

# THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E T T E R

Volume 29, Number 9

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

May, 2005

## ...FROM THE EDITOR...

This month's issue of *WLN* includes articles likely to be immediately useful in many of our writing centers. Richard Carr describes their writing center's program that partners with a student service for rural students at his university—a group who feel uncomfortable coming to a writing center. Steven Corbett summarizes for those of us who missed the recent CCCC conference the writing center sessions he attended, and Lisa Whalen offers examples of how writing tutors can appropriately represent their tutoring work on their resumes.

The first of two Tutors' Column is a multiple-authored essay by a group of tutors who collaborated to share their approaches when tutoring ESL students, and another tutor, Laura Lawfer, introduces us to her writing fellow program. Finally, Howard Tinberg shares with us the letter he writes to his new tutors.

You'll notice that the conference calendar (p. 16) doesn't contain information about any of the regional conferences for 2005-2006. Please send me your conference information for the calendar soon so that possible participants can plan ahead.

• Muriel Harris, editor

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## Bridging the rural-urban gap: The University of Alaska writing tutor in Rural Student Services

University of Alaska Fairbanks Writing Center outreach links our center to Rural Student Services (RSS), a program originally designed to address the needs of Alaska Native<sup>1</sup> students and now targeted for all rural students attending UAF. Eight hours each week we provide an on-site tutor for students connected to RSS. Kay Thomas, long-time academic advisor, articulates the purpose of the program by evoking the reality of the state: "Alaska has a significant rural-urban dichotomy." Even in 2003, only 20% of the state was accessible by roads, and a good portion of students labeled *rural* live in communities accessible only by air or by sea. Since its inception in 1969 as Student Orientation Services, RSS has served as a means to bridge the rural-urban gap. Program counselors work with incoming students from the pre-admissions stage onwards, starting with telephone contact while students are still living in their home village. They offer students a variety of services as they apply and once they arrive: linking them with the

Financial Aid Office, offering registration and general academic advice, helping them feel at home. The writing tutor thus joins a staff of professionals dedicated to easing the transition from a rural to an urban environment and, in terms of the uni-

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**Manuscripts:** Recommended length for articles is approximately 2500-3000 words, 1500 words for reviews and Tutors' Column essays, in MLA format. If possible, please send as attached files in an e-mail to [wln@purdue.edu](mailto:wln@purdue.edu). Otherwise, send hard copy and a computer disk or CD-ROM, and 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 an October issue).

versity, join one sort of community to another one governed by and operating under an often unfamiliar set of rules.

The mission of the original Student Orientation Services was "to provide services to Alaska Native students whose goal was to receive a college education" (RSS, par.1). The design of the original program followed the patterns of academic programs for Native American students then appearing on college and university campuses nationwide. In changing the name, the RSS program also expanded its mission to encompass all UAF students from a rural background. Yet the bulk of students who take advantage of program academic services and social offerings remain Alaska Natives, who currently comprise 9.6% of the UAF student population. In assessing the effectiveness of our on-site RSS tutorial service and exploring ways of making our work there more visibly successful, I am thinking of how well we serve our Native students.

My interest in this issue grows from an earlier frustration as a writing center administrator. As a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Minnesota, I directed the Writing Laboratory for nearly three years. I recall the occasions in which Native American students were referred to us for additional assistance and our continued ineffectiveness in providing that help. What appeared at issue then were intercultural communication problems. "She's going to fail this course if she refuses to talk," said one exasperated tutor assigned to direct a young Native American woman through a tutorial freshman composition course. What *did* that silence mean? Hostility? Lack of understanding? Indifference? At the time the rest of us could only share in her frustration, yet our particular failure to work effectively with that student represented a larger failure of the Writing Lab to serve our Native American patrons well. We provided assistance but only on our terms.

Ron Scollon and Suzanne B.K. Scollon, both formerly associated with the Alaska Native Language Center at UAF, explore the challenge of interethnic communication in a video and accompanying booklet of the same title. The Scollon project focused on communication issues involving English speakers (i.e. mainstream White Americans) and Athabaskans, and they are quick to advise their audience of the diversity encompassed by the term "Native": "We cannot make generalizations about 'Alaska Natives' and hope that they will be fair to many individuals" (17). At least twenty distinct Native languages are spoken throughout the state, representing at least twenty distinct cultural groups. Still, certain aspects of the Scollon study can serve as a window into the complexities of interethnic communication generally and the strong potential for miscommunication and thus misunderstanding between the English speaker and the Native student, especially in official settings. The Scollons identify the basis for frequent miscommunication: "The two groups have very different views of the purpose of talking and how their goals should be accomplished through talk" (25). The on-site writing tutor, though a lone, friendly individual, is a feature of an official setting.

As Writing Center administrators and tutors, we focus our energy so frequently on promoting our general ability to address all writing and writer concerns that we may miss the particular needs of a group or individual. Although my remarks here connect directly to Alaska Natives and by implication to the larger Native American community, I see that our experience tutoring in RSS could extend to a full range of intercultural communication dynamics. In developing this essay, I spoke to the tutors over the past two school years—all graduate teaching assistants in the English Department, several students, and the already identified advisor, Kay Thomas. I

sought their perspectives on RSS, the tutoring service, and the value of our work there. After all, the UAF Writing Center is an all-campus service used by faculty, staff, and students from all over the University, including Alaska Native students. Does our outreach service in RSS serve an essential purpose?

UAF has funded a full program for Alaska's rural students, and that extended support indicates the University position that Rural Student Services fulfills a distinct campus need. Did tutors see their clients in RSS as "special needs" students? The tutors shared similar views on the challenges posed to many Native students enrolled at UAF. Students often showed unfamiliarity with the academic demands of college papers, and language issues that tutors frequently confronted with second language speakers of English appeared in the papers of those RSS students they tutored. Kasey, a tutor during the 2002-3 school year, commented on her RSS clients' struggle with writing for the academic audience: "In rural life they did not need to explain because everyone around them came from the same world." Yet most of the tutors expressed discomfort with the term "special needs." I spoke to Kay, herself a UAF graduate who as a student took advantage of the RSS program in its early years of operation, regarding this designation. For many rural Alaskans, according to Kay, "the concept of having community resources in health and education is new." Village residents are still slow to go outside the family for assistance. Because they are not used to community resources, students are unlikely to take advantage of them on their own. And if showing a piece of writing to an outsider—a tutor—causes anxiety in most of us, at least at first, the resistance to doing so will likely be even stronger among Native students. "It's not our way to ask for help," said a student to one of the tutors as way of explanation for his and his friends' reluc-

tance to seek the writing advice they needed.

