Preparing Faculty, Professionalizing Fellows: Keys to Success with Undergraduate Writing Fellows in WAC

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SINCE THEIR BEGINNINGS in the late 1970s and early 1980s at Carleton College and Brown University (Haring-Smith; Severino and Trachsel, "Starting"; Soven, "Curriculum-Based and WAC"), Undergraduate Writing Fellows have become increasingly common and featured characters in comprehensive WAC programs. And in the past 15 years, WAC Fellows programs have spread beyond liberal arts colleges and private universities, taking root in larger public comprehensive and research universities and in community colleges as well. Writing Fellows programs have achieved this kind of success because they help integrate some best practices of writing instruction into writing-intensive courses across the curriculum. They do so by tapping into the talents of carefully selected and trained undergraduate students (Fellows) to help other students with papers and to improve the quality of writing instruction across the curriculum. Built on process models and principles of collaborative learning, Writing Fellows programs stretch out the writing process by building in cycles of drafts, conferences, and revisions in courses where otherwise such a process might not be possible, and through the dialogue between Fellows and faculty, they help faculty reflect critically on their own practices in designing writing assignments, in coaching students through the process, and in evaluating student writing.The instructors in these courses are at many stages of their teaching careers, ranging from lecturers to full professors.

Within the modest but steadily growing literature about Writing Fellows, there is no shortage of publications about the philosophy informing the model and the steps involved in implementing it (Bazerman, Little, Bethel, Chavkin, Fouquette, and Garufis 110; Haring-Smith; Leahy, "When"; Mullin, Schorn, Turner, Hertz, Davidson, and Baca; Mullin and Schorn; Severino and Trachsel; Soven; Spigelman and Grobman, "Hybrid";

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Zawacki). This literature demonstrates persuasively that Writing Fellows energize and enrich WAC and WID initiatives. Fellows give tangible help to faculty who are willing to do the hard work of integrating writing into their teaching in enlightened ways. The Writing Fellows model and the interaction between WFs and faculty can influence faculty attitudes and practices (Corroy; Mullin, Schorn, Turner, Hertz, Davidson, and Baca; Soven, "Curriculum-Based and WAC"). And the work that Fellows do within writing-intensive classes across the disciplines offers valuable research opportunities, for Fellows and scholars alike (see, for example, Gladstein; Lutes; Mullin, Schorn, Turner, Hertz, Davidson, and Baca; O'Leary; Severino and Trachsel, "Theories"). Because of these benefits, Writing Fellows programs have now become, we would argue, essential components of comprehensive WAC programs.

At the same time, however, some of the Writing Fellows literature also makes it clear that real challenges exist, especially in finding the right faculty to work with Fellows. That's actually putting it mildly. In fact, the narratives of failed partnerships between faculty and Fellows (see, for example, Leahy; Mattison; Zawacki) can send shivers up the spines of WAC and writing center directors contemplating starting a new Fellows program. After reading widely about Writing Fellows and consulting with many directors of Fellows programs, a colleague from Lansing Community College, for example, who's currently in the process of launching a new Writing Fellows program, concluded: "Most of the significant problems I have heard about and read about did seem to involve faculty in some way–faculty 'abusing' the Writing Fellows (intentionally or unintentionally), faculty not understanding what was required of THEM in the relationship, faculty saying things to the class that were simply untrue about what the Writing Fellow could and could not do, and faculty thinking of the Writing Fellow as a teaching assistant, no matter how hard the director of the program tried to dissuade them of this notion" (Reglin). Within the Writing Fellows literature, then, there's a gap between the impressive potential that Fellows have to be agents of change in WAC and the cautionary tales from the complex realities of Fellows actually working with faculty and student-writers. Where we see most of the challenges arising is right there, where Fellows and faculty meet.

The simple description of Fellows programs—that we select and educate Fellows and pair them with faculty and students in writing-intensive courses—actually belies the complexity involved. To succeed, this Writing Fellows model demands quite a complex teaching collaboration between faculty and Fellows. How, after all, can undergraduate Fellows motivate students to care about their writing, persuade student-writers to work collaboratively with peers outside of class, cross all sorts of disciplinary boundaries, earn trust and acceptance by faculty as partners in teaching, satisfy understandable faculty desires

for stronger writing from students, earn strong evaluations from appropriately critical faculty, and convince experienced faculty to examine and even change their pedagogical priorities and practices? None of these tasks would be easy for a course instructor or a WAC professional to accomplish (Jablonski). But they're especially challenging for undergraduate students to do working collaboratively with faculty, though they have the potential to enact interdisciplinary collaborations in productive ways (Haviland et al.). In this article, we hope to begin to fill what we perceive to be a gap in the Writing Fellows literature by delving deeply into two of the most critical parts of setting up a Writing Fellows program: (1) recruiting and preparing faculty to work collaboratively with Fellows and (2) rigorously preparing Fellows to help them to have meaningful collaborations with faculty. As we explore these challenges, we'll offer suggestions for making these relationships succeed.

