how to compose rather than a language problem. In particular, while the good writer followed the general steps in the writing process, allowing ideas to shape the writing, the poor writer was bound to the text at the expense of ideas (140). Therefore, although counselors may tend to either underestimate or overestimate the abilities of ESL students, in truth most beginning writers need similar types of assistance in generating ideas and then polishing and organizing them.

When the counselor does begin working on surface errors with the student, we generally tackle those errors that occur most often and are the most troublesome for the reader. Thus, an error in choice of preposition may not warrant as much initial attention as the

omission of a verb in a sentence. A counselor might also consider if an error is particularly stigmatizing: for example, "he be going," might be judged "uneducated," whereas "I was envious for her" would be deemed an error in word choice.

Step 5: Assisting in student learning

After the counselor has established priorities, he/she sets about helping the student learn. In the case of organization, thesis, support, etc., we would follow the same basic strategy for any session, but counselors do need to realize that the American style of essay is not necessarily what ESL students are used to writing. For ESL students,

Often their culturally induced inclinations about how to communicate appropriately with their audience must be resisted. A Chinese audience would expect "citations of historical events" rather than data and rational arguments to support a point. A Japanese audience expects diffidence, indirectness. . . . Another student finds English writing crude and complains in frustration:

The kind of writing the teacher wants . . . is stupid. It is so childish. All he wanted was example, example, example, concrete, concrete, concrete . . . I can't understand why the audience cannot infer? Why do we have to be so obvious? (Leki 85)

When I taught in Romania, I remember my students turning in page after page of quotations. When I asked where their opinions were, they responded that they were mere students and therefore unworthy of expressing an opinion when there were scholars' ideas.

Writing center counselors obviously do not need to memorize every culture's style of writing, but they should be aware of possible troubles that may arise from cultural differences in order to clarify to the student what is expected by American professors.

Moving then to surface errors, certainly when a counselor begins helping an ESL student with grammar, the basic counseling session strategies must be adapted and, in general, intensified. We focus on the major types of ESL errors: countable/uncountable nouns, articles, vocabulary, idioms, prepositions, verbs: plurality, relative pronouns, inflections, and fluency. Our strategies include:

- asking our ESL students to keep a log of errors and corrections of errors of all types, but specifically of idioms, prepositions, and new vocabulary words.
- having students read their papers aloud so they can begin to hear their errors.
- showing the students how to dissect their own sentences, primarily in an effort to resolve issues of subject-verb agreement and verb tense errors.
- allowing the students to work on an ESL computer program called the *ALAnia* series, published by the American Language Academy.* The program allows students to choose an area in which they are having trouble (verb tenses, modals, articles, etc.) and then to work through that topic area in a variety of ways: by listening on headphones to passages being read; by listening and then repeating and recording their own voices as they read; by filling in the blanks; by answering multiple-choice questions; etc. So for prepositions, for example, a student could tap into seven different activities for one set of prepositions.
- using whatever other resources are available—workbooks, tapes, handouts. Our counselors even assign homework.

That concludes our last step. Of course, in their actual counseling sessions counselors may or may not follow all five steps, but in going through

the entire process in their training, they hopefully gain a better understanding of ESL students' diverse needs.

I mentioned earlier that the counselors at my university had been "successfully" trained to work with ESL students. One might wonder how I have made this determination. It's hardly a scientific formula; I listen in on tutoring sessions, survey our clients and counselors, and generally take note of what's happening. For instance, we're hardly two weeks into the spring semester, and already I have overheard three ESL students thanking their tutors for their help last fall. Of course, these same students have also set up new permanent appointments, which means the counselors' work must continue. Nevertheless, at least my university's ESL students have a place

to go, a trained counselor to work with, and some sense of accomplishment and hope. For me, that's success.

Nancy Wilson
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, TX

* American Language Academy, 1401
Rockville Pike, Suite 550,
Rockville, MD 20852. Phone: 800-
346-3469; fax: 301-309-0202.

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Middle Atlantic Writing Centers Association

Call For Papers
March 20, 1999
Dover, Delaware

Mail 3 copies by Jan. 15, 1999 to Renee Young, English Dept., Delaware State University, N. DuPont Hwy., Dover, DE 19904. For further information: <http://www.english.udel.edu/wc/mawca> or ryoung@dsc.edu

Northern California Writing Centers Association

Call for Proposals
February 26, 1999
Redding, California
"Writing Center Praxis: A Cross-Curricular Vision"

For further information and the proposal form, please contact Maria Madruga, Conference Chair, Writing Center Director, Shasta College, P.O. Box 496006, Redding, CA 96049-6009. Phone: 530-225-4689; e-mail: mmadruga@shastacollege.edu. Proposal deadline: Jan. 5, 1999.

New York College Learning Skills Association

Saratoga Springs, NY
March 21-23, 1999

For further information, contact Sallie Joachim, Learning Assistance Center, Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, New York 12180. Phone: 518-270-7226; fax: 518-270-7509; e-mail joachsall@hvcc.edu

Coping with the mismatch: Writing center conferences and workplace-oriented writing

The University of Wyoming Writing Center staff has frequently felt challenged, if not frustrated, by the numerous conferences with students who bring in workplace-oriented technical writing. Much of this writing is generated in our university's technical writing courses where teachers simulate a workplace environment to teach students about the audiences, writing tasks, and demands of workplace writing, not academic writing. Other writing comes from students preparing résumés and application letters for real-world situations and from students and faculty who are writing articles for journals and proposals to funding agencies.

When conferencing with clients who bring in these types of technical writing, we have discovered our tutoring strategies have to be different than those we use for conventional academic writing. As a result, these conferences raise ethical issues about the relationship of tutor, client, and audience (LeBlanc and Marron 9-11). We have talked with writing center tutors from other universities who are also concerned about the place of technical writing in writing centers. We think there is room for workplace-oriented technical writing in the writing center; the problem, however, is to prepare tutors to handle these conferences and to cope with the perceived mismatch between writing center conferences and workplace-oriented writing.

