THE WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Volume 22, Number 4 Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in one-to-one teaching of writing December, 1997

...FROM THE EDITOR...

If you're in the countdown mode awaiting winter break and a breather from a hectic fall term, consider finding some room on your agenda of heavy-duty relaxing to act on suggestions found in the articles in this month's newsletter. Steve Sherwood presents a compelling rationale for developing a code of ethics for your writing lab, and Lissa Petersen makes an equally compelling case for following her lead in organizing workshops for students led by faculty who offer their thoughts on how they write and what they look for in student papers. Then, if you're in a reading mode, Steve Bray and Jo Koster Tarver review a new book on type theory that can be useful in tutor training. If you're near a copying machine, another thing you may want to do during winter break is make copies of the two excellent Tutors' Columns in this issue for your tutors to read. And one final item to be put at the top of that agenda: pat yourself and the tutors on the back a few dozen times for all the important work that's been done to help student writers this semester.

I wish us all a superb vacation, meaningful holidays, and a great year ahead.

• Muriel Harris, editor

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Ethics and improvisation

While I was a graduate student working in a new writing center, one of my professors stopped me in the hall to ask, "You're not writing the students' papers for them, are you?" He interrogated me about his other suspicions, implying that he found the work we did in the writing center equivalent to plagiarism. Until then, I had believed that the English department unanimously endorsed the center's mission. And I had gone blithely about my various roles as a tutor—coach, critic, collaborator, cheerleader—seeing little cause for alarm. As D. Don Welch says, "Only when taken-for-granted actions are challenged . . . does ethical reflection occur" (30). I realized, as a result of this confrontation, that I had to remain continually on guard to be sure I wasn't violating, or being seen as violating, my ethical duties.

But what exactly are these duties? After ten years' experience in three writing centers, I sometimes still find it hard to decide precisely where to draw the line between ethical and unethical behavior. As tutors, we must help student writers to the best of our ability. But we also have an obligation to others who have a stake in our work: our-

selves, our colleagues, the students' teachers, the administrators who oversee our centers (and evaluate our performance), and the society at large (which, for some reason, expects college graduates to be able to write). Our obligations often conflict, in part because the definition of "help" shifts with one's perspective. To students, help means anything from a quick, impressionistic reading of their work to proofreading. Some of them expect to leave the center with a perfect paper. Some teachers and administrators expect the same, and hold us accountable for the students' errors or poor grades, while others consider even a stray pencil mark from a tutor's hand to be a breach of ethics. Meanwhile, we often take the position that the quality of a paper, like the grade it receives, is strictly the student's responsibility (and I'm not sure we should so easily let ourselves wriggle off this accountability hook).

Most professions have a formal code of ethics to guide their practitioners in resolving dilemmas. In fact, the adoption of an ethical code is one of the criteria (in addition to having a national organization, national journals, professional schools, state licensing, and relatively high social status) that distinguish professions from mere occupations (McDowell 14). Based on these criteria, despite a national organization, three journals devoted to writing center theory and practice, and innumerable calls for professional recognition, writing center practitioners do not appear to qualify as professionals.

Establishing a code of ethics would seem to be a next step toward achieving the professional status many of us crave. Ironically, though, we professional types apply the most stringent ethical guidelines to our peer tutors (especially rank beginners), reserving for ourselves the right to break such "rules" when circumstances so dictate. For example, as coordinator of peer tutor training at my center, I have my tutors take Jeff Brooks' "minimalist" approach, which involves refusing to edit papers and making students do most of the work. Even in my tutors' case, though, I try to keep the list of do's and do not's fairly short because I cannot anticipate all the dilemmas my tutors might face, and I fully expect that, as they gain experience, they will develop their own sense of propriety. Each tutorial, after all, is a singular interaction between two or more people. And if, as Christina Murphy and I have suggested, "a simple technique-driven approach would be inadequate for operating in the fluid, unpredictable, give-and-take atmosphere of the tutorial" (2), then a formal, rule-bound ethical code would serve as a poor guide for tutors working at this intersection of complex and conflicting duties, agendas, and philosophies. In this sense, tutoring is more improvisational art than science. To adopt an ethical code—to paint by the numbers—might actually be a step away from, not toward, true professional status. So rather than formalizing a list of do's and do not's, I propose that we embrace this artistic aspect of our work, becoming what Welch calls ethical improvisers, or persons who work in "a landscape that is in constant flux" and must learn to deal with moral challenges in ways that "are especially sensitive to context, interaction, and response" (122).

Arguing for what amounts to moral relativism is risky, but as Michael Pemberton acknowledges, writing center ethics "are deeply embedded in institutional and situational contexts, and as such they resist reduction to a simple set of principles or universal guidelines" (13). This resistance often results from a genuine sense that a particular action (such as editing) is wrong in one student's case but right in another. And although some of our best minds (including Muriel Harris and Irene Lurkis Clark) have wrestled with them, these dilemmas remain unresolved. Perhaps our central ethical quandary involves how to limit the amount and kind of help we give students, which derives out of a larger question of whether knowledge resides in the individual mind or is socially constructed. In other words, is writing a solitary act of discovering meaning in our own minds and transcribing it onto paper or is it a dialogic process of making meaning in collaboration with others (including the society embodied in language itself)? Many of our ethical dilemmas stem from this one because how we perceive the act of writing (and learning how to write) will

The Writing Lab Newsletter, published in ten monthly issues from September to June by the Department of English, Purdue University, is a publication of the National Writing Centers Association, an NCTE Assembly, and is a member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement. ISSN 1040-3779.

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

Subscriptions: The newsletter has no billing procedures. Yearly payments of $15 (U.S. $20 in Canada) are requested, and checks must be received four weeks prior to the month of expiration to ensure that subscribers do not miss an issue. Please make checks payable to Purdue University and send to the editor. Prepayment is requested from business offices.