Selecting and Preparing Faculty to Work with Writing Fellows

Because this teaching collaboration is so complex, we select faculty for our Writing Fellows program just as we select undergraduate Fellows—very carefully. Recruiting, screening, and preparing faculty are time-consuming and delicate tasks that must be done again every year as the program works with new faculty and new Fellows. Even though our program is now well established (it began in 1997) and well respected, we've found that on a large campus like ours—where faculty have too much to do, where they constantly receive too many communications, where they rotate in and out of undergraduate teaching, and where they regularly go on research leave or leave altogether for another university—we have to continue to publicize and recruit for the program, and we have to be always on the lookout for faculty who would be a good match for the program. We don't quite sell door to door, but we're always selling the program, always recruiting. Each semester, we send emails to all faculty, as well as specifically to faculty who are teaching or who have taught writing-intensive courses, introducing the program and inviting faculty to consider working with Fellows (see Appendix A for a sample recruiting memo to faculty). In orientations for new faculty and in faculty teaching institutes, we introduce the Fellows program. And in WAC workshops and consultations and in our writing center outreach with faculty across campus, we're always listening carefully as faculty talk about the writing components of their courses and about their teaching generally, identifying and recruiting faculty whose courses might be a good match for the Fellows program. As we recruit faculty, we're eager to form effective partnerships and to learn with and from colleagues.

The literature and our experience suggest that when choosing faculty to work with Writing Fellows, we should look for colleagues who demonstrate that they are:

- committed to undergraduate teaching and writing, and especially to thinking carefully about writing instruction (rather than just assigning writing in their course)
- willing to collaborate with Fellows as teaching partners
- careful listeners and patient as we explain the program, its philosophy, logistics and challenges
- flexible, willing to experiment with teaching and to work with our Writing Fellows model
- open to building process and revision into paper assignments
- willing to sell the process of working with Fellows to student-writers, signaling what a great opportunity it is and that they expect students to work seriously with the Fellows and to do substantial revisions

We begin to glean this information ourselves during a meeting we insist on having in person with faculty who express interest in working with Fellows. We actually have multiple goals for this meeting, which usually lasts half an hour. As we listen to faculty talk about the course and their approach to the writing assignments, we're thinking about whether this course is a good match for our Writing Fellows model and whether we have confidence that this will be a successful placement for Fellows. At the same time, we want to describe the program in enough depth so that the professor can make an informed choice about working with Fellows. We're also aiming to convey the ethos of the program—its philosophy, its carefully designed model, its pedagogy of drafts and comments and conferences and revision, its deep respect for the potential of undergraduates as peer mentors, its collaborative approach, its deep respect for the student-writers in the course, and its deep respect for and desire to support faculty. We focus our conversation by using a brief list of nine key points about working with Fellows, a list that we explicitly review together during our meeting. (See Appendix B for that list.)

During some of these conversations, it's evident that faculty members and courses are great matches for the program, which many are, and we eagerly agree to have Fellows work with them. In other cases, faculty want to think it over for a while, which we're glad to have them do. And often it's a mixed bag—we encounter some of the varied faculty attitudes about teaching writing-intensive courses and about faculty work in general that Salem and Jones identify in their recent research. They cluster faculty based on five factors that define their experience with writing-intensive courses: their "enthusiasm about teaching," "confidence in [their] teaching ability," "belief in the fairness of the workplace," "belief that grammar instruction belongs to the writing center," and "preferences for teaching underprepared students" (65-66). When we encounter faculty attitudes that cause us some

concern about whether the Writing Fellows model is a good match for a course and an instructor, we listen carefully and offer respectful suggestions about sequences of assignments and try to convey the attitudes about student-writers and about successful writing instruction that are central to the Writing Fellows model. Sometimes, if we're seriously concerned that Fellows are not likely to succeed, we'll kindly explain that we always have more requests for Fellows than we can meet and that we're sorry but we won't be able to offer Fellows for that semester. In other cases, depending on how eager we are to have more possible placements or how adamant the professor is about working with Fellows, we will hope that the process of actually working with Fellows will change faculty attitudes toward writing and students, which it can. Sometimes we're then pleasantly surprised and other times, the Fellows and we, as well as the faculty member and the students in the course, suffer through a less-than-ideal placement.