Writing center conferences and technical writing assignments are mis-

matched when neither the tutor nor client is familiar with the various purposes and audiences of workplace writing. Two situations are likely to occur in these conferences. First, clients who bring workplace-oriented technical writing to a writing center expect the tutors to answer questions and help in the same way they would for an academic assignment. But sometimes the tutors cannot address the clients' needs because they are unsure of workplace audience expectations. Second, writing center tutors are usually trained to avoid giving direct answers to clients' questions. Instead, they turn the questions to the clients, intending them to "discover" their own answers. But the clients do not understand the workplace audience either.

Coping with this mismatch of intentions and audience expectations means that tutors need to know how the differences between the purpose of workplace and academic writing affect their conferencing strategies. Generally, we agree that the purpose of academic writing is to effectively assert, support, and argue what the writer wants to say about a topic. Accordingly, questioning writers about what they want to say is an appropriate conferencing strategy for most academic assignments. In contrast, workplace-oriented writing delivers mostly what the reader (audience) wants or needs to hear. Workplace writing focuses on the needs of the reader, and, in most cases, the expectations of the workplace reader differ from the academic reader. Thus, questioning writers about expectations

of an audience they don't understand is not an effective conferencing strategy. The expectations of a nonacademic audience, less familiar to many tutors, impose parameters on an assignment that both tutors and clients may be unaware of. By understanding that hidden rights and wrongs usually exist in workplace-oriented writing, writing centers can better train tutors to be aware of the special problems and approaches inherent in technical writing conferences and to be prepared to conference ethically.

The following scenarios are typical conferencing situations that University of Wyoming tutors have experienced in the past and that have involved them in making decisions to cope with workplace-oriented writing.

1. A student needs help writing a personal statement as part of the application process for graduate school. The writing prompt asks him to discuss motivations and goals in his chosen field. The tutor wonders how to advise him: "If his audience is a panel, what does it expect to hear? How much personal narrative versus how much analytical thinking should this piece of writing expose? How much 'creative writing' and informal diction is appropriate?"
2. A young tenure-track professor comes to the writing center with a grant to the National Science Foundation. He is collaborating with a colleague and wants to know how to start the proposal.

The tutor thinks, “What are the parameters of this proposal? Will first person plural point of view be appropriate, or will the proposal’s readers expect passive voice?”

3. A young Japanese pianist who is a guest performer in the Department of Music for a year is preparing to go to a job fair. She has never written a résumé and needs help. The tutor thinks, “Does the audience want a conventional résumé? Should it be a chronological or functional résumé? How much of her Japanese experience will an American audience want to know? Whom should she list as references? How do I help her avoid second language mechanical errors without editing for her?”
4. A student from a technical writing class comes in with an assignment to create a computer-readable résumé. The audience is not even a human reader but a computer! The tutor has to help her shift from a résumé whose visual design catches the eye to one that can be scanned by Optical Character Recognition software; the tutor needs to know how to change the client’s résumé from one that demonstrates accomplishments using verbs to one listing nouns, buzzwords, and acronyms. How does the tutor know what is right?”

In each case, knowing the parameters imposed by the audience’s expectations is important to the success of the conference. The nonacademic audience has different expectations about the amount of creative expression appropriate for some kinds of assignments, the choice of voice or point of view, the importance of visual appeal, format, and mechanical accuracy. These hidden parameters affect a writer’s choices to design and develop a par-

ticular document. Writing center tutors need to understand such limitations in order to know the appropriate kinds of questions to ask clients during a conference.

Because the writer has fewer choices, conferences need to center more on determining how the writer can effectively convey information within the structure of the assignment rather than determining how the writer wishes to structure. For example, a technical writing teacher may have required a specific format for a progress report. Or someone working on a proposal may be responding to a very specific request for proposals. The tutor needs to realize that these specific guidelines cannot be altered even if the document would work better with a different format or organizational structure. The writing center staff needs to help writers understand what they have to do, not what they wish to do. For example, asking a client who is writing a set of instructions “How do you wish to format?” is fruitless because established formatting expectations exist for instructions. Instead, the tutor and writer might look at the clarity of the instructions.

We do not mean that questions cannot be asked in workplace-oriented writing conferences. Rather, the questions should be different. For example, a tutor may ask, “What is the main point in your statement of the problem?” instead of “How do you wish to begin your proposal?” because writers have few options, if any, for proposal introductions. But the tutors need to know what questions to ask. As Judith Powers and Jane Nelson state in their article on discipline-specific writing, the discovery-based approach to conferencing depends upon two factors: “The writers’ ‘knowing’ but not recognizing the answers to their own questions” and the “writing center faculty having a reasonably good idea of what writers must discover” (Powers and Nelson 13). When writers do not know the answers and writing center

tutors do not know the questions, then conferences are understandably not very productive.

The challenge of such conferences increases when the tutors have not had experience with the writing task involved. This situation is not unusual because many tutors and clients have had little experience with writing outside of the university. They may have never written a proposal for a business, for example, so they do not have a clear idea of expectations. True, as tutors, we often deal with writing tasks that we ourselves have not undertaken. However, we understand the audience expectations for academic writing and can apply those expectations to a variety of academic writing assignments. But when academics have written little outside academia, they do not have a good sense of workplace expectations.

Workplace expectations are markedly different than academic expectations. In general, academic writing is more theoretical, scholarly, and developed. Workplace writing is more straight-to-the-point, practical, concise. The business world often pays more attention to mechanical correctness and formatting than the academic world. Generally, more perceived rights and wrongs exist in workplace-oriented technical writing. Tutors need to know the expectations in order to use a discovery process with the writers. The tutor unfamiliar with these expectations may encourage a writer to be more creative in an introduction, for example, not realizing the audience just wants to know the facts as quickly and concisely as possible.

Moreover, a lack of workplace-writing experience can result in misinformation being given to writers. Tutors may encourage writers to use full sentences in a résumé, for example. Also, lacking confidence if they have never written a proposal, tutors may be hesitant to work with that kind of writing and, in an effort not to give misinformation, provide vague recommenda-

tions instead. In either case, the result is not good.