In my discussions with tutors I wanted especially to know what tutorial strategies worked with their RSS clients and why. "How was tutoring in RSS distinct from tutoring in the Writing Center?" I asked. "Did you take specific approaches to tutoring to address this distinct aspect?" Tutors used these questions as a springboard for discussing their experience as RSS tutors, their remarks falling into three general categories. I will use these categories as an organizing principle for the larger applicability of the lessons learned through our tutoring at RSS.

### 1. Be patient

The Scollon study noted the differences in pauses between utterances in the English speaker, who generally expects a response from the other speaker in one second, and the Athabaskan, who will frequently let a longer pause occur between utterances. The Scollons also comment on the distinct manner in which the disparate groups will handle communication with an unfamiliar person: "If they don't know each other well, the English speaker will start talking to find out what the Athabaskan is like, while the Athabaskan will wait to see what the other person is like" (26-7). Seven of the eight tutors remarked on the "shyness" of the students they helped, and all individually noted that they waited for students to speak before moving to a new question or a different tutorial approach. For Martha, a three-year veteran in RSS, the means of addressing that shyness lay in stressing the personal over the academic. Having grown up in Alaska and traveled though much of the state, Martha could occasionally link her experience and their background—their family or village. If the shared knowledge of people and place did not offer a way into discussion, Martha still sought to explore the personal as a potential for writing: "When we start talking about

their work, I steer them toward something they know." For many students it was a revelation that their experience could form the basis or focus for academic papers; they then needed assistance—a tutor's assistance—in conveying that experience to an audience unfamiliar with their world and worldview.

Listening is a logical extension of this need to be patient. The video *Intereethnic Communication* features Eliza Jones, an Athabaskan woman, and Ron Scollon roleplaying an encounter between Native and mainstream individuals in an official setting—here a job interview—and then discussing the larger meaning of that meeting. In their review of the interview Scollon, evaluating his role as prospective boss, notes his failing in the conversation: "I was interrupting you. How did you feel?" Jones replied, "That's what happens all the time . . . [English speakers] say what they want to say, not hear what you want to say." The graduate students who volunteer to tutor in RSS presumably have a sensitivity to their clients that an office interviewer might not, and certainly the tutors remarked on "listening" as a key to their success. Said Ashley, a 2002-3 tutor, "Most students [in RSS] seemed shy and uncertain, and thus I was always careful to be patient with whatever they said or asked." In discussing that slowness to speak, Kasey remarked, "I tried not to be aggressive when helping them. I smiled at them and tried to make them feel comfortable. . . . I *listened* to their frustrations."

### 2. Present yourself appropriately

Scollon indicates "how people display or show themselves to others" as another key point of difference between English-speaking and Native cultures. In the Writing Center tutors approach our student-clients cheerfully and confidently, asking questions about the writing need and, possibly, related background details: "Why are

you interested in this topic?,” “What are you trying to say to your readers?” Eliza Jones notes that in her culture, “You don’t ask questions. . . . When Natives meet, they don’t start talking right away. [You] sit down, be quiet, start talking naturally after you’ve been around each other for a while.” RSS advisors had told Ashley and Kasey that they would need to spend time getting to know the students, talking and eating with them, before the students would be comfortable bringing their writing to a tutor. Kasey recalled student laughter at her first effort to eat dried King salmon at a program gathering, but she saw the event and that moment as an icebreaker on both sides. Inessa, who tutored both writing and math for two years, remarked on the informal social environment as a factor in her feeling less businesslike in RSS and thus more approachable. In this more relaxed environment Inessa felt able to develop a deeper connection with students as she tutored them multiple times.

### 3. Encourage

All of the tutors showed reluctance in claiming that their tutoring style differed significantly between their work in the Writing Center and at RSS, yet just as most remarked on the “shyness” of their RSS patrons, most also acknowledged that their RSS clients often needed more direct encouragement. Martha spoke about a woman writing a paper for English 111, an argument about “how parents don’t give their children the proper training in etiquette.” Faced with a draft that was “a series of unsupported assertions,” Martha urged the student to mine her own experience: “I steered her toward using examples from her own childhood and her own village to back up what she was saying.” Other tutors remarked on the need to “encourage [students] on a personal as well as an academic level,” but Martha expressed most succinctly the challenge inherent in tutoring insecure writers of any

stamp and one means of meeting that challenge: “I think sometimes we overlook the value and learning potential offered by familiar topics. They can start in the village (or hometown) and springboard into the world.”

Kay Thomas identified a serious challenge the program must face, one impacting the use of all RSS services: “Some say ‘There shouldn’t be an RSS,’ and these remarks come from within the Native community.” The paradox here, as Kay points out, is that at the same time that Alaska and other places in the nation have seen a resurgence in the tribal sovereignty movement, many Native students express a desire for a contemporary identity. Incoming students resist the “special needs” designation, just as the tutors did. For many Native students at UAF, bridging the rural-urban dichotomy entails struggling to reconcile the conflicting pulls of their wish to assimilate and their need to maintain a culturally distinct identity.

That desire for a contemporary identity leads me back to the question that guided my exploration: Does our outreach service in RSS serve an essential purpose? Do outreach or satellite tutoring programs achieve something distinct and necessary to the mission of a writing center? In our case we have plenty of Alaska Native students who take advantage of the many resources in the Writing Center—tutors, computers, reference texts, study space. My discussions with the tutors, with Kay Thomas, and with students showed me the value of the tutorial service provided in RSS by the UAF Writing Center. “I couldn’t have gotten through school without [the RSS writing tutor],” a UAF graduate now living in Nome told me over the phone. Our outreach recognizes the reality that students from all over need and benefit from writing support, and for some, finding that support in the on-site tutor is the key. Students who spend time in

RSS can see the tutors helping their friends, they can hear from their friends about the valuable writing guidance those friends have received, and they can try the services themselves. In so doing, they can learn more about their power to communicate and the benefits of tapping community resources. Berda Willson, longtime resident of Nome, wrote of her struggles to obtain a degree and the larger importance of her achievement: “I hope that by fulfilling [my dream] I can motivate others to continue with their educational goals in rural Alaska. I feel that education is the answer for Alaska Natives to meet the challenges of living in two worlds” (113). With writing an essential for all academic and professional success, RSS tutors can play a vital role in guiding their students toward fulfilling their dreams.

