For those of us planning our spring agenda of meetings to attend, the calendar of writing lab conferences, on page 9, should be helpful. Since I've been notified that several other regional groups may be starting up, the calendar will be expanded as I receive information. Any notices or announcements that get to me by the first of any month can be included in the next month's issue (Feb. 1 for the March issue, and so on).

Please continue to send your announcements, articles, reviews, queries, names of new members, and donations of $5/year (in checks made payable to Purdue University, but sent to me) to:

Muriel Harris, editor
WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER
Dept. of English
Purdue University
West Lafayette, Ind. 47907

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UT AUSTIN FRESHMAN LAB: BIG AS TEXAS

5481. That's the number of potential customers for the University of Texas at Austin's Writing Lab. Geared specifically for freshmen, the lab reinforces the one-year freshman composition sequence by supplying the supervised practice time and/or supplementary material which the traditional classroom cannot. To do this, UT's lab utilizes the standard lab format: the student may confer privately with a lab tutor or work independently on a specific concept. However, making these services available to a student body with the size and diversity of UT's poses certain problems.

The first and, in a way, most important problem is merely getting the word out to each semester's 5000-plus freshmen. This contact is especially crucial in the fall, since everything is new to incoming freshmen who often feel lost amongst their 43,000-plus colleagues. To inform freshmen as a whole, the lab generally relies on mimeographed handouts made available to instructors for classroom distribution. These handouts summarize pertinent information: services, hours, location. After this initial contact, many students come on their own; others need a firmer shove to head them in the direction of the lab--especially those students who, ironically, have the most to gain. Therefore, the lab makes a special attempt to recruit two groups who are perhaps in most need of its services.

The largest group, which numbered 375 in fall, 1980, consists of those incoming freshmen who make lower than 350 (out of 800) on the required English Composition Test. At the beginning of each semester, registration workers note the ECT score of each registering freshman and give special handouts on the lab to those scoring below the cutoff. Workers also stamp "Lab Recommended" on the student's course card. In addition, the lab sends each writing instructor a list of those students in his class who scored below 350 on the ECT. These names are gleaned from a master computer list and distributed during the first week of class. The second group which is specially contacted consists of those students who are admitted to UT on a provisional basis. During the spring and summer sessions, UT provisionally admits Texas residents who normally would not meet the standard admissions criteria. The bulk of these students registers for the two six-week sessions held in the summer. The past year, 1981, the lab was open for the first time and heavily attended for both sessions. To insure maximum participation, members of the staff visited each instructor personally--a feat not possible during the fall and
spring semesters when over 200 teachers are involved in teaching composition.

Once in the lab, students are screened to determine what kind of help they need. Occasionally, a student is aware of just what he needs or has been told what to cover by his teacher. More often though, the staff must use one, or even a combination, of the tools available in the lab. The two most frequently used are a grammar/mechanics diagnostic test based on the Gorrell/Laird format of 100 multiple-choice questions, and a paragraph skills test devised by Dr. David A. McMurray, the lab's director. Based on the results of these tests, the staff recommends a program of work to fit the student's particular needs. In general, these two tests are given to students who have volunteered or have been assigned to attend the lab for the whole semester. In other cases, graded papers handed back to the student serve as diagnostic tools, illustrating both his strengths and weaknesses. But no matter how long or short the recommended program of work, the staff always encourages students to deviate from the prescribed order or content if the need arises. The goal is to help students quickly and efficiently master whatever seems most pressing, rather than to lock them into some rigid format.

Approximately 40 percent of the lab users confer with a tutor on pre-writing or actual composing techniques. The rest works independently on polishing basic writing skills. Judging by our staff's knowledge of other labs, UT's approach to the one-on-one tutoring sessions is fairly common; however, due to the potentially large number of customers, the lab utilizes a four-part process that allows a student to work efficiently and independently on improving his basic skills. Students take a ten-minute pre-test (really just a quiz) over any one of a variety of concepts, read some background, practice on a worksheet, and then take a ten-minute post-test which measures their gain. For most students, these steps take about one hour to complete. Having students take pre-tests over concepts with which they are having difficulty has two distinct advantages. 1.) The pre-test motivates the students to learn since a low score sparks a challenge to do better on the post-test, while a high score goads them to "get them all right." 2.) The pre-test thus gives direction to the reading which follows in that students are more prone to take note of what they missed and read specifically to unearth the reason why.