Manuscripts: Recommended length for articles is ten to fifteen double-spaced typed pages, three to five pages for reviews, and four pages for the Tutors' Column, though longer and shorter manuscripts are invited. If possible, please send a 3 and 1/4 in. disk with the file, along with the hard copy. Please enclose a self-addressed envelope with return postage not pasted to the envelope. The deadline for announcements is 45 days prior to the month of issue (e.g. August 15 for October issue).

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determine how we feel about assisting the writer.

Consider, for example, the December 1994 "Voices from the Net" column, which chronicles a WCenter discussion about whether tutors should bring pens to tutorials. This apparently simple question, as Jeannie Simpson points out, "gets immediately at the heart of the style of the tutorial and the relationship between tutor and student" (Crump 6). In fact, it raised complex issues of authority and text ownership that writing center practitioners from around the country debated for nearly a week. At one point in the exchange, Dave Healy observes, "It seems pretty clear from our discussion that we're not of one mind on these issues. Should we be?" (7).

By asking this question, Healy seems to imply that consensus on key issues is unlikely and possibly undesirable in so diverse and lively a group as writing center folk. Our differences of opinion and practice keep the field vital, prevent ideas and techniques that may work well in one setting (but not so well in another) from hardening into doctrine. This does not mean, however, that we are plagued by universal disagreement, especially about general principles. Most of us, for instance, would agree that tutors ought to treat students with respect as opposed to wanton cruelty. As Pemberton points out, we also believe that "our instructional attention in conferences should focus on higher-order problems (organization, development, focus, etc.) first, and then move to problems of grammar, mechanics, and syntax as the occasion warrants" (13). In an effort to hone writing center ethics to the essentials, he offers his Three Laws of Tutorics (loosely based on Isaac Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics), which follow:

1. A writing center consultant should teach students how to write and revise their own work, not do the writing or revising for them.
2. A writing center consultant should help students identify the most significant problems in their texts, so long as the help they provide does not violate the First Law.
3. A writing center consultant should follow a student's agenda for the writing conference, so long as that agenda does not violate the First or Second Laws. (Pemberton 13)

Pemberton's laws set a "clear hierarchy of values" (13), expressing underlying principles most of us already attempt to follow. With the exception of prohibiting the writing or revising of papers for a student, they do not prescribe or forbid specific actions, thus allowing us a some freedom to decide for ourselves how best to help each student. Invoking Ronald Dworkin's distinction between "principles" and "rules," I would classify these laws not as rules, which "are applicable in an all-or-nothing fashion," but as principles, which state "a reason that argues in one direction, but does not necessitate a particular decision" (qtd. in McDowell 30). According to legal professor Banks McDowell, a rule dictates decisions in a legalistic manner while a principle "has weight or strength in the context of balancing this injunction against other principles, policies or goals" (31). The problem with ethical rules, McDowell says, is a tendency to use them to establish a "minimum competence" for professionals. Ethical principles, by contrast, require "the professional to strive for ever increasing mastery. One must always improve, because one never quite reaches the goal of being a complete master of the profession's expertise and skill" (31).

Although I applaud Pemberton's laws for being compact, elegant, and nonspecific enough to allow for individual discretion (and increasing mastery), some of us might chafe under the first law's prescriptive "rule" against revising for the student. There are times, after all, when such revision effectively teaches a student how to write. Judith Powers, for instance, makes a strong case for directive tutoring of ESL students. As she says, "Since they have no inner editor prompting them to stop and raise questions, we are likely to adjust our technique to their needs and discover we are locating errors for ESL writers in a way that looks very much like editing" ("Rethinking" 43). Irene Lurkis Clark goes further, arguing for active tutor-student collaboration, including rewriting. She cites a writer whose "graceful coherent style is due to his undergraduate tutor at a British university" who "would cross out any awkward sentences he found and replace them with more felicitous wording" (9). Through what amounted to imitation, the writer assimilated portions of the tutor's writing style into his own.

Was the British tutor acting ethically? Based on Pemberton's first law, perhaps not. The help the tutor gave, however, had a lasting, positive impact on the writer. If such an impact is a primary objective of tutoring, then we could conclude that the tutor was acting ethically in revising the student writer's sentences. In fact, forced to condense the ethics of tutoring into a single principle, I would propose that a tutor acts ethically if he or she puts a writer's long-term interests (such as becoming a better writer) ahead of short-term interests (such as a high grade on a particular paper). Often, we protect the student writer's long-term interests by focusing exclusively on higher-order problems; sometimes, we protect them by editing his or her paper. Far from a simple process, deciding which action is appropriate in each case calls for a level of judgment and insight one would normally associate with a professional. As McDowell says, "The craft or art of genuinely competent professionals is . . . knowing which skills and knowledge to use under what circumstances" (164).

As tutors, we learn our skills and

knowledge in several ways. We observe veteran tutors in action, swap ideas and techniques with colleagues, read books and essays on theory and practice, attend conferences, and take seminars and courses. Mostly, though, we gain an intimate knowledge of tutoring in the same way we gain such a knowledge of writing—by doing it, reflecting on our successes and failures (both practical and moral), and trying to do better the next time. We learn to tutor by applying a process of "on-line anticipation and adjustment," of "continuous detection and correction of error," that Donald A. Schön (26) calls "reflection-in-action." In learning to tutor, we are like the novice architect Schön describes, who

> is expected to plunge into designing, trying from the very outset to get the sort of experience that will help him learn what designing means. He cannot make an informed choice to take this plunge because he does not yet grasp its essential meanings, and his instructors cannot convey these to him until he has the requisite experience. Thus, he must jump in without knowing—indeed, to discover—what he needs to learn. (93).

From the initial plunge (or series of plunges) into tutoring, during which failure at various levels is likely, we pick up techniques we can use in subsequent sessions. Meanwhile, we also learn to become better improvisers, which, Schön believes, is an essential aspect of professional artistry. Faced with an unfamiliar situation, in which competing ideas and agendas pose a new and difficult challenge, the professional improvises a solution that draws the diverse parts into a harmonious whole. This act, Schön says, is comparable to the artistry of jazz musicians, who by "Listening to one another, listening to themselves, . . . 'feel' where the music is going and adjust their playing accordingly" (30). Ordinary conversation, in which "participants pick up and develop themes of talk . . . is collective verbal improvisation" (30), Schön says, as is the more purposeful conversation between student and tutor.