When our faculty lineup is complete, at the beginning of each semester, we hold an informal, hour-long brown bag meeting with all of the faculty who are working with Writing Fellows. This conversation includes not only faculty who are new to working with Fellows but also those who have worked with Fellows before. We deliberately devote most of the time to open discussion, to questions and answers among the Fellows faculty. The topics faculty raise vary, but they often talk about what faculty like about working with Fellows, what's challenging about working with Fellows, how students react to Fellows, how much responsibility and direction to give Fellows, how to encourage student-writers to listen carefully to the feedback from Fellows and to do substantial revisions, what to do when students fail to meet with a Fellow for a required conference, and how much attention Fellows should give to global versus local concerns in student drafts. We're always delighted by how much the experienced faculty take the lead in this discussion, sharing and recommending best practices in WAC teaching. And then during the semester, the Fellows meet several times with the faculty whose course they're working in—to discuss assignments, drafts, goals, and methods—and the Writing Fellows director touches base with faculty, by email and in a meeting for Fellows faculty.

Despite all our screening and meetings and information we give faculty, we do face challenges in working with colleagues. Drawing from the Writing Fellows literature (Leahy; Mattison; Zawacki, for example) and from our own long-time experience matching faculty with Fellows, we can catalog some of the most common complications that can torpedo Fellows' work with faculty, complications that WAC and Writing Fellows directors need to be aware of in order to forge effective partnerships with faculty. One of the most basic challenges involves communication between faculty and the Fellows. Because collaborative work requires planning and timely communication, if faculty are

unavailable for meetings or don't respond to emails, it's inevitably difficult for Fellows to succeed. Other challenges involve syllabus and assignment design. Sometimes our exploratory conversations with colleagues make it clear that key elements of our Writing Fellows model aren't a good match for some courses. Because they have had success with different patterns in the past or because they have understandable concerns about stretching out the writing/revising process, some faculty are unwilling to build in the necessary time between a draft and a final deadline. Or, in other cases, they want Fellows to work with a paper that is too informal to revise, or they want Fellows to grade papers or to offer the kind of content-based or methods-based advice on writing projects that really needs to come from a course instructor.

Other challenges that Writing Fellows encounter as they work with faculty are more complex and sometimes seem more daunting for administrators and Fellows; these situations, however, often actually create opportunities for meaningful intervention and negotiation. From the many successes we have had with colleagues, we are convinced that these faculty who present these challenges are, in fact, important audiences with whom WAC and Fellows programs need to learn to work. Here are a few examples of the "types" of faculty we've encountered—those who offer us complicated pedagogical and administrative quandaries yet ultimately provide promising opportunities. First, there are faculty whose view of writing focuses almost exclusively on grammar and whose view of writing instruction focuses on correcting error. Faculty who hold these views sometimes question why Fellows prioritize larger rhetorical concerns in their feedback to students, or they complain that Fellows have failed to comment on some problems with grammar or style in students' drafts. In these cases, we're convinced that the Fellows' comments on drafts model, for faculty, thoughtful engagement with student-writers through the process of writing. And we're convinced that the multiple conversations between Fellows and faculty about guiding students' revisions open up healthy discussions about priorities for feedback, discussions that are more sustained and deeper and have more potential for change than ones that typically occur in faculty WAC workshops.

Second, there are some faculty who initially hope to make only a minimal commitment to WAC and to the Writing Fellows. They want to have some writing in their courses and they choose to work with Fellows as a way to integrate writing instruction into their course, but they want to make only a minimal investment of time in this pedagogy. As a consequence, they aren't prepared to fully integrate the Fellows process into their assignments, they don't talk deeply with their students or with Fellows about the purpose of writing assignments or about students' growth as writers, and in their comments on and evaluation of students' papers, these faculty do not reinforce the importance of drafting

and revising, and of peer collaboration in the writing process. We affectionately refer to them as the faculty who are willing to "date" the writing Fellows program but don't yet want to commit.

The third concern is the opposite of the second. Some faculty who choose to work with Fellows turn out to be "helicopter faculty," who struggle sharing authority with their Fellows. They hover over Fellows' work, they insist on reviewing Fellows' comments before student-writers receive them, and they want the students in their courses to confer about their drafts with them—sometimes instead of with their Fellows. Some of this close attention can, in fact, be ideal—students and faculty and Fellows all can benefit from it. Taken too far, though, this kind of hovering can undermine the Fellows' authority and confidence and discourages student-writers from learning to trust and collaborate with Fellows. Being willing to learn from undergraduate Writing Fellows, from students, is indeed new territory for some faculty.

Within these complex situations, we have found that carefully prepared Fellows can genuinely effect change. If Fellows work meaningfully with faculty as a team, if both Fellows and faculty bring flexibility and respect to the partnership, Fellows can open up dialogue about effective writing pedagogy, earn faculty trust, and help faculty develop even more effective writing pedagogies.