The actual wording of the pre-/post-tests and worksheets encourages efficient learning. Each of the three parts avoids an open-ended format which calls for students to fabricate their own material on the spur of the moment, for example, topics or complete sentences. Instead, the units devised by the lab staff restrict the number of answers available by using identification, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank. This method accomplishes two things: 1.) Students can quickly evaluate their own answers (i.e., grade), thus allowing them to work as quickly or as slowly as they wish. 2.) Their efforts go into the act of recognizing and understanding, rather than composing. This focus helps eliminate the frustration of trying to compose in a void and also illustrates a major assumption underlying the lab's approach: students need practice time on concepts before they can readily make use of them in their own writing. Topics covered in this manner include the old stand-bys of grammar and mechanics, along with more innovative units on various pre-writing and paragraph/essay-level aspects. Some of the most popular include units on structuring introductions, outlining, recognizing/evaluating topic and body sentences, narrowing a topic, formulating a thesis sentence. In completing these units, students are entirely on their own, thus freeing the staff to confer with other students on revising rough drafts, clarifying assignments, or interpreting remarks on graded papers--tasks which obviously do not lend themselves to a testing format. Since the staff is relatively small, usually only six members with two or three manning the lab at any one time, this freeing of staff time is crucial if we are to cope successfully with the rather large tutor-student ratio. Thus, the emphasis on independence, especially through the use of student-graded, four-part format covering common topics, allows UT's Writing Lab to operate at a maximum efficiency with a minimum of workers.

The final success of the lab, though, depends on the cooperation of both students and writing instructors. Many students are motivated enough to seek out the lab on their own after hearing of its availability. However, just as many, if not more, need more reinforcement. Since the lab is strictly voluntary and no formal credit hours are
given, the staff relies heavily on the cooperation of teachers to steer customers its way. One of the most effective ways teachers encourage students to attend is to incorporate their extra work into their semester grade in some way. Since the lab's set-up, i.e., pre-/post-test, lends itself to numerical evaluation, many instructors choose to use the average of each student's Lab scores, for example, to replace a low essay grade, or to supplement daily quiz grades, or to take the place of their own grammar units. The method chosen is strictly up to the instructor, since he is the one responsible for the student's final grade. The lab does strongly recommend that instructors give at least token acknowledgment of their students' extra efforts, since students are less likely to feel that their time is being "wasted" and thus will spend more time in the lab. In the past, students have worked intensely and diligently for as little as five percent extra-credit. Of course, not all instructors give credit for lab work on the grounds that the student should be grateful rather than rewarded for gaining much needed skills.

The lab at the University of Texas maintains close contact with writing instructors to inform them of their students' progress and to facilitate record-keeping. After each visit by a student, a staff member fills out a short form which identifies the name of the unit and gives pre-/post-test scores or which summarizes briefly, usually in a sentence or two, the gist of the tutoring session. In addition, the lab keeps a folder for each student which includes his completed worksheets/quizzes and a list of grades for each unit covered. These folders are kept until the end of the following semester in case of grade challenges or discrepancies. The actual location of the lab makes this and additional contact with the faculty relatively easy. The lab occupies a large room in the same building which houses the English Department mailroom and most of the English faculty offices, facilitating mailings and personal visits on the part of both faculty and lab staff.

In conclusion, responding to the needs of a faculty numbering in the hundreds and a student body numbering in the thousands obviously calls for ingenuity and resourcefulness on the part of the staff. As mentioned before, the staff is fairly small; the director is a member of the English Department faculty while the other workers are graduate assistants who have taught or are currently teaching composition. Many of these graduate assistants have opted for split assignments, serving both in the lab and in the classroom during the same semester. This familiarity with the freshman composition sequence, texts, and goals helps the tutors more effectively deal with student conferences on essay assignments. In addition to working directly with students, the director and assistant director generate the bulk of the lab's teaching materials, always keeping in mind the potentially large tutor/tuttee ratio. To meet the increasing demand, new units under development include ones on combining sentences, analyzing literature (point of view, character, figurative language), applying logic (induction, deduction). Plans are also underway to make further use of the computer-based instruction available in the lab which now includes only two programs: Dr. Susan Wittig's modules on sentence combining and Dr. Hugh Burns' module on invention. However, we hope to develop or adapt a more extensive repertoire covering other composition skills. These new materials, coupled with what's already available, will help the University of Texas at Austin's Writing Lab contend with the increasing use by an already large and diverse body of students.