I would like to close with another applicable lesson from this experience, one that can apply to writing tutors anywhere who move away from the central Writing Center to apply their skills in a satellite or outreach program dedicated to meeting the writing needs of any specially defined group. At UAF the Writing Center beckons any campus writer, and many heed the call. We collaborate with writers on developmental English paragraphs, literary research papers, biology lab reports, business memos, and doctoral dissertations, and though we adapt our strategies to each writer and writing need, those who use our Center accept that it is our world as they seek our advice. An outreach program tutor enters another world—in RSS, a village substitute, a home away from home—and may discover that their usual tutoring strategies and conversational approaches need modification. We *have* entered their space. Outreach tutoring can thus translate into a greater empathy for students—in RSS, in the Writing Center, in their classroom, and beyond—as tutors bridge their own gaps. Eva Saulitis, a former graduate student,

remarked near the end of her fourth and final semester as an RSS writing tutor: "It really *is* like going into a village." By that final term, Eva had become that "relaxed, comfortable, familiar individual" that Kay Thomas identified as a successful tutor. Having accepted her as part of their community, students brought their papers to her, sought her advice, and submitted more thoughtful, polished writing to their instructors all over campus.

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#### Note

<sup>1</sup> 'Alaska Native' is a regional distinction within the Native American group.

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## IWCA's New Membership & Subscription Account Service on the Web

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# Report from the 4Cs: Familiar faces and a few surprises

For all of my fellow readers who may not have had the opportunity to make it to San Francisco for the 56<sup>th</sup> annual Conference on College Composition and Communication (March 16-19, 2005), this report is for you. And if you did attend the conference, I hope this is a chance to hear about sessions you may have missed, or a somewhat accurate reminder of ones you saw and heard. As the title “Opening the Golden Gates: Access, Affirmative Action, and Student Success” might suggest, the conference attracted many writing center professionals. With so many big names in composition and rhetoric sometimes giving presentations at the same time, it was quite a task just planning which ones to visit at any given time. My three days (I had to skip Saturday) of scrambling from session to session were filled with excitement, humor, and a few surprises.

## Entering the gateway

My first stop was the Pre-Cs workshop “The Writing Center: Gateway to Diversity.” This was a massive 46-member workshop that lasted all day. Each 90-minute concurrent session featured two or three roundtables. In the first roundtable Beth Burmester, Beth Godbee, Tanya Cochran, Anthea Andrade, and Corey Green from Georgia State University presented analyses of how dialogue and conversation, and logos and images signify writing centers. Burmester talked about the different names historically given to writing centers, and why her center chose “The Writing Studio” in order to highlight the idea of community, performance, and art. Cochran, drawing on Michael Pemberton’s “The Prison, the Hospital, and the Madhouse” discussed the metaphors we live by in writing centers. And Andrade illustrated the im-

portance of scrutinizing our visual logos by showing photographs and asking participants to comment.

In the roundtable I participated in, we blended scholarship and personal experience to illustrate why centers are so important to returning students, and vice versa. From the beginning, Teagan Decker invited an open discussion from the audience involving both the challenges the world of academia poses for returning students, such as family and job obligations, performance and writing anxiety, as well as the resources returning students bring like maturity and lived experience. The conversational nature of the roundtable allowed for an open (sometimes quite confessional) exploration of what it means to, in my case, face the challenges of a returning student, or in Jenny Halpin and Decker’s case, to see the ups and downs of working with and learning from returning students, some of whom come from disenfranchised or alternative backgrounds. Halpin talked about her experience, as a traditional student/tutor working with more mature students. She talked of having the patience and listening skills requisite to working with returning students who often use narrative accounts as they struggle to try and position themselves in academic discourse (and amongst sometimes much younger peers). In a surprising, provocative testimonial, unbeknownst to both my colleagues (though they knew full well the subject matter), I punctuated the alternative tone of our presentation when I began, “I am a PhD student, the principle investigator in an ongoing Human Subjects Division approved research study on peer tutor training, a classroom composition instructor, and the founding director of a writing center. But nine years ago, I was a high school

drop-out sitting in jail for distribution of marijuana.” With this last line I watched the eyes in the room, including my fellow presenters, grow large and intently focused as I continued to relate my personal transition from the subterranean world I knew to the academic one I now inhabit. I talked about anxieties, but also teachers who were patient enough to dispel them at least enough for me to continue through, teachers who gave me the skills and knowledge I needed to continue on.

## Peer review, and pirate shops

The second day of the conference provided, perhaps, the most memorable presentations, ones that I feel honored to represent here. Harvey Kail, Kory Ching, and Neil Lerner’s panel offered some compelling looks back at writing center history and genealogy. Kail offered his intimations of training under Kenneth Bruffee at the Brooklyn College Summer Institute. Kail provided an entertaining, and surprising, illustration of what it was like to work one-to-one with one of writing center’s biggest names via a survey of fourteen of the original participants, and his own personal testimony. Kail related how directive Bruffee was while tutoring, how Bruffee made them write three paragraph essays with a proposition and two reasons. Kail confesses, “We hated it,” and how Bruffee was “not interested in our own voices.” Kail went on to relate how Bruffee’s insistence that the participants write “highly structured” descriptive outlines, descriptions of the functions of essay parts, and reviews of peer reviews left he and his fellow participants “muttering under our breaths” and left Kail asking “who does this guy think he is?” For Kail, Bruffee’s idea of “consensus” seemed to mean everybody had to concede to what *he* said.

But Kail also went on to talk of how important the Institute was to his, and his fellows," development as teachers/learners. He talked about how he and his fellows were "taking big risks as writers and readers" but finding the risks rewarding. The Institute provided bearings, the "language to think, talk in our discourse community," and how Bruffee's theory of collaborative learning "reoriented our worlds." Kail said, "We were playing the roles of students as we were students ourselves," learning to be "students as active participants in their own educations."

A fellow member of the Institute, John Trimbur, synchronistically joined the discussion about half way through and, upon invitation, proceeded to add his own recollections. The dialogue of words that flew through the air in itself, was worth the trip. Trimbur discussed their treatment of the five paragraph essay, how it decontextualized student writing, and how he saw students reacting to it before his experience with the Institute, before he "knew how to teach writing." Trimbur talked about learning the false distinction between what students were being asked to write about in the classroom versus the genres of the real world. He said that he "learned more about life in groups," and how the Institute "gave me more patience" in dealing with his own and other's writing processes. Kail chimed in with his belief that the Institute placed participants in Vygotsky's zones of proximal development in which Bruffee provided "tasks harder than we could do on our own." Trimbur concluded by intimating how Bruffee pressured the participants to rethink what authority is, how to be a peer with students, the "divestiture of authority." Trimbur said, "Ken put so much pressure on us. [He was] a very strong teacher. [It] doesn't look like that, but it worked that way." And Kail concluded by speaking also of au-

thority and intimacy: how these concepts are not always easy to coordinate, how despite some failures the participants explored "how to build community, and how to be a member of the community," how a "student culture" is constructed by a community of peers.