Because ethical dilemmas infuse nearly every aspect of our work, our conversations during tutorials are, by nature, ethical improvisations. Last semester, for example, I worked with a freshman composition student assigned to write a personal narrative about an event that had changed his life. He had written about a car accident, caused by his sister, that killed her, their mother, and his older brother's pregnant wife.

"It was all I could come up with," he said. "My professor likes the idea. She says it's dramatic."

"Do *you* like it?" I asked.

He hesitated. "I haven't done a very good job."

As he read the draft aloud, I noticed he was being quite candid about his sister's recklessness in losing control of the car. He also described, in detail, seeing his sister-in-law thrown from the car and watching helplessly as his mother bled to death at the roadside. Meanwhile, the narrative tone was so carefully detached that it nullified the drama his teacher evidently expected.

Judging from his demeanor and tone of voice, I suspected he was having serious qualms about the story. Eventually, he admitted that by writing about the accident, he felt he was betraying the memory of his sister, whom he loved, and exploiting the death of his mother simply to please his professor. "I asked if I could change topics," he added, "but she said it was too late. Now I don't know what to do."

The student's dilemma became mine. His professor should not have committed him to write about so emotionally charged an event, I thought, but to tell him so—to drive a wedge between student and teacher—struck me as clearly unethical. Together we needed to improvise a way to satisfy the professor's requirement, but in a way that did not leave the student riddled with guilt.

"What happened after the accident?" I asked. "How did your life change?"

Among other things, he mentioned that his relationship with his father grew closer. Aloof and ambitious before the accident, his father began working shorter hours in order to spend more time with him, assuming the roles of cook, housekeeper, nurturer, and confidant. As a result, the student and his father were now best friends. The evolution of their friendship sounded like a wonderful story to me. However, I was unsure how his professor might react if, instead of the highly dramatic car wreck story, he turned in a quiet narrative about how he and his father survived the tragedy and learned to like each other. In my view, several important outcomes hinged on the decision. If he conformed to the professor's wishes simply to earn a higher grade, especially if doing so meant betraying the memory of his sister and mother, he might never gain the independence of mind he needed to grow as a writer. But deviating from the approved course had its own risks. His writing skills might not be sufficiently developed to do justice to the other story. And imagine his confusion if he actually wrote a good piece but received a low grade because of the change in focus. Based on the grade alone, he might make mistaken assumptions ranging from "my teacher dislikes me" to "I'm a lousy writer."

As Welch says, professionals often "encounter a set of circumstances that causes us to pause, to consider options or review how fitting the automatic response really is. We are forced to stop

and ask the normative question, 'What ought I to do?'" (29). In this case, having reviewed some possible consequences of my advice, I gambled that the student would be better off without the guilt, even at the risk of displeasing his professor. I like to think the gamble paid off, but the student did not return to tell me what happened, so it looks like I'll simply have to live with not knowing if I made the right decision.

Such ethical uncertainty is common among writing center practitioners. Fortunately, as Judith Powers' experience illustrates, when faced with a situation in which accepted tutoring strategies fail, we improvise. When the faculty at Powers' writing center realized that their "well-ingrained notions of model writing center conferencing" ("Assisting" 16) were ineffective when applied to graduate thesis and dissertation writers, they changed their policies (and their sense of protocol) to meet the legitimate needs of these students. In their willingness to be what Schön calls "corrective on-line" (272), they exercised improvisational artistry worthy of professionals. For as Schön says, a professional person's "knowing-in-action is dynamic and 'facts,' 'procedures,' 'rules,' and 'theories' are static" (25).

In describing the qualities of an ethical improviser, Welch echoes Schön, saying that a "fluid, evolving response to circumstances may be risky, but it is rich with the potential of new possibilities" (122). Welch adds that while a formal ethical code

> might impose more order in the decision-making process, it is an artificial order that obscures the complexity and particularity of moral life. For an ethics of response, the decision-maker is left to rely on ideas of moral intuition, seasoned judgment, sensitive imagination, and the like. (148)

As we work within the unpredictable, ever-changing context of the tutorial, we'll continue to make and regret our mistakes. Meanwhile, we'll find no lasting comfort in doctrine. Our best chance of resolving our ethical dilemmas, and qualifying as true professionals, lies not in painting by the numbers, but in relying on experience, intuition, and conscience to lead us toward ever-increasing mastery of this improvisational art we call tutoring.

Steve Sherwood
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, TX

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Call for Proposals

The last few years have witnessed a proliferation of online writing centers but only minimal critical attention to their effectiveness in serving students. For a volume on this technological phenomenon, I am collecting essays on the effects of such electronic extensions of traditional centers, their various purposes, and assessment of their work. Possible topics include, but are not limited to, role of design in a website, parallels between hypertext and use of hard copy handbooks, interpersonal communication in traditional labs vs. greater dependence on student initiative in an online center, aspects of distance learning. I am interested in theoretical considerations as well as practical approaches. Please limit proposals to 250-500 words (1-2 pages). Publisher contacts will begin with the selection of abstracts.

Inquiries or proposals can be sent, by January 15th, to:

Beth Kamhi
Dept of English
Rhodes College
2000 North Parkway
Memphis, TN 38112

Engaging the faculty: A successful strategy

As Writing Center staff members, we need to keep the focus on our main job: to help students become better writers by talking to them about their writing. So why offer writing workshops with faculty members? And what can we learn from them? Stephen North defined all such efforts as having about them "an air of shrewdness, or desperation, the trace of a survival instinct at work" (446). These terms aptly describe my state of mind in early 1993 when, as Writing Center Director at The Claremont Graduate School (CGS), I began organizing writing workshops with panels of faculty members talking to students in their fields about writing issues. My motives were both political and philosophical.