Professionalizing Fellows to Work Successfully with Faculty

As our discussion of our interactions with faculty has indicated, professors vary widely in their expectations for their work with Writing Fellows, but they are united in their desire to see tangible improvements in their students' writing. Thus, at a minimum, Writing Fellows need to have practical, applied knowledge about reading and responding to student writing and about holding effective conferences with students. But their collaborations with faculty who resemble the "types" we describe above demand even more than this: Writing Fellows need to be equipped with some breadth of theoretical knowledge, intellectual flexibility, confidence, resourcefulness, and awareness of how writing abilities develop. To gain the trust and respect of their faculty collaborators, they must be capable of offering tactful suggestions on assignments to a professor in a subject they may never have studied, able to discuss process-model philosophies of teaching writing, and willing to negotiate these philosophies in conversations with faculty and students. In other words, they must be WAC practitioners, diplomats, peer collaborators and more. As Jeffrey Jablonski has argued, "More than goodwill and good communication skills are needed when negotiating relationships forged in the ambiguous spaces across disciplinary ways of knowing and doing" (12). Like Jablonski, we believe in the importance

of "training/professionalizing writing specialists for [cross-curricular literacy] work" (13). To prepare Fellows for their multi-faceted role, our training, like that of many Writing Fellows programs, offers Fellows both practical skills and theoretical knowledge, along with opportunities to contribute to scholarly knowledge themselves. By uniting practice with theory and, in turn, offering Fellows the chance to generate new theories, our program aims to prepare Fellows to serve as cross-disciplinary writing specialists—to play a genuinely cooperative and even occasionally transformative role in their work with faculty.

We accomplish these lofty goals through a comprehensive training program composed of three central parts: a semester-long course for new Fellows; a sequence of ongoing-education sessions and staff meetings; and individual mentoring for each Fellow, every semester. Margot Soven has pointed out that a semester-long training course requirement emphasizes to students and faculty the academic seriousness of the program ("Survey" 64). We strive to offer Fellows a rich, intellectually challenging education throughout their time in our program. We feel strongly that only a sustained, engaging training sequence can enable Fellows to think deeply and critically about writing issues and can prepare Fellows for the complex, layered interactions they will have with course faculty. In the balance of this article, we explain the philosophy, context, and methods of our Fellows training, focusing particularly on the ways we unite practice and theory—and demonstrate the substantial results this can yield.

The Fellows Seminar

All new Writing Fellows enroll in a three-credit, writing-intensive honors seminar. Our Fellows course combines strategies to help new tutors learn and practice the skills necessary for commenting on papers and holding successful student conferences with intellectual inquiry into issues that surface in the teaching of writing. The class is based on the ethic of peer collaboration; in all aspects of the course, Fellows are both teachers and learners. In addition to requiring rigorous theoretical readings, the course encourages students to consider and debate multiple approaches to writing and learning issues, to discuss and learn from one another during class meetings and through shared journals and personal writing, and to design and conduct an original research project. Topics explored include commenting and holding conferences, teaching style and grammar, working with L2 writers, WID, and theories of writing and difference. In all aspects of the course we seek to equip Fellows with the practical expertise and the theoretical frameworks necessary to work as partners with faculty. The benefits of applied training are obvious; the Fellows are first and foremost peer tutors and they need the skills to work effectively and efficiently

with their student peers. And indeed, many of the applied topics we cover resemble those in well-known peer tutor training textbooks such as Soven's *What a Tutor Needs to Know,* which has a particular focus on training Fellows. What is less evident is how this training, combined with learning composition and rhetorical theory and with the chance to generate original scholarship, provides an exciting opportunity to model contemporary WAC practice to faculty and to professionalize, in a sense, Writing Fellow-Faculty interactions.

Writing Comments

To prepare Fellows for the challenging task of writing smart, thoughtful comments on student papers, they read authors such as Nancy Sommers, Peter Elbow, Richard Straub, Donald Daiker, and John Bean. During class meetings, Fellows learn to respond to student papers both globally and locally, offering specific marginal suggestions as well as an "end note," or letter to the student writer, which outlines specific strengths in a draft and offers substantive suggestions for the writer. Class discussions revolve around questions of how to balance marginalia with an end note, how specific should comments be, how to combine directive comments with more open-ended or suggestive ones, and how to respond like a peer. From these readings and discussions, Fellows develop a personal philosophy of commenting, which they put into practice in their work with students. Practical experience then begins to inform classroom discussion as Fellows share with their colleagues which strategies are effective and which are less so. Here is an example of a typical "end note" to a student—in this case to a student in an upper-level philosophy class. The assignment asked the writer to analyze, interpret, and take a stand for or against Kant's theory of evil.