What is the solution? We do not think that having technical writing specialists is either practical or necessary in a writing center. And, although conferencing with workplace writing is different, the conferences can be successful without resorting to editing or overly directive strategies. However, special accommodations need to be made so that tutors and clients can conference on workplace-oriented writing ethically and effectively.

Some suggestions for accommodation follow:

1. Train tutors to work with workplace-oriented writing. In training sessions, instruct them about the typical assignments in technical writing courses. These assignments cover many of the writing tasks that people may be undertaking for writing outside of academia.

2. Set up files with models of workplace writing, manuals, and samples of requests for proposals. Also invest in self-help books on résumés, cover letters, and personal statements for tutors and clients to use together to find "answers."
3. Encourage the writers to search for answers they need. In some cases, they may need to ask their classroom teacher. In other cases, they may need to read instructions more carefully or perhaps be taught how to read a document such as a request for proposals. Proposal writers should be encouraged to call the funding agency if they have a question that is not covered in the request for proposal.
4. Designate certain staff members who are familiar with workplace writing. They can help other staff members and perhaps work with particularly problematic conferences.

5. As a staff, brainstorm the kinds of questions that can be asked in conferences for workplace-oriented writing.

The above are a few ideas that can help workplace writing conferences fit into writing centers. With a little adjustment, the fit will be fine.

Peggy Marron and Carolyn Young
University of Wyoming
Laramie, WY

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Director, Academic Assistance and Resource Center Stephen F. Austin State University

The person is responsible for overseeing services provided by the Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC), to provide primarily non-remedial academic assistance in college level core curriculum courses. The AARC offers one-on-one and small group peer tutoring sessions, workshops, and Supplemental Instruction (SI) groups. The director supervises AARC professional staff, establishes procedures for AARC operations, prepares detailed reports on all AARC activities, prepares and oversees the AARC annual budget, supervises the SI Program, and promotes the AARC.

REQUIRED: Master's degree, min.; college-level teaching ex-

perience; basic computer skills; experience working in a college level tutoring center. **DESIRED:** Administrative experience.

SALARY: \$35,000 for 10.5 months, negotiable.

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Applications accepted until position is filled.

STARTING DATE: January 1999.

Northeast Writing Centers Association

Call for Proposals

APRIL 10, 1999

Lewiston, Maine

*"Countering Educational Malaise: The Writing Center as Stimulant/
Stimulating the Writing Center"*

Keynote speaker: Albert C. DeCiccio

Proposals must include: proposer's name and educational institution; names, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses of presenters; type of session (interactive presentation, workshop, panel discussion); intended audience (directors, peer tutors, general); audio-visual needs; one page description of presentation and a 75-word abstract. Deadline: Jan. 8th, 1999. Presenters will be notified Feb. 20th. Send four copies to Theresa Ammirati, Dean of Freshmen, Connecticut College, 270 Mohegan Avenue, New London, CT 06320. Proposals may be sent electronically to tpamm@conncoll.edu with a hard copy to follow by fax or regular mail.

TUTORS' COLUMN

When friendly becomes too friendly

What do you do when suddenly you are with a student and friendly becomes too friendly? Or perhaps you are unsure as to how to interpret your student's actions. What does a supervisor do if one of the tutors comes to him or her with a distressing situation involving a student? How should the supervisor deal with it? The American Psychological Association states that 40–60 percent of females students in universities encounter this problem. So don't worry, many people have encountered the same dilemma. Take comfort in the fact that you are not alone. There are many people to talk to about this situation.

As the tutor, when this happens, you probably feel a variety of emotions including depression, anxiety, shock, denial, anger, fear, frustration, irritability, insecurity, embarrassment, and feelings of betrayal. Perhaps you are worried about what will happen if you choose to disclose information concerning what has happened. Will you be believed? The answer to this is yes, you will be believed. The options that are available to you are to talk to either a supervisor, an administrator, your professor, or the student's professor. The main point is to discuss it with someone. Remember, you cannot put a stop to it unless you get help. It may also be useful to remember that you may not be the only one who is experiencing this from this person. Chances are, someone else has also been a victim of this type of behaviour. By disclosing what has transpired, no matter how embarrassing, you could help to avoid a similar situation from happening. If you don't tell anyone, no one will know and no one can help you.

The supervisor, or anyone with any authority, should take note that the situation may be very stressful to the person experiencing this, so they may fear disclosing information in case the story isn't believed by the person they are disclosing information to. This is usually a primary fear. What the supervisor or whoever hears you can do is state the following:

- I believe you.
- I'm sorry it happened.
- I'm glad that you told me.
- It's not your fault.
- Together, we can get help.

Supervisors should not be judgmental. They should carefully listen to what the tutor is saying and respect the tutor's right to privacy. This is a very embarrassing and confusing situation to be in, so the supervisor needs to keep disclosure confidential. If the supervisor chooses to consult someone, they should try to obtain the individual's permission first. This isn't always easy because everyone is human, and it is natural to feel concern accompanied by the desire to help.

You, as a tutor, may also feel that you are misinterpreting actions that could be merely friendly. However, you must ask yourself the following question—does this situation, or whatever is happening, makes me feel uncomfortable, and if so, would I like it to either be rectified, or stopped? Basically what it boils down to is whether the situation feels wrong. If it does, then trust your feelings because all feelings can't be wrong. Even if you were mistaken, at least you will know instead of always wondering. Even though it would be embarrassing to be

found wrong, wouldn't you rather know than not? Or perhaps you are correct. At least if you tell someone, the situation can be stopped. The worst that could happen is that you are wrong. Isn't it worth taking a chance?