M. Sue Campman
University of Texas

MATERIALS EXCHANGE TABLE AT 1983 CCC

A materials display and exchange table will again be part of the Special Session on Writing Labs at CCC to be held in Detroit, March 17-19. In the past, this table has been an invaluable addition, enabling participants from all over the United States to share ideas and materials. These materials have included everything from bookmarks and brochures letting students know a writing center is available to descriptions of services provided, guides for tutoring, and actual materials used within the writing labs. Any materials you would like to share with other colleagues would be welcomed. As chair of the session, Joyce Kinkead is arranging the program so there will be a fifteen-minute
1. Donors of display materials are to fill out the accompanying forms. This form should be sent to me as soon as possible so that I can plan for adequate space.

2. Donors are to bring the materials in them to Detroit and turn them over to the convention before the session begins. I will be on duty during this period, during our fifteen-minute intermission, and approximately fifteen minutes following the conclusion of the session.

3. Materials to be exchanged are to be in manila folders, identified by school and individual, and marked "Display Only." Do not remove or mark. A legal pad with school, individual identification, and the cost of return postage should be included.

4. Materials are to be exchanged during our fifteen-minute intermission, and approximately fifteen minutes following the conclusion of the session.

5. Donors will be responsible for picking up their folders during the fifteen minutes following the session.

Those of you who would like to participate in the materials exchange but who will not be able to attend the session are requested to contact me at your earliest convenience. If you have any other questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Jan Ugan
20452 Seneca Avenue
Trenton, MI 48183

[Technology Page]

[Technology Page]
realize that with budget cutbacks and travel limitations not everyone who would like to will be able to attend CCC's and participate in the materials exchange. If you are in this position and have particular information in mind you would like sent to you, let me know before the convention. I will then check the information available and add your name to the list provided if what you want is part of the exchange.

If you have any materials at all you think others would also find useful, please plan to share them by participating in the materials exchange table. Any questions or suggestions you might have please direct to Jan Ugan, Allan Hancock College, Santa Maria, CA 93454.

WRITING LABS WITHIN SKILLS PROGRAMS

Though my own experience is in a general skills program with strong emphasis on writing at a two-year campus with 2,200 students, I believe that organizing a skills program around a writing lab could have several advantages even for a much larger campus.

Our Writing Lab began six years ago with a half-time director, a half-time assistant/tutor with an A.B. in English, and student tutors. At the same time a reading program began in an entirely different location with a half-time reading specialist. Both were open limited hours, served small numbers of students, and were exclusively remedial. By combining them, we were able to keep the skills center, now called the Learning Lab, open all day and two evenings with no increase in staff. This is important because students do not use a skills center with limited hours.

During that first semester as a combined program, we took over administration of a tutoring program funded by student government. As a result, all programs to assist students in academic skills were together, which is convenient for students and faculty. The student who wants a tutor in English and math and wants to take a diagnostic reading test does not have to find these three services in different areas of the campus; he makes one appointment with the Learning Lab and talks to appropriate staff members.

As the campus increased its concern for minority/disadvantaged students, funds were added to the Learning Lab budget for recruiting and counseling minority students. Since minority/disadvantaged programs rely heavily on tutorial services, it is appropriate to combine the minority and tutoring programs. When the staff included part-time specialists in writing, reading, math, and counseling, the administration saw the need for a half-time secretary. Thus, if funds for basic skills and for minority/disadvantaged programs are limited, combining services in one skills center allows for one viable office with convenient hours, a variety of professional staff, student tutors in many academic areas, and adequate secretarial assistance.