Next, Kory Ching discussed the connection between collaborative learning and literary societies in writing groups. Drawing primarily on the work of Anne Ruggles Gere, Ching related how far back formal peer response really goes, at least to A.A. Lord in 1880.

Finally, Neal Lerner discussed how writing labs/centers developed in answer to periodic surges in incoming student populations. Lerner explained how in the 20s and 30s mass waves of incoming college students urged pleas for more personal instruction, which also brought along logistical challenges. By the 30s, Lerner reported, writing labs had cropped up to help relieve the burden of overloaded teachers. Lerner related how in the late 60s and into the 70s more waves of incoming students, due to open admissions, demanded still more focus on student-centered approaches advocated by such teacher/scholars as Peter Elbow and Donald Murray. Lerner concluded by juxtaposing Stephen North's 1984 call for writing center independence with the idea of writing center theory and practice melding with classroom composition practices, calling for classrooms as "experimental sites" that combine performative happenings with critical understanding.

The next presentation showcased the impressive non-profit community tutoring program David Eggers founded. Eggers presented his San Francisco-based project as a "bridge between the community and kids who need attention with their writing." Chuckles

filled the room as Eggers talked about the Pirate Supply Store that acts as a curious, creative front for the free community drop-in tutoring center.

Eggers and his associates, Ninive Clements Calegari, and a tutor named Aaron, outlined the rather broad scope of the work their project offers the community: tutoring diverse student populations one-to-one; field trips (including story telling, and making their own books); sending tutors into classrooms to assist and guide students in their projects; workshops that provide individualized attention; special events (see their website at <[www.826valencia.org](http://www.826valencia.org)>); and, of course, "affordably-priced pirate supplies." Eggers related how, with over 600 volunteer tutors, they are now sending tutors into schools and classrooms, and establishing satellites in New York City and Seattle. He also talked of student publications and his project's link to McSweeney Publishers. Students have a chance to publish their work, quarterly, in collections with titles like *Talking Back: What Students Wish Their Teachers Knew*. Aaron gave some logistical details involving the project. Since August of 2004, 285 projects have been initiated or completed involving: college entrance preparation; poetry; playwrightings; elementary, middle, and high school outreach programs. Two specific projects Aaron pointed to included an outreach program to a middle school in which all 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>-grade classes had in-class tutors (which resulted in double-high API test scores), and a newspaper in which the "students decide what the news is."

Conclusively, Eggers poignantly described his own motives for the project, and the idea of "creative versus practical" in writing. As a well-known, prolific author of works including *A Heartbreaking Work of*

*Staggering Genius*, and contributions to *The New Yorker*, Eggers intimated his strong belief that students need to be interested and excited about writing and the writing process. He discussed how teachers all too often “set the notion of what an expository paper is” paralyzing students “before they even get started.” He said “they [students] freeze up” and say “so screw it.” In contrast, he said, “the first couple of drafts, I let them go crazy, no punctuation, getting blood on the paper.” He believes in putting students through the publishing process, writing six to seven drafts back and forth. Eggers said he tells them you “gotta find a way to make it interesting to you.” Eggers wrapped up by talking of his old idea that “writers need to be selfish with their writing,” and how the “huge bridge of understanding between students and tutors” is a testament to how he views writing now.

### **Tutor/teacher training, and writing center location and image**

In the first of two important panels the next day, Melissa Ianetta, Susan Pagnac, and Leigh Ryan, offered research and theory on issues of composition teachers trained in writing centers, and critical thinking. Ianetta’s presentation showcased a national and local study involving TAs trained in writing centers before they teach in composition classrooms, aiming to go beyond what Ianetta described as the usual testimonial-based accounts of the benefits. In a 13-question survey distributed to 25 writing programs across the country, Ianetta found that teachers, writing center directors, and writing program administrators reached an overwhelming positive consensus in their responses to center-trained teachers. The answers to the 13 questions from respondents suggested what, specifically, center-trained teachers were better prepared for, including being better prepared to teach, to discuss writing, to grade student essays, to offer more useful feedback to student

writers, and to understand the writing process. Ianetta concluded by urging all writing professionals to at least try out, and to exploit this valuable resource for teacher training.

Pagnac offered a nice counterpoint to Ianetta’s research. Pagnac intimated her own perceptions of the transition from tutoring one-to-one to teaching in the classroom as problematic. Pagnac voiced how she was lured into an authoritative Freirean banking style of teaching. She said she “slipped into lecturing as easy as slipping into a Lazy-Boy chair,” boring her students and boring herself. She felt that this was the identity she was creating for herself. Then she realized, by closely watching the model of a fellow teacher she admired, that there were alternatives to lecturing. She began to learn that she could balance one-to-one aspects of teaching with “taking care of business” in the writing classroom. She concluded by suggesting that future teachers sometimes need more than tutoring experience for the multiple pedagogical situations that arise in the classroom.

Finally, Ryan reported on her discussions with an economics professor who teaches critical thinking along with subject matter in a very student-centered fashion. Ryan related how he took his students’ blue book exams, redistributed them amongst the class, and then had the students write five-page critical essays on their peers’ exams. In addition, Ryan claimed that through his dialogic teaching style, he helped students come to their own understandings; participate in the critiquing process; develop their own perspectives and understandings of complex problems, develop independence; share experience and research, and learn “new lines of inquiry.” Ryan went on to say that these faculty member used open-ended questions and played on the idea of the devil’s advocate to push critical thinking. She

quoted him as saying, “a teaching moment may steal the moment from the student.”

In another panel Deborah Depiero and Daiva Markelis discussed center location and advertising. Depiero argued “space does matter” and “you need the right space for the right tutoring.” Depiero illustrated how her center went from an isolated campus location to a much more central one in the center of campus. Her new center was fresh and clean, with new carpet, paint, furniture, and carefully chosen art hung on the walls. But Depiero also related how in their new location her tutors felt a sense of dislocation, a loss of independence, and a longing for their old space. Depiero talked about how things are gradually changing now, though, as new tutors come in and the older tutors are adjusting and adapting to their new surroundings. Depiero concluded by suggesting that the “cross-pollination” that occurs when centers take on central locales can be very important, but to be wary of the period of adjustment that such a move will inevitably entail.