Dear _____,

I enjoyed reading your explanation of the complexities that arise when the propensity to evil is seen as "sometimes innate." You treat the subject in a very accessible yet scholarly tone, which makes it easy for me as a reader to follow the line of your argument without becoming hindered by the language. Also, you have done a nice job incorporating quotations into the material—doing so helps me to understand more precisely how Kant thinks so that I can compare it with what you say.

Here are some things for you to consider as you revise:

1. *Scope.* You mention that you are concerned with the amount of material you cover in such a small space. It certainly is all very interesting; however, considering the page limit of the assignment, I think that you are correct to say that it may need

to be constrained. How might you condense the material in the first part of the paper (approximately through paragraph 5, perhaps?), while still constructing a complete explanation of propensity to evil and its implications? I think that doing this will focus your argument so that you are not trying to do too many things at once. There were times when in first half of the paper (the analysis of the propensity to evil) when I was not sure how this explanation was relevant, considering that you ultimately show propensity to be flawed.

2. *Quotations.* There are certain places where you use quite a few direct quotations from Kant. After each one, instead of letting it speak for itself, make sure that you sufficiently explain your interpretation of this quote and how it furthers or complicates your argument. For example, paragraph 8 contains almost one quote per sentence—a lot for a paper of this length; it might benefit from you incorporating the ideas into your own by paraphrasing them, or from a short elaboration after each one. Since you seem to agree with Kant at certain points and disagree at others, your readers can benefit from you clarifying the intent with which you use each quote.

3. *Topic sentences.* Many of your topic sentences are already good, but there are places where they could further guide the reader in the journey of your argument. For example, instead of using a question (paragraph 9) or a re-statement of Kant's explanations, take it one step further and explain where this idea fits in within your thesis statement. By relating each topic sentence back to the thesis, and by making each one a mini-thesis for the paragraph, you will ensure that a) each paragraph plays a distinct role in your argument and b) that your reader will easily follow and (more likely) be convinced by your logic.

I look forward to meeting with you and discussing your paper further at our conference—your paper's already got a lot going for it, so through revision it will only become stronger still. Please look over your paper, and bring any questions or ideas you may for us to talk about. See you then!

–Eva

Note how the Fellow, Eva, follows some best WAC practices, offering specific and meaningful praise before critique, and how each paragraph functions as a mini writing lesson, with advice students can export to writing in other classes. Just as importantly, this letter functions as a model for the course professor who may have little dedicated training

in responding to student writing, a point that Mullin notes in "Enlivening WAC Programs Old and New." The Writing Fellow's example makes it, frankly, more challenging for a professor to provide only minimal feedback on student papers. Comments like these encourage a professor to commit more fully to teaching and responding to student writing. For additional examples of Writing Fellows' commenting letters, see Severino and Knight and Soven *(What the Writing Tutor Needs to Know)*.

Holding Conferences

In their training, Fellows also read, discuss, and practice conducting successful conferences with students. Articles by Muriel Harris, Kenneth Bruffee, Catherine Latterell, Paul Kei Matsuda, and others help Fellows to guide productive, revision-based conversations, and to think carefully about how they use their authority in conferences. Like writing center tutors, Fellows learn how to ask smart questions of student writers, how to listen carefully, and how to structure a dialogue to help a student rethink and revise a paper. Unlike writing center tutors, however, Writing Fellows have the unique and sometimes challenging task of leading a conference on a paper they've already commented on extensively. Fellows sometimes feel (as do their students) that a meeting to discuss the comments is extraneous. One Fellow identified this concern in a journal entry: "The major drawback [of commenting] is that it can render the conference moot. Since I have [written out] all my criticism and concern in the response then surely there is no need for its reiteration [in person]." Because Fellows may be required to delve more deeply into a paper's issues than their writing center peers, they strategize in our training seminar about how conferences can build upon and complement comments: what advice can be "held back" from a student until the conference, how a Fellow can encourage a student to begin actively revising in a conference meeting, and how a Fellow should negotiate the fine line between being a peer and being an authority who's written all over the paper. In-class exercises devoted to reading, commenting, and discussing each other's papers in peer review sessions lead to new insights. After one such class exercise, the Fellow who voiced concerns in the journal entry above revised his thinking about the value of conferences: "I've discovered that …speaking about [my written comments] allowed me to explore the issues more in depth and it facilitated a new level of exchange between my peer[s] and me." Having the chance to practice skills in the seminar allows Fellows to appreciate the advantages of particular methods and strategies.