Perhaps you fear that something bad may happen to this person if you talked to someone—"he/she was a nice person, and I don't want to get him/her in trouble." If you feel this way, stop and think. This could happen to someone else such as a close friend. Could you sit idly by and watch your friend go through the same situation? Can you go on knowing that someone else may also be in danger of encountering the same problem? Can you live knowing that you did nothing about it? If you don't report it, the situation probably will go on. Chances are that someone else may encounter the same problem. Can you afford to take that chance? The reality is that you are not helping anyone, least of all the offender. Even though the person may appear to be nice, chances are that they wanted to obtain your trust beforehand. Otherwise, becoming more friendly may not have been effective. Perhaps they are a nice person, but you still have to take yourself into consideration. Perhaps if the person was merely lonely, you could end up helping that person overcome his/her loneliness. Either way, you can't help someone else unless you begin with yourself.

The authority figure in this situation can help you recall what you did to stop the issue. The supervisor should concentrate on what went right instead of wrong, especially if the supervisor is the first person you have come to. Es-

establishing trust is important at this point. You may be concerned that you did not make the right decision. By being understanding and nonjudgmental the supervisor can help you overcome your fears and begin to help you. Also the supervisor should discuss what is happening now, feelings about self and the student, and the effects. The supervisor should assure you that you did the right thing, and nothing bad is going to happen. Common phrases you might use will include:

- It was all my fault.
- I did something wrong.
- I am causing a lot of problems.
- I don't like what he/she is doing—it makes me feel uncomfortable.
- I'm really scared/mad/confused/etc. and don't know what to do.
- I would be labeled as a trouble-maker.

The best strategy for you is to keep a record of what happened and when: include dates, times, places and witnesses. This way, you will have someone who can back up your story in case it is denied by the offender. The supervisor will have to reassign the student to another tutor and try to ensure that a similar situation will not occur again. Also the supervisor should suggest discussing the situation with a professor or an authority figure to ensure the situation will not happen again.

Together, the situation will be overcome, but the supervisor can't help you if you don't tell him or her. I hope that you will never encounter this situation, and if you don't, then at least you know what to do if it happens. But for the few that do experience this, know that there is always someone available to help and now you know what to do. Take care.

Michelle Bresch
University of Winnipeg
Winnipeg, MB, Canada

Collaborative report from an interactive session at the National Writing Centers Association conference

This collaborative paper is the product of the approximately fifty persons who attended our session at the 1997 National Writing Centers Association Conference in Park City, Utah, entitled "Question Asking Strategies for the WAC-Based Writing Center Tutor." Ironically perhaps, many conference presentations that address themes of socially constructed knowledge and collaborative learning are conducted in a traditional lecture-based format, as if knowledge were best constructed socially in all situations except the one at hand. Eliminating this contradiction entirely was, of course, not possible given that we—John and Bill—had designed, proposed, and structured the session. Still, knowing that our audience would consist of experienced tutors, writing consultants, and writing center directors from across the nation, we felt the expertise in the room could be utilized in the production of a collaborative text based on discussion of issues during the session. This is that text.

The session focused on the difficulties, theoretical and practical, of using inquiry and collaboration to tutor across disciplines. During a brief introduction to the session, each of us presented preliminary questions raised by our research and experience at the University of Nevada, Reno Writing Center. At this point, index cards were passed around the room. On these, the session participants recorded their contact information and interests regarding interdisciplinary collaborative tutoring. For the purposes of the session, we defined "inquiry and collaboration" as the approach to tutoring in which the tutor does not take ownership of the student-client's work through directive commentary. Instead, the tutor partici-

pates through question-asking and non-directive dialogue to assist the student-client in discovering her own paths to the successful completion of the text. We defined "cross-disciplinary tutoring sessions" as those in which the tutor is unfamiliar with the conventions for writing and knowledge-constructing in the student-client's discipline. An example is a session involving an English major tutoring a physics major. We also briefly discussed the state of theoretical writings about discipline-specific knowledge and analyzed a transcript of a cross-disciplinary tutoring session to consider the tutor's inquiry strategies.

Then the audience divided into groups to generate ideas based on these three prompts related to interdisciplinary tutoring: 1) Practical Question-Asking Strategies for Tutors; 2) Ideas for Future Tutor Research Topics and Methodologies; and 3) Notes from Home, a forum for contributors to share practices from their own writing centers. After several minutes, the large group reconvened for a lively discussion of these issues during the final third of the session.

We promised the group that we would utilize their comments in the group discussion and their written notes in the creation of this collaborative text, an e-mail or hard copy of which is being sent to each member. Though this cannot be a fully collaborative text, given the impracticality of fifty individuals negotiating every word, it does represent the combined expertise of the many voices present that day in September. In this sense, this text is a unique effort to use inquiry and collaboration within a conference workshop. What follows, then,

is a collection of verbal and written responses organized according to the conversation prompts from our presentation.

I. Question-Asking Strategies:

Attendees were likely drawn to this session by their interest in its title, "Question-Asking Strategies for the WAC-Based Writing Center Tutor." The comments and suggestions offered under this category reflect the concerns of tutors who frequently confront problems of inquiry in tutoring sessions.

Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of questioning the student, based on the assignment sheet. On a philosophical level, this allows students to enunciate writing values and contextualize their own work within the arena of those values. With the requirements for the assignment "on the table," the tutor and student can begin finding ways of successfully completing the text. The importance of the assignment sheet points to the value of encouraging teachers across campus to print their assignments (or post them electronically).

One tutor role presented by session participants was the tutor as uninformed reader. By presenting questions that might be asked by a lay reader, the tutor invites the writer to clarify her audience and revise accordingly. Another suggestion involved 'problematizing' writing within the tutoring session. By questioning writers about alternate views of their subject matter, or by asking the writers to generate a variety of means for presenting their material, the text can be enriched by complexity. In other words, the problems the tutor presents to the writer through inquiry elicit critical response on the part of the writer.

II. Ideas for Future Research:

As tutors and writing center directors, many of whom presented their own material at the conference, the session participants demonstrated in-

terest in and commitment to the development of tutor research. Their various ideas highlighted the broad range of possibilities for valuable work within the field.

Many session participants suggested that by studying assignments in various departments, and by interviewing faculty in those departments, writing center scholars can identify values for writing across their own campuses and further contribute to the ongoing discussion of discipline-specific values. This research can practically assist the day-to-day operations of the writing center. For instance, it is possible that tutors could cross-train in multiple disciplines based on information from those assignments and interviews.