The most immediate was purely political. The Writing Center had been formed in the fall of 1985, disbanded in the fall of 1986 in a general round of budget cuts, and reinstated in 1990. In the spring of 1993, the center was again in danger of elimination. This crisis as well as some earlier discussions I had been having with supportive faculty members were what prompted me to try these workshops. They may have had some effect on the faculty, which voted unanimously to support the center with funds deducted from departmental budgets. But I believe the main reason professors voted for the center at a sacrifice to their own programs was because they wanted us to remediate their weak graduate-student writers.

This issue brings me to our philosophical motive. While this problem definitely needed to be addressed by the Center, I was becoming concerned that too many professors were seeing our function as only a remedial and editing service. North's article was written out of the same frustration: "The members of my profession, my colleagues . . . do not understand what I do. They do not understand what does happen, what can happen, in a Writing Center" (433). We saw our mission as inclusive—to give all sorts of writers helpful responses from experienced and highly qualified readers. We believed that any writer—student or professional—benefits from gaining a sense of audience while drafting a paper. But no matter how many times we had sent information to professors and spoken at orientations about the mission of the Writing Center, few seemed to be hearing us. We wanted faculty members to get to know us and our purpose first hand. Our goal was to remove the stigma of remediation from the center by creating the sense of "a community of writers" among professors and students. We also needed professors to promote the center to their students—all kinds of students, not just the weakest ones.

Before we began these workshops, we already had in place several ongoing means of communicating with the faculty. We made presentations to students, with professors present, at departmental orientations each fall. I gave annual oral reports at faculty meetings. We sent out semester reports on our activities, student use, and student evaluation responses. We sent letters from the Dean with fliers and bookmarks each fall, reminders at finals time, and notices for our workshops on writing graduate research papers, conference papers, grant proposals. . . .

In addition to informing faculty members of our activities, we worked with the Dean, who invited selected professors to serve on the Writing Center Advisory Committee, which makes annual recommendations to him on the Center's budget and future plans. I also interviewed several professors over the first couple years to determine how we could best meet their needs. And I invited professors from various departments to our staff meetings to talk to us about writing in their disciplines and to answer consultants' questions about writing assignments or issues that surfaced in consulting sessions with students from their departments.

Out of these discussions, particularly with Advisory Committee members, we came up with the idea of "Talking about Writing" workshops, where a panel of three or four faculty members would speak to students in their discipline about what they do when they write and what they look for in student writing. Specifically, I sent the professors the following list of questions to discuss at the workshop:

1. When you write, what works for you?
    - What process do you use in general?
    - What steps do you follow when writing an article in your field?
    - What habits get you going?
    - What difficulties have you had, and how have you coped with them?
    - What advice do you have for students to help them with their writing process?

2. What do you look for when you evaluate student papers?
    - What are the most common problems in student writing?

- What kinds of writing skills should students master to make successful contributions to this field in the future?

The focus is on the underlying assumption that all of us are writers and that, while we may have different approaches, we confront similar situations and problems when we write. The focus is on the process first. I generally moderate and make arrangements for these sessions; a Writing Center consultant attends as a notetaker.

In the eleven "Talking about Writing" workshops we have held since 1993, this format has worked. Professors have been willing, often eager, to participate because they enjoy sharing their own writing experiences and they are concerned about the quality of their students' writing. Moreover, they can count this participation as a form of service to the institution, and it involves little preparation. Students have attended—usually in much larger numbers than at our more general workshops—because they want to hear what their professors have to say. Their evaluations have been enthusiastic, and many have started visiting the Writing Center because of these sessions. As for us, we are spreading the word about our mission, getting good publicity, and finding out what professors value in student writing.

What do they value? After sorting through consultants' notes from the "Talking about Writing" workshops over the years, I have synthesized Claremont Graduate School faculty members' responses to the basic questions on the writing process and on evaluation of student products. While the categories are mine, the quotations and paraphrases are the professors' and reflect their main concerns.

CGS professors' advice on the writing process

In General—

- Writing IS thinking.
- Find good models and find out why they are good.
- Look at professional journals in your field, and follow the conventions.
- History professor: "Your body tells you when to write." In the morning with a clear desk and a cup of coffee, perhaps. Set up a routine that works for you.
- Set aside large blocks of time to write.
- "Force yourself to write even if you don't feel like it."
- When a professor offers to read over a first draft before the paper is due, take advantage of the opportunity.
- Set artificial deadlines, especially if you are a procrastinator.
- Education professor's process: spew, organize, write, criticize, revise—again and again.

Inventing

- Write down ideas all the time. Keep a journal. If you're an oral person, you might tape your ideas. These practices keep you in touch with what you are thinking.
- Politics and Policy professor: "The first conversation is with yourself. Once it's on paper, it has a life of its own, but you don't know if it will work until it's written down."
- Economics professor: "Research is a big conversation." Don't research and write in isolation. Talk over ideas with your colleagues and make notes.
- The purpose of the literature search is to motivate your own inquiry. Know what you want to say, and focus your search. Engage the literature; don't just summarize it. Ask, "So what?"
- Before drafting, do a "mind dump" first. Then clear the screen and start writing the paper. One professor advises, "Throw away whatever you start out writing. The first stuff is just to get you going."

Outlining

- History professor: "Outlining is the thing on which you grow the paper. It enables you to have the paper before you have the paper."
- It is highly recommended by some professors and used more informally by others. But they caution, "Be flexible." Often your ideas will change as you write. Don't rule out new ideas you discover just because they don't fit the outline.

Drafting

- Don't research and read too long and start writing too late.
- Write regularly. Begin each day rereading yesterday's work. Be your own devil's advocate. Sometimes real progress is just revising yesterday's writing.
- Anticipate your audience—what it knows and what it needs to know.
- Write the introduction and conclusion last.
- If your topic is well focused, you should be able to tell what the paper is about in one sentence.
- Don't get bogged down in data. Get to your point.
- Use placeholders when you get stuck, and move on.
- Use signposts—transitions, headings, or organizing sentences. Bullets are recommended in some fields; be sure the context and the connections among the points are clear.
- Show respect for positions you criticize.