Markelis talked about another type of move involving considerations of center image. She played show-and-tell as she illustrated the public relations considerations her center made while trying to come up with a visual logo. She began by claiming that “students are immersed in a popular culture that privileges the visual.” She went on to talk of the importance of “priming” in advertising, that people don’t necessarily remember explicit details but implicit memory triggers. This is why, Markelis suggested, advertisers use sex so much in advertising. Markelis went on to show a series of visual logos they had tried at their center with varying success. The first one was of Mae West peeking seductively from her wide-brimmed hat and uttering “Why don’t you come up and see us some time?” Markelis said that while the



faculty and instructors loved it, when she polled a group of 14 students, only 3 knew who she was. “They wondered who this old lady was,” Markelis joked. After discussing three other creative, but ultimately unsupportable logos, Markelis described the most successful flyer. The winner was a simple picture of a puppy. Markelis claimed that everyone could relate somehow to the puppy and that dogs are more appealing to consumers than cats, and even sex. Markelis concluded by urging the importance of scrutinizing our visual logos so that we send out the right image and message about our centers.

### Retrospect

Looking back, the presentations we saw and heard in San Francisco were both memorable and eye-opening. We heard testimony from revered center scholars and practitioners that demystified certain presumptions of what it means to tutor, teach, and learn. Who would have thought that Kenneth Bruffee was somewhat of an authoritarian, highly directive teacher, or that there was a time when John Trimbur didn’t know how to teach writing? Or how much fun tutoring programs can be if we pay attention to image and creativity, as in Eggers’ Pirate Supply Storefront to his community tutoring program. Or how in a discipline such as economics, student-centered teaching methods can be employed with style. I left for Seattle full of ideas and ready and willing to apply what we learned. I hope these remembrances offer some useful suggestions to fellow readers as well.

*Steven J. Corbett*  
*University of Washington*  
*Seattle, WA*

## Putting your writing center experience to work

Many students and professionals, as they prepare to enter or change positions in the workforce, find themselves at a loss as to how to put their skills, qualities, and work experience into concise written formats such as resumes and cover letters. Often, the most promising job opportunities appear suddenly and from unexpected sources, so we feel rushed to create or modify and submit our resumes before hiring deadlines expire. In doing so, we slap “writing tutor” under the past work experience section of our resumes and leave it at that. Unfortunately, in leaving our resumes that way, we do ourselves a great disservice. What many of us who do writing center work, particularly student tutors, don’t think about intentionally enough is the range of skills we develop, the personal qualities we foster, and the applicable experience we gain as a result of our participation in writing center work. The broad range of relevant skills writing center work provides are the same skills employers seek, no matter what the profession.

When thinking about writing center experiences and how they might apply to other careers, we tend, too often, to think only of the obvious: editing, publishing, proofreading, marketing, teaching. But when examined in some detail, what we learn as writing center tutors and professionals provides a wealth of experience for nearly any profession. From law enforcement and the legal profession to politics, customer service, technology, and management, employers are looking for employees who can work independently, communicate clearly, think critically, and assess social and professional situations and respond appropriately. Whether we are readily aware of it or not, these are all things we, as

writing center tutors and professionals, do on a regular basis. The key to getting what we have to offer on our resumes and into the interview process in ways that best demonstrate what an asset we will be to potential employers is placing less emphasis on our duties and what we *do*, and focusing more on the skills and qualities we develop as a result of our tutoring experience. In other words, we need to focus on what we *learn* from writing center work and how it relates to the job we seek. What follows is a partial list of suggestions for how those involved in writing center work might present their experiences on a resume.

### Communication

#### *Interpersonal*

- Explaining and demonstrating in concrete terms the abstract concepts of organization, tone, voice, grammar and punctuation
- Communicating effectively with peers of varying ages, personality types and academic abilities
- Communicating clearly with peers about subject material spanning a wide range of academic and professional subjects
- Providing and accepting constructive criticism in a professional manner
- Communicating with faculty and staff as fellow tutors and/or supervisors

#### *Group/Mass*

- Presenting workshops on various aspects of the writing process
- Reading one’s own writing in a public forum
- Presenting and/or teaching material to fellow tutors and classmates

- Promoting the writing center in several different media

### Analytical Skills

- Reading and assessing writing in a wide range of disciplines
- Reading critically for content, style, and grammar
- Assessing a given audience and determining the most effective approach for communication
- Making quick decisions about how to improve student writing
- Prioritizing writing problems quickly and formulating an efficient plan to address them
- Gaining knowledge of resources and determining appropriately when to consult them
- Creating multiple ways of explaining and demonstrating the same concept
- Reflecting upon personal experiences and performance to refine technique

### Administrative

- Keeping accurate and timely records of tutoring sessions
- Recording and analyzing data regarding writing center usage
- Serving as an active member of professional associations, such as the International Writing Center Association
- Promoting writing center use throughout the campus community

### Technological

- Using e-mail and the Internet to provide timely feedback to student writers
- Using Microsoft PowerPoint to demonstrate and present information
- Using Microsoft Excel and various database programs to record writing center data
- Using word processing programs, such as Microsoft Word, to compose and edit

documents and to provide feedback on student writing

### Pedagogical

- Explaining and demonstrating new concepts to peer writers
- Breaking down complex concepts to help writers understand them and then broadening those concepts to help writers see the “big picture”
- Creating support materials, such as handouts on grammar or other writing issues

The tricky part about putting these experiences into words when it’s time to apply for a specific job is that it can be tough, on a moment’s notice, to remember exactly what we learned and how we learned it. Therefore, I offer a few suggestions for how to make the process easier:

- (1) Keep a file, on paper or on your computer, of notes about particularly good tutoring sessions, about workshops you attended or presented, about roles you played in helping to train other tutors or raising awareness of the writing center on campus. These notes will ensure you have a more complete and accurate resume as well as make the process of creating or updating your resume much quicker.
- (2) Take your own advice when it comes to brainstorming, drafting in advance, getting feedback on your draft, revising, and proofreading your resume and cover letter. Don’t become overly confident in your abilities because of your status as a tutor; remember, writing is a process, and we all benefit from having someone else look at our work.
- (3) Brainstorm questions you think potential employers are

likely to ask in an interview. Have in mind, or even in your notes, a list of specific examples you can mention in the interview that demonstrate the skills and qualities you list on your resume. For example, if you are applying for a position as an EMT, firefighter, police officer, or manager, and you list the ability to effectively diffuse emotionally charged situations and communicate with reluctant participants, be prepared to talk about a particular tutoring situation in which you helped a writer who resented being sent to the writing center to see the benefits of receiving tutoring.

Writing center work is, of course, worthwhile and gratifying in and of itself, but we sell ourselves short if we don’t keep in mind how it benefits not only our tutees’ present and future professional lives, but also our own.