Another research interest addresses the degree to which a discipline's professional journal articles and the assignments designed by instructors within that discipline share discourse values. Do disciplines value the same things at the professional level that they do at the undergraduate level? Do discrepancies exist, and if so, what implications might they have for tutor training, WAC administration, and theories of disciplinary knowledge? Following that line of thinking, other participants expressed interest in disciplinary hegemony. They seek to identify whose voices count most within discourse communities and why. Others in the group would like to see more research concerning the existence of disciplinary values. What are they? Can they be named? Do they, in fact, exist?

Moving away from issues concerning disciplinary values, other session participants were interested in the many ways technology impacts the writing center. Technology may allow the writing center to extend its services to the larger community, including high schools and community organizations. The satellite writing center was another hot topic, as was on-line writing.

III. Notes from Home Writing Centers:

The discussion reflected the daily concerns of audience participants. As a result, it made sense to generate a list of some of the issues people are currently facing in their home writing centers.

To help students gain an understanding of the appropriate styles of writing within the disciplines, one WAC program conducts audio and video interviews with faculty members across campus. Another center instructs their tutors to keep journals in which they consider the strengths and weaknesses of their sessions. Similarly, many centers use observation to encourage reflection on one's own tutoring practice and the practices of others. A mentoring system is in place in more than one center, pairing new tutors with more experienced ones who can help them deal with the early difficulties of tutoring. And a continued concern of many writing centers is to continually promote writing center services to instructors and students across campus, and in some cases, to the larger community.

IV. Conclusion:

We have chosen, for logistical and ethical reasons, not to include the names of the participants who graciously contributed their thoughts to both the conference session and this collaborative text. We hope that this article will spark more conversation, and we invite interested readers to contact us.

Bill Stobb (stobb@scs.unr.edu)
and John Eliason
(jeliason@equinox.unr.edu)
University of Nevada, Reno
Reno, NV

NWCA News from Al DeCiccio, President

Not long ago, I expressed some disbelief that the new academic year was upon us. As I write this column, I am astounded that my term as President is nearly complete. On November 21, in Nashville, I will preside over my last NWCA business meeting. At that time, I will welcome new members to the Board, and I will hand the presidential gavel to Eric Hobson who will lead NWCA in the upcoming year.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my officers, all of whom helped me when I erred and advised me when I sought to extend the organization. Eric Hobson, Michael Pemberton, Neal Lerner, and Paula Gillespie have been my vice presidents, treasurer, and secretary; Joan Mullin, as past president, always provided me with judicious counsel. When you have occasion to interact with these colleagues, you may want to express your appreciation to them for keeping the NWCA ship of state afloat and on course.

As my year ends, I want to thank Mickey Harris for allowing NWCA this forum. We know how much of an ally Mickey is to all writing center workers. Extending NWCA this space to keep members apprised of happenings is only one more example of her ongoing support for the organization. During the past year, I have tried to keep you informed of what NWCA has been about; therefore, I will not recount what we have accomplished or what is upcoming.

What I want to leave you with is my expression of how meaningful and rewarding it has been for me to lead NWCA. I am proud to be affiliated with an organization that has come so far after initially being granted so little. Many of us have made our way into the decision-making processes of our host institutions to have a say in the teaching, learning, and research agendas of those institutions. This is particularly gratifying for me because I remember how the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) originally associated writing centers with such support services as office space and duplication technology. Then, Jim Upton, Joan Mullin, and Bonnie Sunstein persuaded CCCC to provide writing centers a more significant part in the *Wyoming Resolution's* section on enhancing teaching and learning. Ever since, writing center research and practice has been about the business of improving the conditions necessary for making better writers.

This accomplishment is impressive, but we cannot ignore continuous attempts to get writing centers to prove their worth. Last June, I wrote the following:

“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.”

If I may direct the organization one last time, I would like to ask NWCA members to conduct research that will give our institutions evidence of how necessary writing centers are to quality education and of how imprudent it would be to out-source writing center work.

I hope to see many of you in Nashville later this month. When I do, I can tell you face-to-face how much I appreciate your ongoing support. Until then, on behalf of my officers, thank you for helping us steward NWCA through another successful year.

With best wishes,

Albert C. DeCiccio
Merrimack College
adeciccio@merrimack.edu

Book Review

(cont. from p. 16)

need for faculty development or the Advisory Board. The writing center was situated into an academic unit; I now report to the English department and the CAS dean, whereas before I reported to a cross-disciplinary faculty and staff Advisory Board and the upper administration. I think that references especially to II.2 and IV.4 may have

perhaps caused the president to contextualize his decisions, which will impact everything from nomination and training of trainees to “grass roots” WAC/WID faculty involvement and even client and faculty attitudes about the center.

Besides renewal, I am using the

Manual as a recovery guide. I strongly urge other center directors to use and cite this manual as a reference in program review, as well as center development and renewal. Administrators do base their program review decisions within the context of national standards and guidelines for fields. This manual provides us with ours.

Book Reviews

The Writing Center Resource Manual, ed. by Bobbie Bayliss Silk. Emmitsburg, MD: NWCA Press, 1998. (To order, send checks to Carl Glover, Managing Editor; NWCA Press; P.O. Box 7007; 16300 Old Emmitsburg Road, Emmitsburg, MD 21727. \$15 + \$2 per book for shipping and handling. For information, e-mail: glover@msmary.edu; phone: 301-447-5356)

Reviewed by: Suzanne M. Swiderski, Loras College (Dubuque, IA)

Two weeks before this fall semester was to start, I found myself in my office, sorting through the piles of mail that had accumulated over the summer. After opening all of the on-campus envelopes, I allowed myself to tear into the package pile—the one containing all types of goodies and freebies: my reward for choosing a life in academia—and I came upon a group of texts I vaguely remembered ordering while at the 4Cs convention in Chicago, one of which was the National Writing Centers Association's *The Writing Center Resource Manual*, edited by Bobbie Bayliss Silk. Since I had anticipated the publication of this text, and had agreed to write a review of it, I decided to spend the next half-hour or so paging through it, simply to see what it had to offer.