Staff members complement each other in several ways. The student who needs writing help probably should at least be tested in reading, if not actually enrolled in a program in vocabulary, spelling, or reading comprehension. The student who requests a psychology tutor may actually have a reading problem rather than a psychology problem. A sociology tutor should have some orientation in study skills from the reading specialist before working with students.

The Learning Lab now serves about 500 students per semester though only about 200 are receiving intensive, sustained assistance. Even so, it is exceptional for a skills program to reach nearly one-fourth of the total student body. While many students are remedial, the Lab is also expanding in the sense that students at all levels seek assistance from basic math to calculus, for example.

Throughout the years that the Lab has developed, the direction has been toward long-term, organized programs rather than occasional visits to edit a specific theme or solve one math problem. For instance, a student with poor writing skills has a weekly appointment with a writing tutor throughout the semester. A student seeking a sociology tutor takes a reading test and a study skills attitudinal survey before being tutored and then works regularly with a tutor throughout the semester.

The Lab owes much of its success in at-
tracting students to widespread faculty endorsement. While students are not required by faculty to visit the Lab, they are certainly encouraged. Sometimes faculty members bring a student in and introduce her to a Lab staff member. Other faculty members give back the first quiz with directions to some students that they should go to the Lab. In addition, all English faculty who teach the first level composition course allow the reading specialist to test their students in one class period and return in the next to interpret test results. Faculty, as well as students, are given test results and the approximately 20% of those tested who have remedial reading levels are strongly urged to seek help. As a result, for the first time this fall, Lab courses including one in remedial writing, one in reading comprehension, and one in study skills, are filled to capacity, and during most of the day tutors are seeing a different student in each half-hour time slot available.

Also for the first time, this year the Lab staff took over the interviewing of all poorly prepared freshmen so that from the outset they would know about the Lab and its staff and so that they would select appropriate courses for their initial semester, including Lab courses.

As funds for higher education become more and more limited, our Lab will face the same pressure to cut back as are other writing labs across the country. However, because it serves so many and works with faculty in such a large number of departments, we will have a fighting chance to maintain its program.

Frederick K. Moss
University of Wisconsin-Waukesha

MIDWEST WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

The Midwest Writing Centers Association announces the first Midwest Writing Centers Association Conference, to be held Saturday, April 30, 1983, at the University of Missouri at Columbia. The theme of the conference will be "The Challenge of Diversity."

We are inviting proposals for papers which will fit into either a one-hour workshop format or a twenty-minute individual presentation followed by a ten-minute question and answer period. Although we welcome proposals dealing with any of the standard concerns of writing centers, topics of particular interest include:

- the professional status of writing lab personnel
- the role of computers in teaching writing
- tutor training
- the use of the writing lab approach in the classroom
- programs for writing across the curriculum
- effective diagnosis of writing problems

All papers presented at the conference will be published in the Conference Proceedings. The presentations, however, should not be merely readings of papers. Instead, presenters are encouraged to give informal talks focusing on practical suggestions.

Writing centers and labs are also invited to share instructional materials, descriptions of their programs, or other items of interest at the Materials Exchange Table.

The conference will be co-hosted by the University of Missouri at Columbia and Central Methodist College at Fayette.

One-page proposals (or completed papers) should be submitted no later than February 15, 1983. Please send all proposals and requests for further information to:

Melody Daily, Director
Writing Lab
Central Methodist College
Fayette, Missouri 65248
(816) 248-3391 ext. 328/338

A READER ASKS...

We are interested in expanding the services of our peer tutoring lab to offer help in reading. Could this be a topic for a future issue of the WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER?

Judith A. Goodwin
Grand View College
CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

Writing in the Humanities
Sponsored by:
National Endowment for the Humanities
Beaver College
University of Pennsylvania
National Council of Writing
Program Administrators
Delaware Valley Writing Council
JUNE 17-19, 1983
University City Hilton
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MAJOR SPEAKERS:
.Kenneth A. Bruffee
.Edward P. J. Corbett
.James L. Kinneavy
.Donald A. McQuade
.Harriet W. Sheridan
.Nancy I. Sommers
.Harvey S. Wiener
.Richard E. Young

Theme: "Only Connect"

The purpose of the conference is to share ideas about writing across the curriculum. In the last several years, many institutions have rediscovered an emphasis on writing as a way to connect the disciplines. This meeting will provide a focal point for theoretical and practical developments in the uses of writing to enhance liberal learning. We invite administrators and instructors from a variety of disciplines at all educational levels to explore writing as a means of connection.