Revising

- Don't turn in a first draft as a finished paper.
- Set a draft aside for awhile (a day, sometimes a month) so that you revise it with a fresh perspective and see it as a reader would.
- First revise the content; then edit the sentences and words.
- When editing, read your writing aloud. Notice sharp stops. Also

watch for sentence breaks, lengths, and rhythms. Finally, edit for elegance—precise and concise wording.
- Share your writing with a constructive, critical reader. You might form a group of fellow writers for this purpose, or use the Writing Center.

CGS professors' responses to student writing

1. Clear, Strong, Focused Thesis

Advice

- "Be direct." Get to the point early.
- Economics professor: "Have clarity and conviction. If you know what you want to say, you can say it forcefully in your writing; if not, then no amount of effort devoted to the writing can make it communicate something other than your own confusion."
- Management professor's criteria for judging a paper:
  - clear, strong position
  - comprehensiveness of the literature search
  - quality of the analysis

Problems

- No point, no clear purpose
- "It takes too long to figure out the writer's purpose."
- Topic too broad
- Unclear, undefined terms

2. Substance—Originality and Depth of Analysis

Advice

- "Have the courage to put yourself on the line."
- "Don't hide your voice in other people's words."
- Politics and Policy professor: "It's important to introduce the chorus of others' voices, but it's critical to introduce your own voice, even if it's just a note. Voice comes through in how you select priorities, synthesize, and hone your style as well as through direct assertions. Have an original way of seeing and saying something."

Problems

- Lack of originality
- Too much description (summary); too little analysis.
- English professor: overquoting or relying too heavily on what critics say and on plot summaries instead of original analysis.
- Unsupported assertions

3. Organization

Definition: the logical ordering of the arguments with a clear and connected sense of direction

Advice

- Religion/Archaeology professor:
  - Get at the problem right away.
  - Relate it to the larger field.
  - Give the methodology you will use.
  - State your conclusion so that it advances knowledge in the field.

Problems

- Poor organization, illogical argument, disjointedness
- The "information dump" paper
- Students turn in as final papers first drafts that are unorganized masses of researched material.
- Weak connections
- "No transitions, so I don't know where the paper's going."

4. Elegant Style

Advice

- Some professors prefer a rich vocabulary; subtle, complex sentences; and lengthy paragraphs. Others ask for "short, straightforward, simple, decisive sentences" with common words in concise paragraphs. These divisions are not necessarily based on academic discipline, though there are more humanities professors in the first category and more Management and Information Science professors in the second.
- "Minimize jargon," say the psychologists. Some professors hate jargon; others say it's okay if correctly used, with the audience in mind.
- Politics and Policy professor: "Get rid of all the adverbs."
- Both types, however, agree on the need for a clear, succinct, precise style.
- Write with active sentences, avoiding passive verbs unless necessary. "They are distancing and more complicated to read."
- Choose precise words.
- Be concise: "Short and sweet."

Problems

- Everything is too long!
- A Psychology professor's complaint: "Lots of extra words or sentences that repeat ideas without adding useful information."
- The paper's too long for the assignment.
- Sentences are too long and hard to read.
- Phrases are too wordy.
- "Unreadable academese" and "overblown rhetoric."

5. Acceptable Grammar

"Acceptable" means that it does not impede comprehension or distract the reader. Some professors are more bothered than others by grammatical or mechanical errors.

Problems

These are the ones professors specifically mentioned in order of frequency:

- sentence errors (run-ons, fragments, comma splices)
- spelling: "It bugs me when folks fail to run a spelling checker."
- subject-verb agreement errors
- wrong words: affect-effect; criterion-criteria; datum-data; less-fewer
- tense and point-of-view or number shifts
- paragraphing: "Not starting a new point with a new paragraph but rambling on in one long paragraph."
- capitalization errors
- poor vocabulary
- lack of parallelism
- awkward constructions
- dangling modifiers and mixed

metaphors (from an English professor)

6. Appropriate Documentation

While this issue came up, professors did not consider it as important as the others.

Problems

- Inadequate documentation (plagiarism)
- Inconsistent form

What is most interesting in reviewing these responses is that these professors from a wide range of disciplines (excluding the hard sciences, which are not offered at CGS) sound like writing teachers. Their advice is strikingly similar to Maxine Hairston's definition of good writing, based on research in composition and rhetoric, which she discusses in her textbook, *Successful Writing*: "Good writing is writing that succeeds in saying something worthwhile to a specific audience for some purpose." It must be:

- substantive
- clear
- unified
- economical
- grammatically acceptable
- vigorous, and
- in an authentic voice.

While we had expected to learn from these graduate faculty members addressing students in their fields what the particular characteristics of writing are for each discipline, we were surprised, and eventually a little bored, to hear professor after professor recite Hairston's (and our) litany. One of my note-taking consultants complained, "They all keep saying the same thing!" At a recent Writing Roundtable we held for faculty members, I asked several, who were reviewing the notes from the "Talking about Writing" workshops, why they had not discussed discipline-specific requirements for their fields. A Politics and Policy professor answered that is not where his students' problems lie. The others agreed. He proceeded to ask me for a "template" to give his students on the basic characteristics of good writing such as those mentioned by his colleagues so that his students could refer to it as they write and he could evaluate their papers accordingly.

How have these workshops affected the way we do our basic consulting work? They have given us confidence that we do know what we are doing and that an English consultant can effectively tutor an Economics student, although we try to match up consultants and students in similar fields whenever possible. It has been worthwhile for the consultants to hear firsthand what professors in other disciplines value, both in these workshops and at our staff meetings. Because of these face-to-face connections, we have been able to consult informally with them when we have questions about assignments or discipline-specific expectations. In fact, in Information Science, we have developed a mini-curriculum to prepare international students for timed Ph.D. qualifying exams. Overall, professors who participate in these workshops are more supportive and aware of us and our mission, and we are more in tune with theirs.