The Role of Theory

Applied readings and activities such as those described above are critical to Fellows' daily work as tutors and to the ways in which they model best WAC and writing center practices

for faculty. However, when practice is combined with a thorough grounding in the theory behind such practice—as well as with theories that question and explore traditional academic hierarchies—Fellows see how their tutoring work fits in to larger social and institutional contexts and feel authorized to assume a more assertive, more nuanced role with the professors with whom they work. While a number of tutor training manuals (such as Murphy and Sherwood's *St. Martin's Sourcebook*) include theoretical readings designed to acquaint tutors with the scholarly conversation that informs writing center practices, none includes texts that encourage tutors to explore and rethink their social, cultural, and academic positions in relation to faculty and institutional hierarchy. Through reading and discussing composition, rhetorical, writing center, Marxist, feminist, and other theories, our Fellows question what it means to be an "expert" and learn to negotiate with students and faculty in confident, new ways. Not only does reading theory help Fellows understand the philosophical underpinnings of the practices in which they engage, it also empowers them to disseminate ideas from writing studies to the professors and students with whom they work. One Fellow, in a paper exploring the relationship between practice and theory in writing fellows tutoring, suggested,

> I believe that my theoretical training as a tutor enabled me to redirect [my] students' [requests for me to 'fix' their papers] into more productive, wide-ranging, creative thinking. Of course, I didn't create this ability for my students, but my open-ended questions and non-directive conferencing style—both gleaned from theory learned in English 316—may have increased their own ability to look at their writing differently.

One can read the influence of Paolo Freire's "problem-posing education" in this Fellow's description of her experience with her student: she clearly reaps tangible benefits from putting theory into practice as a Fellow. And, as Fellows begin to understand their own roles as tutors in new ways, so they begin to view faculty through different lenses. They feel authorized to question professors' pedagogical priorities; they comment on assignments that seem to require regurgitation rather than original, critical thought; they push back when they are being hovered over; and they expect to be taken seriously when they offer opinions.

Writing in the Fellows Course

While readings and discussions in the training course are central to preparing Fellows to work with students and faculty, writing also plays a critical role in their preparation. By doing several different types of writing assignments, accomplished through stages with extensive peer feedback and revision, Writing Fellows expand their repertoires, gaining

critical awareness of writing within and outside of familiar academic genres. At the same time, they study in depth how to produce texts with a clear thesis, focus, and clear plans for arrangement. Fellows write a literacy autobiography, weekly journals, a tutoring-philosophy paper, and a 20-page research paper on a topic related to tutoring or teaching writing. All assignments help Fellows develop a sense of themselves as tutors, as writers, as critical thinkers, and as scholars within a larger academic community.

The research paper, more specifically, affords the Fellows an opportunity to participate in the scholarly discourse on composition, rhetoric, and writing centers in ways different from research they've done in previous courses. In an article that argues for the value of engaging student tutors as producers (and not simply consumers) of theory, Peter Vandenberg claims, "Student tutors must be authorized to author; in an institutional context that depends on written debate to modify ideas and ultimately confer acceptance or rejection, student tutors must become response-able" (71). If we want our tutors to hold their own in conversations about writing with faculty members, they need to be more than readers of academia; they need to have a role in producing and disseminating such discourse. In a recent CCC article, Laurie Grobman makes a powerful case for the importance of undergraduate research, suggesting it has the power to influence, even transform the discipline of composition studies. In our program, we have seen the ways in which our Fellows' research has worked to challenge the faculty/scholar vs. student/consumer opposition both on a programmatic level and on a larger, scholarly level.

The Fellows' seminar capstone assignment, a 20-page research paper on a topic related to writing or tutoring writing, helps fellows accomplish these goals. As part of the project, Fellows pose original research questions, review current states of knowledge, develop research methods, explore conflicts between the data they've gathered and the theories they have read, and develop arguments that deepen our understanding and knowledge of tutoring writing. Frequently, Fellows choose to conduct research on the actual courses in which they are "fellowing," thereby thinking and learning more deeply about their work in the course than they ever would in their practice as Fellows. One Fellow for an atmospheric and oceanic studies course, in which students had complained about the writing assignment, conducted a research study of how he and his co-Fellows functioned as "field reporters" for their professor, providing critical information on student responses to the particular writing tasks. As part of his research, the Fellow, Michael, gathered permissions, read assignments and papers from the class, interviewed his three co-Fellows and the course professor, and compared his original research with theory from composition and rhetoric. As Michael wrestled with the project over twelve weeks, we could see his persona within and outside of the Fellows' course begin to change. His research provided him, in

a sense, with more specific knowledge about the writing in the course than the professor had—a status that seemed to make Michael more confident and vocal in the Fellows' seminar. Even more, his research compelled the professor to think more critically about his assignment (a paper on science and the media) and to clarify (and re-write) its central task. Through his research, then, Michael addressed a local, immediate problem (students' negative responses to a challenging assignment) yet he also generated new knowledge (about the role Fellows can play in helping professors understand student responses to assignments) that he could share with his co-Fellows and abstract to other fellowing situations. His research provided us and other tutors with a new, in-depth understanding of a complex learning situation.