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION:
Papers and Workshops
Please send a one-page proposal by February 1, 1983. Include a title, rationale, and synopsis of your presentation. Address proposals and inquiries to:

Elaine P. Maimon
Conference Director
Writing in the Humanities
Beaver College
Glenside, PA 19038
215-884-3500, X320, 387

Supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities

For those of us attempting to enter the bewildering new world of computers, it is a major problem to locate sources for educational software, to preview materials before a purchase, to find informative catalogs--even to make contact with responsible publishers who will respond to our requests for information. Perhaps we can help each other by recommending materials, catalogs, and so on. For example, if you are looking for books, courseware, and software on computer literacy and/or BASIC programming, you may want to send for a catalog from:
Sterling Swift Publishing Co.
1600 Fortview Rd.
Austin, TX 78704

For Apple users, the Apple II edition of their 1982 Educational Software Directory is a 354 pp. paperback ($14.95), and they sell a handy little circular guide to Apple programming, the "Dial-a-Command" ($9.95) that can be kept next to the computer.

If you have suggestions for materials or catalogs to send for (or to avoid), let us know.

The Texas Association of Writing Center Directors

An Affiliate Organization of the Conference of College Teachers of English (CCTE)

The Texas Association of Writing Center Directors will hold its initial meeting in Waco, Texas, March 3-5, 1983. Meeting in conjunction with CCTE, the association will have a brief business meeting and a program of its own in addition to the general program provided by the conference. The meetings will be held on the Baylor University campus, and the conference hotel will be the Sheraton Inn in Waco. In order to receive information and registration forms for the convention, one must join CCTE before January 15, 1983. Dues ($5.00, payable by personal check to CCTE) may be sent to Keith C. Odom, Executive Secretary of CCTE, Texas Christian University, Box 32872, Ft. Worth, Texas 76129. Those who do not join CCTE in advance may still attend the convention, paying registration and membership fees at that time.

For further information contact Jeanette Harris, Department of English, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409 (Telephone: 806/742-2509).
A READER ASKS...

We are operating a lab as part of a year long Reading/English Course. We have been doing that for four years. However, we are interested in hearing about other programs who are doing this also.

Arlene C. Stewart
Special Services
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, NC 28723

NON-CREDIT STUDENTS IN THE WRITING LAB

Students at St. Petersburg Junior College can make use of the Alternate Instruction Center's Writing Lab in one of two ways: they can take individualized audio-tutorial courses for credit, or they can choose to work in the Lab on a non-credit basis. For the former group, the necessity of attending a minimum number of hours per week and taking tests simplifies the staff's job of keeping records. On the other hand, the non-credit students, those either self-referred or referred by a classroom instructor, form a class somewhat more difficult to keep track of. They make appointments to use the lab but are under no necessity to appear; they are not following a regimented course procedure; and they do not take conventional tests, so no grades are recorded for them.

Although the Lab's primary duty to the non-credit student is to assist him in improving his writing skills, there are also reasons for being concerned with the task of keeping track of these students. One involves the bureaucratic imperative of maintaining records of the number of people utilizing the Lab's facilities and studying the best, most efficient way to set up the Lab. In addition, those classroom instructors referring individuals wish to know if their students are indeed attending and what work they are accomplishing. And most important, the institution of systematized procedures benefits the student; he is assured of continuity of instruction, feedback to his instructor, and periodic review of his progress. To ensure that these goals are met, the Lab's staff--instructors, technicians, and student tutors--have devised a procedure which has proved effective but not so obtrusive as to be burdensome.