Where do we go from here? We have repeated these workshops in some departments, but we are interested in trying new formats that will not be too cumbersome for the presenters. This year we are offering workshops in several programs on more specialized topics. Professors are explaining how to write conference papers or how to publish articles in their fields. In Information Science I will be moderating a workshop this spring with four faculty members explaining how to write academic papers and journal articles as well as reports and proposals for professional clients. As we focus on these more specialized forms, I expect we will get more discipline-specific information. In a recent Religion workshop, for instance, professors advised students which journals to try to publish in first and what their typical article lengths are. Still, much more of the conversation had to do with basic good writing skills: remember your audience; fit the purpose, style, length, and documentation form to that particular audience; and get to the point.

Lissa Petersen
Claremont Graduate School
Claremont, CA

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North, Stephen. "The Idea of a Writing Center." *College English* 46 (1984): 433-446.

Association for the Teaching of English Grammar

July 17-18, 1998
Seattle, WA

The contact person for the conference is Michael Kischner, North Seattle Community College, 9600 College Way North, Seattle, WA 98103. Phone: 206-528-3540; fax: 206-527-3784; e-mail: kischner@seaccd.sccd.ctc.edu. Paper or presentation submissions may be sent to Martha Kolln, 3638 Buffalo Road, Bellefonte, PA 16823.

TUTORS' COLUMN

Say what? A question of understanding the student.

Suzy wanted me to kiss her at my fifth birthday party, but I definitely didn't want to kiss her. She had cooties, and I didn't want to catch them. Sure, I thought she was nice for a girl, and even fun to play with if there were no boys around, but she was still a girl! No way would I ever do something like kiss her! Yet she persistently asked me to do just that. When I went to my father for an explanation of why girls wanted you to kiss them, he gave me some advice that I have learned to apply indirectly to my recent writing and tutoring experiences:

> "Girls are different," he said in a conspiratorial whisper, "They do a lot of weird things. I think it's because they have marbles in their heads, but I'm not sure. Anyway, that's just the way life is. You'll have to learn how to deal with this type of thing someday if you want to make something of yourself."

I must admit that at the time I did not understand a thing my father had said, but his words have stuck with me through the years. I interpret them a little differently now than he may have meant them at the time, but I still believe the application remains the same. At age five, some girls want to kiss boys simply because that is what some girls want to do. There may or may not be a real reason for it. You "just have to deal with it."

In life, the individual success of a writing tutor lies in his or her ability to accept the existence of diversity and adapt to it. A tutor must make an attempt to understand each student with whom he or she works. If he/she fails to understand the student, the tutor may end up feeling much like I did at the age of five when Suzy tried to kiss me—dazed and confused, unsure of how to assist the writer. This would result in giving advice that seems as unintelligible to the student as the directions of my father were to me so many years ago. When a tutor attempts to counsel a writer, he or she should be prepared to do it based on an understanding of each individual author.

People are different. Girls differ from boys just as electricians differ from plumbers. Humanity is divided into numerous facets of personality and style, each with its own individual characteristics. In a written essay, the style, format, or voice a student uses in writing may depend greatly upon his particular individual characteristics. For example, an artist might use very colorful and descriptive language. To her, writing might represent an early form of imagination used to plan a work of art or describe a characteristic that she views in the world. In contrast, an architect might employ a writing style that is similarly creative, but more technical and unemotional in form. Students are no different and vary in a similar fashion. Hence, a tutor cannot expect all writers to conform to an individual style of writing. Each student is different, so a tutor must learn to adapt to each one.

Recently, I tutored a male student who wrote in what I considered a very dreary and depressing monotone. His writing lacked excitement and tended to use very long, uncharismatic sentences—The word "and" appeared almost twenty times in the first page. I suffered a great deal of agonizing frustration while attempting to read the essay, and it proved extremely difficult for me to understand his intended meanings. After reading only a few sentences, I decided I did not like the paper and that this particular author had little hope of ever writing anything of worth.

When the time came for the conference, I didn't have the slightest idea how I could help this student. I spent the first fifteen minutes hiding my inability with a discussion of punctuation and grammar, but when I noticed that his attention centered more on the carpet than on my comments, I knew I needed to stop. I started talking about concerns other than writing, telling him anything I could remember about my life that seemed remotely interesting or amusing. After only a few short minutes of idle discussion, the atmosphere of the conference began to change.

Unexpectedly, once I started telling him about my own life, he began to share a little about himself. To my surprise, he was actually an interesting person! As misfortune would have it, he had found very few friends in his younger years. He had decided to attend college in an attempt to find that feeling of friendship he had somehow never experienced. Unfortunately, after two years he still hadn't found a quality friend.

"AH-HAH," came the instant revelation, "now I'm beginning to understand why you write this way!"

By combining this new view of him as a person with the other small bits of information I gleaned from the discussion, I found myself viewing his writing in a startling new perspective. My attitude about him and his paper changed dramatically, and I began to feel more confident of my ability to

help improve his writing. I could almost see myself as Superman tearing off my Clark Kent clothes of misunderstanding and saving the writing world! I no longer had to fake my way through the conference. I knew how to help!

The point is that once I understood the student better, I was more able to understand the ideas he had expressed in his writing. From there, I could better comprehend the particular problems in his paper and help him to correct them. The essay really wasn't that bad; I simply had not understood the orientation of the author. Once I made the effort to discover a little about him as a person, I found myself more able to critique his paper effectively.

If a tutor wants to help a writer, he or she must first make an attempt to understand him. Once a tutor does this, the advice and suggestions given will be better, more relevant, and much more helpful to the student. The student will find him or herself more apt to learn something from the experience, and the tutor will have performed his job effectively.

At first glance, this may appear somewhat difficult to do—especially when faced with students whose personalities differ greatly from our own—but I have discovered several fundamental keys that aid in understanding and overcoming misinterpretation. The first key relates to discovering exactly what makes a writer in question "tick. " In simple words, what characteristics does the personality of the author exhibit and what makes him or her that way?