We cannot emphasize enough how valuable the research project is for our Fellows: participating in meaningful, sustained scholarship benefits the Fellows themselves and their work with students but also leads to more collaborative and productive engagement with course professors and can even give undergraduate Fellows a meaningful voice in a larger scholarly conversation about tutoring and teaching writing.

Ongoing Education

We have examined the ways in which our Writing Fellows training seminar equips our Fellows to collaborate and earn the trust of the faculty with whom they work. Even more, we have shown how this training enables Fellows to cross and even reconfigure the boundary between the roles of teacher and student. But it would be easy for the benefits of this training to recede once the research project is complete and the training seminar ends. Thus, we offer Fellows an ongoing education sequence that provides multiple opportunities to participate in intellectually in-depth workshops about writing and related topics. In a given semester, for example, we may offer short workshops on such topics as: "working with highly experienced writers," "the relationship between marginal and end comments," "how (and how much) to praise," and "apply to present your Writing Fellows research at a national conference." Not only do these workshops encourage Fellows to maintain their skills, but they also challenge Fellows to re-think theoretical issues from the Fellows' seminar in light of new practical experiences.

In addition to these group workshops, each fellow is mentored every semester by an experienced Writing Center administrator. These mentoring sessions provide an opportunity for Fellows to receive individualized advice as they write their comments on student papers and prepare to hold conferences. Since professors are absent from the conferences, Fellows' written comments are the most visible evidence the professors see of the Fellows' work and provide the main opportunity for professors to assess their Fellows' work. Well-written comments, as

we suggested above, have the potential to significantly influence professors' practices and to teach faculty to take student writing more seriously. Because of this, individual mentoring creates wonderful opportunities to help Fellows think more deeply and carefully about their comments; to avoid pitfalls (such as boilerplate copying and pasting sections of comments, offering minimal or generic praise, or neglecting to read the assignment carefully enough); and to continue to grow as tutors.

The Results

Our faculty evaluations demonstrate the ways in which our rigorous training of Fellows yields tangible and meaningful results. Repeatedly, professors describe how their interactions with their Fellows persuade them to reevaluate the place of writing in their classrooms and to reconsider how best to teach it. While not all professors change their practices, choose to commit, or even relinquish control, many describe the significant impact that working with a Fellow has had on their teaching. Consider the following example—from a professor in comparative literature:

> I was surprised at the extent to which the Writing Fellows' comments … provided a useful context in which to grade the final products. This additional material really offered valuable perspectives on the students' writing processes…. The involvement of the WFs made me think through the writing assignments, and their place in the course, much more carefully. I think they made me a better 'paper-assigner.'

While she initially requested Writing Fellows in the hopes that they would "clean up" her student papers and save time from her busy assistant-professor schedule, her work with Fellows prompted this professor to think more carefully and critically about her goals for teaching writing and how her assignments fit with her course content. Her students' improved performance on specific papers becomes secondary here to her own development as a more thoughtful and aware writing teacher.

A similar comment from a history professor demonstrates how working with Fellows influenced not just how she assigns writing but also how she teaches it:

> The Writing Fellows comments sometimes really made me think…. I've become in all of my classes now, much more critical of the writing process, I mean, I always look at content, but now I'm very aware, I explain to students I need a thesis statement, need a conclusion, and I'm looking for topic sentences and all those things.

These comments showcase how Fellows can serve as influential and effective WAC professionals, promoting WAC concerns with professors who might never otherwise

encounter them. The quotation demonstrates how working with Fellows can inspire faculty to think more specifically about the criteria they use to respond to student writing and to develop a larger sense of responsibility for guiding their students as writers in all courses.

Finally, reflections from an anthropology professor suggest how the Fellows work can lead to a full reevaluation of typical university roles and positions:

> The writing fellows were wonderful and very effective in helping the students structure their arguments, organize their papers so that they flowed well, and they did such a magnificent job of encouraging the students and offering supportive commentary that the products were far more enjoyable to read than in past semesters. In particular, the writing fellows helped the students find narrative themes that tied each paper together and I found that I enjoyed reading the papers more than in previous years, and I actually felt like I learned things from the students.

This comment seems to recast and refigure typical institutional roles: here, the students have learned from the Fellow and, as a result, the professor has learned from the students. Learning originates with an undergraduate student, not with an institutional authority.