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## Writing Fellows

*(continued from page 13)*

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# TUTORS' COLUMN

## ESL-ing

Oh no. Not again. I see her name on the schedule, lay my head on my hands, and pray that she won't show up. I don't want to tutor her because, every time I talk to her, I feel like nothing is getting through. She continues to insist that I fix her writing problems for her. What can I do to help her learn? I don't want to tutor someone who seems to refuse to progress.

At the risk of sounding callous, we confess that this is the way some of us thought when tutoring ESL students, who probably did not realize that they were producing this effect. We sometimes confused an L2 writer's insecurity with an unwillingness to learn. We felt as though ESL students came to us so that we would write their papers for them. We told ourselves that our thirty-minute writing tutorials were too short to allow us to help ESL learners improve their writing. Their problems were huge, and we did not enjoy working with them. But L2 students kept showing up on our doorstep, and we could respond in one of two ways. We could dread each ESL visit and suffer through every appointment, or we could design an approach to the problem. Facing the problem was not easy but was more tolerable than failing to help L2 students progress. So, we decided to move beyond our negative perceptions of "ESL-ing."

As we began working in earnest with L2 students, we noticed that many are shy in manner and uncertain about English. They struggle with sentence structure, punctuation, and verb conjugation. Their meaning may be fairly clear, but the idioms, common speech, cultural differences, and translation of

words interfere with its expression. We found that showing an interest—asking them about their native tongue, the meanings of their words, how to spell them, or how sentences are structured in their language—is the best way to reach these students. For instance, a young Vietnamese man who frequents our Center has told us that verb tenses and plural nouns are contextual, and articles absent, in his native dialect. He developed confidence in his ability to communicate by talking to us about Vietnamese conventions, and, along the way, he came to a better understanding of English grammar. It seems that ESL learners need confidence in their abilities to understand assignments, content, and English writing conventions.

Sometimes, though, confidence and grammar are not huge issues for L2 writers; instead, phrasing and translation stand out as major problems. ESL learners might be unaware of cultural idioms, confused about what phrases are usable in our society, and misinformed about our culture—and their writing reflects those things. Such students sometimes tell us that they write in their native languages with the intent of translating into English after the fact. Most of us empathize. Having been students in foreign language classes, several of us have experimented with this method of approaching coursework, and we know from experience that it just doesn't work. But when we tried to explain our reservations about after-the-fact translation to ESL writers, we sometimes made them feel dumb for trying it. At that point, some of them began to resist our help, and they put up their guard.

So, we asked ourselves: How could we best approach wary L2 students, those who were afraid of asking for help or of being viewed as dumb? We discovered that it's important to put ESL students at ease while letting them know they are going to be responsible for writing their own papers, i.e., putting their own ideas into words. One way we do this is by inviting students to participate in a long-term tutoring relationship with us. We try to remember, "No one can learn to write in half an hour. If we are to offer encouragement and information, that means we need to ask the student to come back to see us over and over again." The record shows that scheduling multiple, sometimes many, sessions with an ESL writer is probably the only way to achieve lasting L2 success.

Okay, let's say that an ESL learner has agreed to participate in long-term tutoring with us, has a paper due a week from Friday, and has written a draft for us to review. We devote the early session to a general reading of the paper and discussion of the student's goals. We check the student's written argument or explanation for logic and forcefulness. The student's grammar might not be touched until a subsequent session, and we keep in mind that the task of going line by line through grammatical errors is sometimes arduous. After making some initial suggestions for improving an essay, we ask L2 writers to go ahead and incorporate the corrections so as to keep the paper from becoming too muddled with further suggestions. This allows L2 students to digest one set of suggestions at each session.

Another thing we do is to encourage our long-term ESL tutees to write about their own cultures. After all, L2 students who have just moved to America often find it difficult to adjust. Take the example of a young woman from Pakistan who regularly visits our Center. She moved to America with courage to learn but little training in English. After writing some failed papers, she came to us discouraged and bitter. We engaged her in a long-term tutoring relationship and pushed her to compose a paper about her homeland. She returned with a paper detailing the dance customs of her country. Although filled with grammatical and spelling errors, the paper was informative and fun to read. The best part was that she was happy and enthusiastic about describing her culture's dance rituals. This woman, who once came to the Center rushed and disinterested in her papers, has changed her negative attitude toward English. She found that, by writing about a subject she knows, she could have fun and her papers would turn out better.

Besides encouraging ESL learners to write about what they know, we tutors also tried the tactic of "acting ignorant" of what they are trying to say. This tactic is faithful to the goal of helping L2 students learn the conventions that make English understandable to a wide audience of readers. Telling an ESL writer, "I don't understand the

point of this part of your paper; please explain it to me," makes that student confront the problem verbally, talk through the confusion, in order to move on. We found that getting ESL writers to talk as much as possible is always good. The more they talk, the better sense we have of what they are trying to say, and the greater facility they gain with the language. For ESL students who find the process difficult due to a lack of basic verbal skills, this tactic encourages them to talk with us about their papers for a while and makes them explain clearly what they are trying to relate. In this way, we get L2 learners to connect mental ideas with the spoken English word and then transfer their best verbal efforts onto the page. This is not always an easy way to go, as we might have to "force" students to face their insecurities and failings multiple times, but it helps them connect thoughts, words, and writing, and learn that the cost of doing so isn't as high as they may have imagined.

We have discovered, then, that working with L2 learners requires some strategic understanding on our part. First, we practice patience. We realize that no magic pill exists to help someone learn a new language. We express an interest in the native tongue of our ESL students. We don't chide them for making literal translations of idiomatic phrases. Instead, we put them at ease, and urge them to participate in long

term tutoring by offering to assist them with their next assignment. We stress their potential for improvement, and remind them that true progress will come only after multiple sessions. Then, we schedule time with them early enough to work through the writing cycle in such a way that there is some advancement for them to notice. We do our best to see that L2 students clearly understand their assignments. Then, we work through the assignment with them verbally, showing encouragement when ideas are properly communicated and gentle correction where required. We avoid overwhelming ESL writers, limiting our suggestions to a manageable number per session. We recommend that they improve their papers by writing about what they know. When they bring an essay draft, we ask them to read it aloud. Verbalization makes it easier to point out phrases that simply don't sound right. And finally, if there just isn't enough time to make solid gains, we refuse to give up. Using these techniques has helped us to change ESL writing sessions from being awkward and unproductive to pleasant and constructive.