Before making a critique, a tutor must attempt to understand the relative elements that influence a student's writing. People come from a variety of backgrounds and upbringings, and possess a myriad of expressive styles. For example, they may come from the perfect model home, where everything seems happy and life looks great, or from a broken home, where life is unhappy and bleak. The mode of expression used by an author will depend greatly upon this variety of style-determining factors. If tutors want to offer understandable and helpful advice, they must first attempt to understand how each particular writer expresses herself and why. Once this is done, the tutor will more clearly comprehend the expressions of the student, and hence find himself better able to fairly evaluate the problems in a paper.

About five years after Suzy tried to kiss me, I entered the fourth grade in elementary school. My fourth grade teacher held a writing conference with me and through the process shattered my writer's self esteem. I was a country boy from Utah and my writing reflected that fact. Confused by my usage of phrases like "we all went and dished up some supper," the instructor labeled me "inept at writing" and told me to try writing a new paper. My ten-year-old heart shattered: I thought of myself as stupid. Basically, my teacher's failure to understand my background resulted in an unproductive conference.

A simple corollary to key number one forms a second key that will help a tutor gain a better understanding of a student. To better understand a writer, tutors must determine and accept the environment in which the writer learned to perform. Artists and architects write differently, and this becomes evident as a result of a number of factors, but we can effectively use this example to illustrate the need for a tutor to understand the environment in which a student performs.

Mathematicians, political scientists, botanists, and medical students alike each learn a particular focus and means of expression. The environment in which a writer performs will contribute significantly to the style in which he or she writes. The essay of an architect might be very specific, but lacking somewhat in emotion. An artist, on the other hand, might use sufficient emotion, but not enough concrete structure. Once tutors determine the mode or discipline in which a writer has learned to perform, they will be better able to comprehend the expressive style used in a paper.

Finally, a third key to understanding a student is the most simple of all, yet probably the most important. In five words or less: ***A tutor must be patient!*** Understanding does not come all at once. It takes time and effort to understand the perspective of a student. Patience will allow the tutor to become adept at comprehending the orientation of the many students with whom he or she works.

As you may recall, I wasn't much of a Romeo at the age of five. At that point in time, girls didn't play much of a role in my life. Today, however, things have significantly changed from so many years ago. I recently tried to get Suzy to kiss me, but for some surprisingly odd reason she does not seem to share my desire. As I turn to my mother for advice—instead of my confusing father—she tells me to be patient and time will change her mind.

My advice to any fellow tutor would be similar to my mother's. Don't worry about how well you are able to understand a student. Simply wait and see how effective your counseling can be. Understanding is a crucial part of an effective writing conference, but it must be tempered with the patience necessary for its achievement.

We have seen that a successful tutor needs to comprehend, adapt to, and teach "understanding." Such a process involves a study of the sources and characteristics of differences among writers and readers alike. Furthermore, understanding is a difficult concept to learn, much less teach. As a result, patience is critical to the success of any tutor attempting to employ these principles. Although we spend only a short time with each student, the effect we make on a writer can be immense if only the effort is made. Once all writing tutors approach student diversity

with a patient attitude and from an understanding viewpoint, the successes of writing conferences will drastically increase.

Chris Stubbs
Peer Tutor
Utah State University
Logan, UT

Helping students gain perspective on their writing: Freeing the writer's independent voice

Often clients come to the writing center with their own specific ideas of what is wrong with their composition. One would assume that clients would certainly know both the strengths and limitations of their own papers, but very often exactly the opposite is true. Clients tend not to have a clear picture of where the paper topic is going and an even less clear idea of how it is going to get there.

Stress and lack of self-esteem often cripple the writer at the outset. Specifically, the length of the assignment, the due date, and lack of a clearly stated purpose will keep the client from focusing on a particular perspective as a starting point. A consultant's first task is more often than not, to put clients at ease by reassuring them that all papers have starting point, that the drafting process is a means to an end, not the end. With this out of the way and clearly stated, one can often focus the client enough to get down to some real work.

For the anxious clients who come to the writing center seeking help, invariably the first problem they seem eager to attack is the one concerning the mechanics of the paper. To students, mechanical problems are so concrete, so easily corrected with the proper help, that they seem not as messy and confusing as the abstract concepts. Gently reassuring the student, the consultant guides the student to see that because these types of problems are so easily corrected, larger concerns about the paper should be first on the agenda. Listening while a student verbally explores the paper's problems and perspectives often helps them to actually start outlining their goals. At this point it is quite tempting to want to step in and take over: "This is where I see you going. . ."; "Let's just try this. . ." "Start here. . . ." While this approach most certainly would help to expedite the session, helping the end result to come into clearer focus and that much more quickly, the process must not be lost or forgotten. Students are there, after all, to learn to become more independent writers, and leading them through their own confusions to their own conclusions is one way of disabling their stress and helping them to gain confidence, not only with the paper at hand but with the many more that will inevitably follow. This is a perfect learning opportunity for the consultant as well: learning when to withdraw is a powerful tool which often empowers a struggling student writer.

Recently I struggled through a session with a freshman writer. Actually, both of us struggled. She was supposed to be defining perspectives of heritage in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use." While I read the paper she silently fumed. Her anxiety was palpable. I could discern some very strong opinions in the undertone of her paper, though what she had written did not exactly coincide. I tried to convey to her that although she needed to temper the paper with the statements of various well-known critics, her perspective was equally important. I decided to set the actual paper aside for a short time and proceeded to engage her in conversation about "Everyday Use," a story I was well acquainted with. It seems as though she simply had difficulty with the confidence level of her own opinions. We went on to talk about her own ideas about heritage and the attainment and ownership of it—she merely wanted to assert this in her paper, though not surprisingly, felt squelched by others deemed "in the know." I asked her to take pen in hand and just begin to list her ideas; not only her own feelings but how they related to the story. And what did she think that Alice Walker was actually trying to say? This technique reinforces the idea that for better or worse (hopefully better!) they and they alone are in full ownership of their papers. Often success comes with a bit of risk taking. The payoff is a paper that is authentically the writer's and a step towards the independence that all writers must cultivate to write well.