As we have shown, establishing productive working relationships between faculty and Writing Fellows is one of the most challenging and exciting parts of curricular-based peer tutoring. However, with careful, thoughtful screening and preparation of faculty combined with rigorous, self-reflective training of Fellows, wonderful collaborative relationships can develop between Fellows and course instructors. Such relationships, on the most local level, lead to improved student writing and the inclusion of meaningful revision in classes that might otherwise not do so. On a larger level, though, these collaborations between Fellows and faculty promote empowerment and expertise among undergraduate Fellows and help disseminate important WAC principles across the disciplines.

Mailing Inviting Faculty to Consider Working with Undergraduate Writing Fellows
To: Faculty Teaching Writing-Intensive and Comm-B Courses
From: Emily Hall, Ph.D., Director, Writing Fellows Program
Re: Working with Writing Fellows in Fall 2011

Please consider working with a Writing Fellow in your writing-intensive or Communication-B course!
Writing Fellows are talented, carefully selected, and extensively trained undergraduates who serve as peer writing tutors in classes across the College of Letters & Science. The Fellows make thoughtful comments on drafts of assigned papers and hold conferences with students to help students make smart, significant revisions to their papers before the papers are turned in for a grade. Building on the special trust that peers can share, Fellows help students not only to write better papers but also to take themselves more seriously as writers and thinkers.

Here's a faculty comment about the benefits of working with Writing Fellows:

> "[The Writing Fellows] were outstanding in their ability to motivate students to adhere to the assignment. In particular, they made sure the students stated and developed arguments in their papers and pushed them to address the readings and important themes from the course."
> —*Prof. Katherine Cramer Walsh, Political Science)*

Here's a student comment:

> "I found that talking to someone about my paper helped me figure out *exactly* what I wanted to say and how I could do that…. This was the first experience I've had with a Writing Fellow and I thought it was extremely beneficial in improving my writing skills."
> — *junior, sociology major*

The Fellows are equipped to tutor writing across the curriculum. In the past, they have worked with students in astronomy, Afro-American studies, history, philosophy, political science chemistry, classics, English, women's studies, sociology, zoology, mathematics, psychology, geography, and more.

You are eligible to apply to work with a Writing Fellow if you:

- are a faculty or academic staff member teaching a course with at least two writing assignments
- will have between 12 and 40 students enrolled in the course
- are willing to adjust your syllabus to allow time for revision and to require that all enrolled students work with the assigned Fellow(s)
- are willing to meet regularly with the assigned Fellow(s) to discuss assignments

If you would like to learn more about the program or apply to work with a Fellow in a course you are teaching …

APPENDIX B

Talking Points for Initial Meeting with Faculty About Working with Writing Fellows
The Writing Fellows Program
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Having Writing Fellows Assigned to Your Course

For the Writing Fellows Program to help you and your students, you will need to:

1. Be a faculty member teaching either a Communication-B or a Writing-Intensive course, without TAs; the minimum enrollment is 15; the maximum is 40. We assign one Fellow for every 10–12 students in a course, so, for example, a course with 35 students would have three Writing Fellows.
2. Believe in the philosophy underlying the Writing Fellows Program—that is, that writing is best taught as a process that involves revision; that well-prepared undergraduates can serve as role models for their peers and can help their peers improve their writing; and that undergraduates benefit from being placed in positions of leadership.
3. Design *two writing assignments* with which the Fellow will help your students. With each of these assignments, a draft must be due to the Writing Fellow two weeks before the final due date.
4. Introduce the Fellow to your class, stress to your class—throughout the semester—the value of working with a Writing Fellow, and be supportive of the Fellow's work.
5. Articulate clearly your expectations for each writing assignment. Fellows work best when they can help students with well-defined writing tasks; open-ended assignments make it more difficult for Fellows to make suggestions for revision. Remember that the Writing Fellows will not necessarily be familiar with the specific subject matter of your course or majoring in your department.
6. Require all students in the course to submit the draft *and* meet with the Fellow for conferences.
7. Meet with the Fellow periodically during the semester—to get to know the Fellow, to talk about your expectations for each assignment, to discuss the Fellow's responses to some drafts, and to solicit feedback from your Fellow.
8. Be committed to helping your Writing Fellow grow intellectually through this experience.
9. Refrain from asking the Fellow to grade students' papers or teach portions of your course.

Questions? Comments? Please call or write Emily Hall, Director of the Writing Fellows Program (608.263.3754; ebhall@wisc.edu), or Brad Hughes, Director of the Writing Center and Director of the L&S Program in Writing Across the Curriculum (608.263.3823; bthughes@wisc.edu).

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