I flipped to the first section, aptly titled "Introduction: How to Use This Book," and found that, in this brief preface, Silk describes the features distinguishing this text from others. Most noticeable is the format: as a manual, intended for a binder, readers can both easily browse through the contents and quickly locate the information most pertinent to them. Less overt, yet perhaps more important, is the theme of contextuality emerging from each article; all of the authors mention the highly individual nature of every particular writing center, and so present their ideas in the form of suggestions to be considered, rather than prescriptions that must be followed. Silk also explains her editorial decision to forego standardizing the style of this collection, instead preferring for unique voices to communicate their own experiences, a practice that enhances the book by echoing current writing center theory.

Pleased that this text seemed interested in practicing what it preached, I began browsing through the remaining sections—"Beginning a Writing Center," "Managing a Writing Center," "Special Needs and Opportunities," and "Appendices" (and, in doing so, found myself only slightly hampered by a page-numbering system that mixed Roman and Arabic numerals). Since I knew that I soon would have to re-examine and revise the training handbook I use with my center's writing consultants, I stopped at Paula Gillespie and Jon Olson's "Tutor Training" to see what advice they had. Gillespie and Olson state their aim as helping readers to "think about a range of tutor-training choices" (III.3.1), and they repeatedly achieve this goal, particularly when discussing the decisions a tutor must make during a typical writing consultation. They also list a number of difficult situations they have encountered, such as a writer breaking into tears or experiencing a serious block, and suggest that the staff of a writing center brainstorm appropriate strategies in advance, so each tutor has some sense of how she might choose to handle these predicaments.

Feeling satisfied because I had located a few new "But What If . . . ?" scenarios for supervision sessions, I nonchalantly glanced at the title on the facing page and found myself drawn into a topic I had never before considered. In "Writing Center Safety: Assess Needs, Implement Policy, Train Staff," Eric H. Hobson identifies potentially dangerous situations that have occurred in, and might again pose a threat for, a writing center. Classifying them as weather/structural problems, medical emergencies, and angry/agitated individuals, he suggests that staff

discuss, and receive training in, the safest ways to deal with these issues. He also recommends that policies concerning appropriate behavior be posted, so all individuals using the center are aware of the standards, and he presents one center's comprehensive yet concise statement of conduct expectations as an example.

Looking up from my reading, mulling over the responsibility I had for people's physical well being—and I naively thought I was only responsible for their pronoun-antecedent agreement!—my eyes focused on a wall hanging I had received from a Japanese student in gratitude for the time I had spent working with him. I then remembered that international students would soon begin arriving on campus and, wanting some reassurance that my staff's methods of assistance were appropriate, I kept turning pages until I came upon Carol Severino's "Serving ESL Students." Severino presents a number of questions frequently posed about English as a Second Language populations, followed by her detailed responses. Of particular interest was her identification of the similarities in working with ESL and native-speaking students: "In general, approach the ESL students' work according to the same ladder [of] concerns that you use with native speakers . . . ESL students need all the help that native speakers do, but more of it" (IV.2.3-4). She also encourages writing centers not only to serve international populations, but also to contribute to an atmosphere of multicultural acceptance in their decorations and publications.

That very notion of publishing made me squirm a bit in my chair because it reminded me that I had not yet begun

to think about a research project, focusing on my staff's tutoring processes, I had to present at an upcoming conference. Fortunately for me, I found that very topic addressed in detail in the last article, "Research in the Writing Center," by Neal Lerner. Using Bogdan and Biklen's term "action research," Lerner describes the type of study he deems most useful: an examination of the daily work performed by writing center staff; he then argues for research examining center activities,

specifically so practices can be understood or, if need be, changed. Presenting his own studies as examples, he clearly describes his research processes, from formulating questions to presenting findings, along with his research instruments, highlighting the various ways his research has been borne from his own, or his administration's, concerns. His article invites all writing center professionals to examine their center's activities and share their findings with a wider audience.

As I contemplated these ideas, I closed the binder and checked my watch: What I had thought would be a brief perusal had turned into much more. I had intended to briefly skim through a few articles, yet I found myself reading word-for-word; I had hoped to find a few tidbits of information, yet I encountered expressions of encouragement, not only for my day-to-day work, but also for my professional projects. Ultimately, I had discovered a resource that will serve as just that: a fount of support.

Reviewed by: Pat McQueeney, University of Kansas (Lawrence, KA)

A year ago I wrote "Proposing a Writing Center: Experts' Advice" (*Writing Lab Newsletter* 22.3) in order to share suggestions made by colleagues—suggestions that contributed to our writing center being funded. Their experienced advice proved invaluable as the staff of Writing Consulting: Faculty Resources, our University of Kansas WAC service, proposed a campus-wide writing center. Equally valuable are the resources in *The Writing Center Resource Manual* as we developed our Writers' Roost tutoring service, which opened its doors a month ago.

The manual, conveniently formatted in loose-leaf sheets with dividers, consists of twenty chapters written by experienced writing center practitioners. The succinct chapters address starting and managing writing centers as well as serving special needs. Appendices include essential forms and research documents for day-to-day operation and data collection. A special resource is the "Peer Consultant/Tutor Preparation Bibliography," a research initiative of the Undergraduate Writing Consultants at Michigan State University.

The entire manual is useful both for novices launching a new writing center and for veterans seeking to reinvigorate their existing centers—and perhaps their own professional develop-

ment. It is also an important tool for those proposing a writing center. In addition, this collaborative project is reassuring as well as instructional: more than once I've been relieved to discover that a problem that I think is unique to our school is a more broadly vexing issue that is worthy of discussion by writing center veterans. All of the chapters are useful, but for our school's situation, Jeanne Simpson's "Assessing Needs, Identifying an Institutional Home, and Developing a Proposal" (II.2), Joe Law's "Serving Faculty and Writing Across the Curriculum" (IV.4), and Neal Lerner's "Research in the Writing Center" (IV.6) are dog-eared and tabbed with my Post-It notes.