The largest number of non-credit students are referred by their composition instructors. These students bring with them a sample of their writing and a referral form filled out by the instructor. Comments describe the student's writing weaknesses and often suggest methods for proceeding. In an initial conference, the Lab instructor and the client discuss the student's problem areas and possible means of correcting them. Self-referred non-credit students may be asked to take a diagnostic test or do a diagnostic writing exercise, although, through experience, we have found that loading students down with diagnostic material on their first visit can be a discouraging factor. In the absence of a writing sample or a specific referral, we start the client working on his first visit. During one of his early return visits, he can be asked to do his diagnostic work; by this time he feels sufficiently comfortable in the Lab setting so that the test or writing exercise is not seen as intimidating.

Files are maintained for each student with any referral or diagnostic material retained here together with the instructor's prescription. Some of the client's work is kept in the file; however, we encourage clients to take any material which they will find useful--handouts, notes, etc.--but we keep exercises or paragraphs which demonstrate his progress. When a tutor works with an individual, the tutor makes a short note in the folder explaining what has been accomplished. The maintenance of a folder facilitates the on-going work in three ways: by reading the prescription and notes from previous visits, each tutor is quickly able to carry on with the program; the instructor, periodically reviewing the files, can check on the student's progress, revising his original prescription if necessary; and the Lab staff is presented with a record of the student's work which can eventually be passed on to the classroom instructor.

Some non-credit students, particularly those with deficiencies in spelling and vocabulary, find that they wish to work with the cassette course material used by credit students. These clients proceed on their own, asking for assistance when needed and taking unit
tests to measure their own advancement. Since they might not be seen by a staff member on each visit, they are asked to sign-in and supply a very brief description of the work completed. These sheets are retained, and once a week the students' files are brought up-to-date.

Also on a weekly basis, lists of non-credit students working in the Lab are distributed to the English faculty. These lists supply them with the information to process as they desire, perhaps encouraging a no-show to return to the Lab or reinforcing a student who has been working industriously. Descriptions of the work done on each visit are supplied on the lists; the classroom instructor might then wish to contact the Lab personnel to shift the focus of the tutoring.

When, in reviewing the files, the Lab instructor feels that an appreciable amount of advancement has been made, she fills out the referral form and returns it to the classroom instructor. This form contains a detailed description of the work covered and comments on the client's overall achievement. Attached is any material, writing samples, tests, etc., which demonstrates the student's progress.

Julie Nieves
St. Petersburg Jr. College

GRAMMAR HOTLINE DIRECTOR

For a copy of the 1982 Grammar Hotline Directory, contact Donna Friedman, Writing Center, Tidewater Community College, 1700 College Crescent, Virginia Beach, VA 23456 (804-427-3070).

The Writing Instructor announces a special Issue. This Issue, Basic Writing and the Profession, deals with composition from political, administrative and pedagogical viewpoints. Articles by James Sledd and Andrea Lunsford are featured. Winter '82 single issue: $3.00; yearly subscription: $8.00. The Writing Instructor c/o Freshman Writing Program, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-1291

CALENDAR OF WRITING LAB CONFERENCES

Feb. 4-5: Southeastern Writing Centers Conference
Place: University of South Carolina
Columbia, S.C.
Contact: Thomas Waldrep
Dept. of English
University of South Carolina
Columbia, S.C. 29208

March 3-5: Texas Association of Writing Center Directors
Place: Baylor University
Waco, Texas
Contact: Jeanette Harris
Dept. of English
Texas Tech Univ.
Lubbock, TX 79404
(806-742-2509)

March 18: CCCC-Special Interest Session for Writing Lab Directors
Place: Detroit
Contact: Joyce Kinkead
Dept. of English
Utah State Univ.
Logan, Utah 84322

April 30: Midwest Writing Centers Association Conference
Place: U. of Missouri, Columbia, Mo.
Contact: Melody Daily
Writing Lab
Central Methodist College
Fayette, Mo. 65248
(816-248-3391 ext. 328/338)

May 6: Fifth Annual Writing Centers Association Conference
Place: Purdue University
West Lafayette, Ind.
Contact: Muriel Harris
Dept. of English
Purdue University
West Lafayette, Ind. 47907
(317-494-3723)
YOUR ALLUSIONS,
MR. ELIOT,
ARE JUST A LITTLE
OBSCURE.