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## Writing fellows: An innovative approach to tutoring

When I began my first tutoring session, I was more than a little scared. You see, as a writing fellow at Penn State Berks, tutors work a little differently than Writing Center tutors. I was used to working with one student at a time as writing center tutors do, but our writing fellows work during regular class time with groups of three or four students, encouraging the students to give one another suggestions for

their papers. Writing center tutors ask the writer questions and encourage the writer to give feedback; in that situation, the tutor and writer often talk the same amount of time. In our writing groups, though, the people who talk the most are the group members themselves, formulating suggestions and giving ideas to improve the writer's paper. Our goal is to improve upon the writing skills of each student by having

them work with one another and to help them learn how to revise papers. Being a classroom-based Writing Fellow tutor has been a learning experience for me, and I want to explain the process in hopes that other tutors will implement this helpful strategy in their tutoring sessions.

For the first two weeks of class this fall, all eleven newly selected writing

fellows, including me, met to learn the job and function of the writing fellows. In these classes, we read articles about peer tutoring and discussed what kinds of questions we would ask the students to get them to participate in our discussion. We even enacted two practice writing group situations. In the first situation, our professor played the part of the writing fellow to help us understand what kinds of questions we could ask to facilitate group discussion. In the second situation, our professor stood back, interjecting thoughts when she felt we needed direction but basically letting us take the reins while one person was acting as writing fellow and the others as discussion group members. From this training, we went into the classroom, learning as we worked directly with the students.

As a writing fellow, I work with developmental writing students, using the strategies we learned during our training. The process for our group work is as follows: The writer reads his or her paper to the group while the group follows along, marking problem areas or sections that could use improvement. When the writer has finished, each group member takes a turn pointing out a specific sentence or idea that really supported the writer's argument or added to the paper, then pointing to a specific idea that could be improved.

The key job of the writing fellow is to facilitate conversation. For example, many developmental English students are unwilling to critique another's paper, so the writing fellow needs to encourage the students to talk to each other. In one case, when asked to point out something he really liked in another student's piece, one of my group members said, "I liked the whole thing." I pressed a little, asking if there was something in particular that he really thought was effective, and he changed his statement to, "The introduction was good." This still didn't really help the writer, so I asked what he thought was "good" about the introduction. This question and answer ac-

tually developed into a real conversation—the student I asked about the introduction elaborated on his comment. He began to ask the writer questions about the rest of her piece and how it related to the introduction, and all the group members began to have a conversation about the piece without my direction.

Another part of the writing fellow's job is to try to encourage the group to concentrate on "higher-order concerns" as they respond to each other's papers. As defined by Donald McAndrew and Thomas Reigstad, authors of *Tutoring Writing*, higher-order concerns are ideas, arguments, and clarity of the paper. "Lower-order concerns" are defined as surface issues such as spelling or awkward-sounding sentences (56). According to Karen Spear, students sometimes focus on lower-order concerns because these concerns are safer than higher-order concerns. Therefore, a writing fellow must ask questions about certain paragraphs or sections of the paper, drawing the group members' attention away from the surface errors and into the deeper issues, such as organization and supporting arguments. In my group Lyle, in particular, always focuses on word repetition when giving comments because he feels safe avoiding bigger issues. I try to draw Lyle out by asking him questions about a paragraph, such as "Do you think this paragraph supports Abbie's main argument?" When he answers, I press him to tell me how or to describe the specific focus of the paragraph. I have also asked him, "Is the organization of this paper effective? If not, how would you change it? If so, why is it effective?" I find that, at times, it is difficult to get him to speak on these topics, but through gentle encouragement (and now that he has come to trust the group), he opens up more. As a result, Lyle has discovered that he can offer valuable suggestions to his group members.

Like a writing center tutor, the writing fellow is not the teacher or editor.

writing fellows have to resist simply taking students' papers and editing them, rewording awkward sentences, correcting grammatical errors, and taking over ownership of the papers. Writing fellows help the *group* give each other suggestions and, even then, the suggestions given by the group do not need to be accepted by the writer.

Being a writing fellow is a "two-way street," as Kenneth Bruffee points out in his article "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind.'" He says that students' writing improves with the tutors' help and tutors' work improves as a result of the action of tutoring itself. This is completely true—while I hope the students are learning from each other and me, I know I'm learning from them at the same time. My group members have taught me that not everyone thinks alike, but that each person's ideas have value. They have taught me about topics from being an EMT who deals with death on a daily basis to being a caddy at a golf course. When we read John Updike's short story, "A & P," I was astounded at the depth at which my students approached the reading. They came into that session saying, "I have no idea what this story is about," but left much more confident and with ideas about how to make changes to their papers. Through conversation, my group has helped one another formulate ideas to improve their writing, and I have learned that all ideas are valuable to the writing process.

Our peer groups have helped developmental writing students expand on ideas and improve their writing skills while also helping the tutor have a more open mind to differences in writers' skills. For these reasons, writing center directors and tutors might consider trying this kind of classroom-based group tutoring.

Laura Lawfer  
Penn State Berks  
Reading, PA

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(continued on page 10)

# An open letter to new peer tutors

What do we tell peer tutors as they begin their work in our writing centers? What tone do we wish to set? What foundational principles do we want to impart? The letter that follows is my attempt to capture the essentials that make up the culture of my college's Writing Lab. If you were to write such a letter yourselves, you might see it as an introduction for a tutor training manual or simply as a means of welcoming new tutors to your center or lab. But such a letter does more than merely welcome folks aboard. It gives you an opportunity to articulate clearly some key principles and practices that underline writing center work, such as the need to trust the writer (and be trusted by the writer) and the need to read a paper through holistically before we separate it into its parts.

*(The following letter was drafted during the 2004 Summer Institute for Writing Center Directors and Professionals at Clark University in Worcester, MA. I'd like to thank Nancy Johnson Squair and Janet Swenson, who, as members of my writing group, offered supportive and collegial advice throughout the drafting process.)*

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Thank you for agreeing to join the Writing Lab staff. I believe that you will find the work truly enjoyable and empowering, for even as you enable others by assisting them with their writing, you stand to gain in big ways yourselves: You are likely to acquire greater confidence in your work and in yourself generally, develop a vocabulary with which to talk about writing and thereby become more able to improve your own writing as well as that of others, and know that your actions may have made a positive difference in the life of another.

## The mission of the Writing Lab

The Writing Lab serves all writers, from novice to experienced, from native speakers of English to second language users. We assist writers regardless of the form or purpose of the writing. We serve both the college and the larger community which the college itself serves.