Our experts had cautioned us to "know your environment" if we hoped to develop a successful proposal for a writing center. We could have benefited back then from the knowledgeable advice of Jeanne Simpson, our profession's guide to the administrative world view. She addresses both institutional culture and proposal writing in "Assessing Needs, Identifying an Institutional Home, and Developing a Proposal." Through her lens, we see the need to understand our place within the school's mission, to value student demographics, to learn the details of the institutional culture, and to comprehend the budget process. But she does not stop with the context; we also

learn the process of communicating with administration by conducting needs assessments, developing surveys, and preparing proposals. Simpson's direct, conversational tone reminds even the most cynical that we have a friend in administration.

By heeding cautions of the sort Jeanne enumerates, we convinced our administration of the need for a tutoring service. Now we are challenged by how to situate the writing center in relation to an established WAC faculty consulting service. As Joe Law points out in "Serving Faculty and Writing Across the Curriculum," the issues are complex: the nature of the relationship, status of the director and position within the academic hierarchy, constraints created by the institutional culture and local history, and the theoretical grounding on which such a joint program is developed. Law is concerned that, without education, faculty may respond to writing-intensive courses by flooding the writing center with students. In contrast, the KU WAC model focused for thirteen years on educating faculty to use writing in their courses (which do not operate from a writing-intensive model) without the support of a writing center. Now, with the advent of a writing center, our concern is how to maintain our momentum with faculty while launching the student service. We will use Law's remarks about the value of fac-

ulty development to support our proposal for expanded WAC services to assist faculty in incorporating the writing center into their teaching.

Because of our thirteen years of work with faculty in the disciplines, we had demand for discipline-specific tutors even before the writing center opened. Law's review of other programs' approaches to locating and training tutors stimulated our thinking, as has the discussion of the legitimacy of expecting financial participation from those areas benefiting from field-specific tutoring. We currently are coordinating one group of specialized tutors funded by another unit, and we may be called upon next year to coordinate a second group. The alternative approaches raised in this chapter generate ideas for viable approaches in our unique situation.

One situation that is not unique to our school is our administrator's first admonition to us when our writing center was funded. "Collect data!" she said. Neal Lerner's chapter "Research in the Writing Center" is a convincing argument for research as an essential component of writing-center work in order to "understand [our practices], to improve them or to show others just what it is that we are doing" (IV.6.3). He uses examples from his own research projects to describe how to collect data on student use, faculty satisfaction, consultant service, and impact of writing services on students' grades. His discussion of the effect of writing center use on retention is timely for our staff, which is being pressured to make positive connections between writing center use and student retention. And the suggestions for additional research encourage professional development of individuals and the profession as a field.

The Writing Center Resource Manual is a valuable resource, in part because it is in progress. Its loose-leaf format invites personalization, expansion, and revision. The occasional typographical problems in this first edition will no doubt disappear in revision. And, hopefully, this current manual will stimulate suggestions for expanded topics such as syllabi of courses and tutorials taught for credit; expanded uses of the Internet for communication, publicity, education, and tutoring; and floor plans of exemplary writing centers. My colleagues' advice for proposal writing a few years ago led not only to a writing center but to my increased respect for their willingness to share their expertise. *The Writing Center Resource Manual* is another such effort by veteran writing-center professionals. Writing center practitioners owe a debt of appreciation to the editor and contributors to this project for sharing experience and expertise and documenting the work of the field.

Reviewed by: Leigh Ryan, University of Maryland College Park (College Park, MD)

When Muriel Harris first communicated with us about doing this multiple review, she suggested that I might bring "a voice of experience and the perspective of someone reading the manual and looking at it from the what's-in-there-for-me vantage point." She thought that some people with reasonably well-established centers might not see such a book as relevant to their needs. If they did think that, they would be terribly wrong! Let me explain why.

In sixteen years of directing the University of Maryland at College Park Writing Center, I have learned that constant change is the norm. Among other things, my writing center has moved twice, added evening dorm hours, gained and lost and regained administrative assistant director positions, added a tutor training course, and had our prayers answered when we received funding for a full-time receptionist. We have formally solicited information on how well we function

from our clients through questionnaires, from a campus review committee, and twice from ourselves through self-study reports. We have written countless reports and proposals, and we've gotten several grants to improve our services. We've coped with a statewide budget crisis and campus administrators who threatened to close us within a week. We've also been blessed with a dean who gained us campus funding and more than tripled our budget. In fact, as I write this review, a drill bit pokes through the wall behind me—part of an alarm system for a soon-to-be mini-computer lab. Throughout all these activities and the abundance of research, considerations, and decisions involved in each, I'd have embraced a book like Bobbie Silk's *The Writing Center Resource Manual*. I most certainly do now, and for a variety of reasons. Rather than review each essay or section, I'll focus more generally on what makes this book such a valuable resource.

First of all, each contributor looks at particular situations and issues from broad perspectives, even as he or she shares personal experiences. An administrative decision often requires looking at many issues simultaneously, making choices and decisions, and figuring out how to approach the audience persuasively. Sometimes it's hard to balance all those pieces, to remember all the details, large and small, and it's useful to be reminded of factors and options. Right now, Stuart Blythe's essay on "Technology in the Writing Center: Strategies for Implementation and Maintenance" fits that category for me as we add a computer lab. On a more general level, in "Assessing Needs, Identifying an Institutional Home, and Developing a Proposal," Jeanne Simpson raises common sense issues and questions, and offers her usual balanced wisdom and counsel. While she directs her suggestions to people starting a writing center, it benefits all of us to heed her advice as

we deal with chairs and deans and provosts. Wisely, she reminds us of an axiom we continually promote to our clients but sometimes forget in our dealings with other administrators: look at matters from your audience's perspective.

I also like the constant reminder that although we engage in the same activity, that of tutoring writing, context defines each writing center. While Bobbie Silk, Jeanne Simpson, Gail Cummins, and others make this point explicitly, it also becomes implicitly apparent in the many lists of questions. Like good tutoring, which uses questions to get writers to come to their own recognitions and conclusions about their writing, so, too, do these lists. Writing center administrators need to look ever so closely at their own situations and make appropriate decisions based on what they find.