## Fundamental Writing Lab principles

Aside from welcoming you, I wanted to use this letter to outline some basic principles that underlie the work that you will be doing in the Writing Lab. I like to distinguish these principles from actual tutoring practice, which I'll talk about shortly. In a nutshell, these principles support, and perhaps, generate, the acceptable tutoring practice that I hope you will by and large follow (recognizing, however, that every tutoring session is distinctly different from another). Here then is a list of fundamental principles:

- Writing is a form of communication that assumes a reader (even, in the case of a diary or privatized form of writing, if the reader is oneself);
- Writing is both a private and deeply social activity, expressing one's own thoughts but generated and in part shaped by other's words and ideas;
- The reader/writer relationship is built on reciprocal trust, with each assuming a seriousness toward the other and a level of respect from the other;
- Tutors, as serious readers, respect the intention of the writer;

- Writers, as serious communicators, respect the effort of the reader to respond to the written work.

I know that many of these principles appear terribly abstract (you might say, I'm a tutor; let's get to the writing already). But in listing these principles I wanted to assure you that this Writing Lab has certain integrity. It has a detectable wholeness and coherence, with each of its parts (that's you and me) working together for a common purpose. We work in an open and frank environment, in which concerns can be shared safely and productively. In addition, I want to impress upon you that the Writing Lab must maintain a culture of respect if it is to carry out its mission.

## Useful tutoring practices

I also want to assure you that you will not be asked to "tutor by the script" in the Writing Lab. You will not be asked, in other words, to follow one set of practices for all tutoring situations. Rather, I expect you to adjust to each situation and to be sensitive to the intentions (as you discern them) of the writer. Nevertheless, the many tutors who have worked in the Lab have found it useful to follow certain practices in helping writers. What follows is a list of such practices. We will spend a good deal of time talking about, and reflecting upon, these practices, so please don't worry if they seem rather overwhelming early on.

- Reading the instructions thoroughly, interpreting and reviewing the assignment, and asking students to explain what the assignment calls for and what they want to get out of the tutoring session

- Asking students to read their paper aloud, or have their paper read aloud, in order to give students a chance to gain perspective on their writing
- Having students read their papers in their entirety before you comment on them
- Discussing teacher's comments, if any, on the writing
- Beginning by talking about positive qualities in the writing
- Identifying and communicating the nature of the writing issue(s), taking care to avoid tackling everything at once (in the case of a great many issues) but rather isolating patterns of error and model appropriate solutions
- Posing open-ended questions so as to invite active student engagement during the session
- Encouraging students to begin writing (or rewriting) during the session

### Reading Holistically

Under certain circumstances, you may as a tutor feel tempted to respond to a paper as you read it (or as the writer reads it), rather than waiting until the end before responding. I have found it very useful to withhold expressing judgments until I've read the entire work. Why? Some writers need time and space to discover their meaning; indeed, some writers intentionally withhold from the reader what their intentions are. Expressing premature judgment runs the risk of damaging the trust that I mention above and that forms the cornerstone of the tutor/writing relationship. Hear the writer out.

### Are You an Expert?

I know that as a peer tutor you may feel conflicted about your position. Are you a student, with much to learn

about writing? Or are you somehow separate from the students who come to seek your help, having achieved an expertise when evaluating writing? I have no doubt that you have much to offer student writers based on your experience and insights. And certainly I would want you to appear confident when student writers come to seek your help. But I also want to assure you that on no occasion am I expecting you to know everything about tutoring or about assessing writing, nor do I want you to send writers the message that you have all knowledge at your command—because in fact none of us does. If, during certain tutoring sessions, you are unable to answer a writer's questions or if you are having difficulty assessing a piece of writing, please be honest with the writer and feel free to seek the help of others in the Lab or consult the various handbooks available in the Lab's library. There is no shame admitting the limits of one's knowledge. In fact, the truly knowledgeable are the first to acknowledge their own limitations (if I sound like a teacher here, forgive me, but I really believe it).

### The Value of Your Work

I'd like to suggest that your work in the Writing Lab will have remarkable value both for yourself and for others. I've tutored in the Lab for over a decade now. I can say without hesitation that I have found the experience among the most rewarding that I've had professionally. Why? I believe that the relationship between writer and tutor is profoundly meaningful. If you think about it, what could be more powerfully generous than the act of one person listening to and reading attentively (without distraction, without multi-tasking) the writing of another—someone whom the tutor is likely not to know? What could be more poignant than a tutor feeling moved (in some cases, almost to tears—it's happened to me) by the words of another? I know that in staff meetings and in workshops, you are likely to hear a lot about reading critically, asking the

right questions in order to evaluate a piece of work and to point the writer in the proper direction for improvement. But tutors sometimes need to be led by their hearts as well (we know language can lead us in that way). I guess what I'm trying to say is this: tutoring brings all of you into play, heart and head. And it leads you to trust, and be trusted by, others. In a time when too much distrust defines our world, this work, this vocation (as we used to call it—a calling and a dedication of a self to task), represents one way to repair the world. In Judaic tradition—the tradition in which I was raised—we call this effort (in Hebrew) “tikkun olam,” to heal the world. I wish you all the best on this journey of discovery and renewal.

*Gratefully,  
Howard Tinberg  
Bristol Community College  
Fall River, MA*

## IWCA Summer Institute for Writing Center Directors and Professionals

As of April 15 there were still some slots left for the IWCA Summer Institute for Writing Center Directors and Professionals. If you would like more information, visit the Web site: <<http://www.writing.ku.edu/SI05/>>.

## *Calendar for Writing Centers Associations*

June 16-19, 2005: European Writing Centers Association, in Halkidiki, Greece.

**Contact:** Conference Web site: <<http://ewca.sabanciuniv.edu/ewca2005/>>.

October 19-23, 2005: International Writing Centers Association, in Minneapolis, MN.

**Contact:** Frankie Condon, e-mail: [fvcondon@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:fvcondon@stcloudstate.edu). Conference Web site: <<http://writingcenters.org/2005/index.html>>.

## *European Writing Centers Association—Date Change*

Please note the change of date for the European Writing Centers Association conference. It was

originally scheduled for June 10-12, 2005. The conference date has been changed to June 16-19.

## *East Central WCA Awards*

The East Central Writing Centers Association (ECWCA) announced its annual awards on March 30. Selected for outstanding tutor was Korinne Milks for Central Michigan University. The outstanding leader award went to Meghan Monroe also of Central Michigan

University and to Scott Peters of Purdue University. The outstanding tutor award is given for innovative and quality tutoring, and the outstanding leader award is based on overall excellence in performance in various administrative functions. Award recipients receive a certificate, a cash reward, and a waiver to the upcoming ECWCA conference.

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**THE WRITING LAB**  
NEWSLETTER

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