Over the years, my various assistant directors and I have made many decisions about how we function. We've set policies and decided how to recruit staff, maintain records, and the like. To be honest, I'm rather complacent about some issues that we resolved long ago. We've done some things in particular ways for years, and I no longer remember exactly why we decided as we did. But this book rocks me out of that complacency, especially the sections on "Managing a Writing Center" and "Special Needs and Opportunities." The essays here remind me that there are often several ways of doing things. In doing so, they prod me to reconsider our current policies and practices—sometimes briefly, sometimes at length. Perhaps the only surprise in this section is Eric Hobson's essay on

safety and security. Its inclusion certainly underscores the importance of these concerns, but I can't remember seeing an article devoted to them.

While revisiting some areas can lead to change, it can also simply affirm a current practice. And that's another reason why I like this book, for reviewing and affirming some of our policies and practices feels good! Take Steve Sherwood's essay "Philosophy, Methods, and Ethics," for example. In just a few pages, he succinctly and realistically covers the complex issues of philosophies of writing center instruction and of ethics. His example of a policy statement made me especially happy (actually it's from Texas Christian University), for it closely resembles the one I drafted nearly fifteen years ago and still use.

Is everything in the book of direct value to me? Of course not. I don't run a writing center in an elementary or secondary school or at a community college. But I am often approached by people who do or who want to, and I need information and places to direct them. As summer ended, for example, my assistant directors and I conducted workshops for middle and high school teachers in two Maryland counties. In each workshop, teachers asked about writing centers in settings like theirs, and we had answers and referrals, including the chapters on those topics in this book.

What would I like to see more of in *The Writing Center Resource Manual*? I'd appreciate more on writing center outreach, like maintaining a grammar hotline or conducting workshops within the campus community and be-

yond. We are currently struggling to develop materials for workshops on writing that are generic enough for any tutor to conduct an interactive session. We're also refining materials for use with faculty, and over the summer, we planned what we did with the middle and high school teachers. I'd like to know more about what others are doing. I'd also like to see an essay devoted solely to tutor evaluation, a straightforward presentation of the various options with their advantages and disadvantages.

The appendices contain much useful information, but I wish they were easier to use. As I read Muriel Harris' essay on "Managing Services," I wasn't sure where to find the examples she referred to. Other times, information listed as being in an appendix simply isn't there, like the submission guidelines for publications that Mary Jo Turley mentions in "Writing Center Resources." The "Peer Consultant/Tutor Preparation Bibliography" looks excellent, but it might be more useful if it were broken down into categories. Overall, however, these complaints seem almost petty, for *The Writing Center Resource Manual* so richly fulfills a need by gathering so much basic, practical, and useful information together in one place.

One last thought about this book—years ago I read an essay (I think by Muriel Harris) that characterized writing center people as talky, warm, and nurturing. Throughout each of these essays, the helpful, caring overtones resonate. The voices are authoritative, but they are also those of friends, and they remind me that my writing center and I are a part of a diverse and generous community.

Reviewed by: Karen Vaught-Alexander, University of Portland (Portland, OR)

Although the original audience for this resource manual may have been those of us who develop and direct writing centers, this manual will no doubt prove to be an invaluable reference for program review—and as a resource for renewal or recovery after such a review.

I would suggest for those us undergoing program review that we can make *Manual* references to everything from center philosophy and ethics to reporting lines to funding as we assess the center in our program reviews. By situating our center policies in the context of a manual published by the Na-

tional Writing Centers Association, we provide administrators with rationales beyond our own and benchmark our center's decisions within this national context. Such a resource will also be useful for the external reviewer of a writing center program.

Even though my program review attempted to carefully assess and document the center's history, Advisory Board-developed center philosophy and policies, and WAC- and WID-based services for student-clients and faculty with recommendations for improvement (i.e., technology), the review could have made references to key questions or issues in the *Manual* (II.1, II.2, II.6-7, III.1, III.3, IV.2-6), which my program and program review was addressing. I had no "standard or benchmark" to refer my top administration to. I truly believe that by cross-referencing the program review to the *Manual* that my administrators would have responded differently.

Basically, the program review questioned the need for a training class because the Mathematics Department does not need such a class for its tutor program. The center was thanked for successfully integrating writing into the campus culture, so there was no further

(Cont. on page 11)

Conference Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

Feb. 3-6: Southeastern Writing Center Assn., in Charleston, SC
Contact: Tom Waldrep, Director, The Writing Center, The Medical University of South Carolina, AA 113 Harper Student Center, 45 Courtenay Street, Charleston, SC 29401.
Fax: 843-792-9179; e-mail: motenb@musc.edu.

Feb. 26: Northern California Writing Centers Assn., in Redding, CA
Contact: Maria Madruga, Writing Center Director, Shasta College, P.O. Box 496006, Redding, CA 96049-6009.
Phone: 530-225-4689; e-mail: mmadruga@shastacollege.edu.

March 20: Middle Atlantic Writing Centers Assn., in Dover, DE
Contact: Renee Young, English

Dept., Delaware State University, N. DuPont Hwy. Dover, DE 19904. For further information: <http://www.english.udel.edu/wc/mawca> (or) ryoung@dsc.edu.

April 10: Northeast Writing Centers Assn., in Lewiston, ME
Contact: Theresa Ammirati, Connecticut College, 270 Mohegan Ave., New London, CT 06320. E-mail: tpamm@conncoll.edu

April 15-18: National Writing Centers Assn., in Bloomington, IN
Contact: Ray Smith, Campus Writing Program, Franklin 008, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405; phone: 812-855-4928; e-mail: nwca99@indiana.edu; <http://www.indiana.edu/~nwca99>.

THE WRITING LAB
NEWSLETTER

Muriel Harris, editor
Department of English
Purdue University
1356 Heavilon Hall
West Lafayette, IN 47907-1356

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