Stepping back and letting the writer choose rather than being a taskmaster enables the writer to gain the confidence to begin writing. Moving away from preoccupying concerns about mechanical errors (which may be very real) and getting right to the source of the more pressing paper problem should be the first concern. Helping students to gain perspective can often be achieved by simply discussing the topic at hand and setting the paper aside for a time. My particular client was experiencing the cognitive dissonance which often occurs when what we think should be true (e.g., what the experts believe) and what we know to be true ourselves come smashing into one another. Sudden bursts, carefully directed, are not necessarily bad things, but a good writing center consultant can gently direct the client in ways that soften the blow!

Michelle Reale
Beaver College
Glenside, PA

Book Review

Most Excellent Differences: Essays on Using Type Theory in the Composition Classroom, ed. Thomas C. Thompson. Gainesville, FL: Center for Applications of Psychological Type, Inc., 1996.

Reviewed by Steve Braye (Elon College) and Jo Koster Tarver (Winthrop University)

Dear Steve,

Thanks for your letter. When I first heard about Tom Thompson's *Most Excellent Differences: Essays on Using Type Theory in the Composition Classroom*, I had great hopes for what I could learn from this book, both as a writing teacher and as a writing center director. I came to Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI) theory late (the consequences of being a biochemist turned medievalist turned rhetorician) and have frequently found myself thinking, "I wish I had known this when I started teaching and tutoring!" And that's where I think this book fits: it's a collection for beginners, novice practitioners who have neither tutored nor taught before. Those of us who know more, and have used the MBTI for a while, will probably find this book a bit disappointing. Would you agree?

Best, Jo

Dear Jo,

I, too, was disappointed. I was hoping for a quantum leap forward in the application and discussion of the MBTI. I agree that this is more of an introductory book, with some broader applications that will help college faculty who don't see the potential for using the MBTI in teaching. I use the MBTI in training tutors in a course associated with the writing center. In that context, Thompson's introductory essay is quite good. He uses practical examples and talks about the test in a way that my students would find interesting. But this has been done before. What did you think of the other essays?

Regards, Steve

Dear Steve,

I'm in total agreement. We use some MBTI in our tutor training class, too, and we spend some time working with the staff on how to "size up" a client for potential tendencies. For me, especially with a book like this, I want more than "this is what type theory is"; I want to see "This is what having this knowledge lets you do." That's why I liked Mickey Harris's and Ron Sudol's essays in this volume best; both of them really concentrate on how knowing about types can help us coach writers to better performance. Another thing I like about both of these essays is that they see personality inclinations as just that: tendencies, not absolutes. For instance, most of my students think I'm an extravert (E), since that's how I behave in the classroom, but I'm really an introvert (I). I've just learned how to bring my E tendencies forward as I teach; I know I can't be an I all the time. As Sudol says, "The study of personality type helps us understand the value of seeing different ways of getting something done, rather than the right way and the wrong way"(102). I admire these two essays for maintaining this necessary perspective. Which other ones did you like?

Best, Jo

Dear Jo,

I also liked Harris's article, as well as Jane Smith's essay, for use in the center. I could see using Smith's essay in a teacher training/education setting, too. Once they have identified their type, students would see themselves in her breakdown of who does what and why. College faculty may resist this more, of course; unless they are aware of the validity of the MBTI, they might be inclined to see this as hocus pocus.

I also enjoyed aspects of Maid's and Scharton and Neuleib's articles, especially when they demonstrated the complex view we can develop of writing and reading after journeying through the type looking glass. But in each case, I found the theoretical discussions more interesting than the actual application. Both of them raise interesting questions about designing assignments and the modes we encourage students to learn (if, indeed, we encourage them to write in modes at all). But both conclude by saying (as I read them) that all discourses are valuable, in their own ways, and that we should teach our students to write capably in them all. But how does the developmental aspect of writing acquisition, mentioned in both articles, interface with type theory? Are there certain parts of the process, even certain modes or styles, that are more or less appropriate at different grade levels or ages? Scharton and Neuleib draw some helpful conclusions applying type in their "Elements of the Assignment" section. But each section acts as if an E or an I is a constant over time and writing expertise. Do all sensing types "become frustrated with modes" (51) or only those at the beginning writing stage? Again, I seem to be asking for more depth, which the writers may not have intended here. But such depth would have made this collection more valuable for me.

I actually thought the Appendix was one of the most useful parts of the book. The summary (145-56) was very helpful. So was Vicki Tolar Collins's breakdown of types and how they apply to library research (140-41). I'm sure most faculty have never thought about type in those terms, and the vi-

sual nature of her presentation was interesting, too. It would start an interesting discussion around this campus, that's for sure! Well, I'll stop there and see what you think.

Regards, Steve

Dear Steve,

I think you're right on target. One of the things that frustrated me a bit about Scharton and Neuleib's essay, as well as about Alice Horning's essay on type theory and readability, is that the stress is all on the teacher: the teacher should change, the teacher should give different kinds of writing assignments, the teacher should accommodate personality types. For me that's fine, but it doesn't go far enough; these essays stopped almost deliberately short of discussing how students can be brought to play against type, or to use their knowledge of type to produce different kinds of writing, and so on. For instance, ISJ students rarely succeed in keeping journals. So yes, it's probably not appropriate to assign them journals. But from what kinds of pre-writing can they benefit? What can they do to get their minds going, to avoid premature closure, to explore possibilities without feeling overwhelmed by methods better suited to other personality types? That's the kind of question I was hoping to find these essays answer, and like you, such attempts would have made the collection more valuable to me and to my tutors.

I too like Jane Smith's essay (and not just because she's my valued colleague). I think one of the most useful things in her essay is the "Summary of Preferences" on page 87; as you say, it will help student writers and tutors recognize both themselves and some of the qualities of other people with whom they work. I liked Collins' summary of the research process, but I wasn't as impressed with the drawings. But that's my personality type coming through!

Now, since we're talking about this as a book that introduces teachers and tutors to type theory (boy, say that clause fast!), let me make a few niggling points. In their essay, Scharton and Neuleib misidentify the title of the collection of essays edited a few years ago by Ray Wallace and Jeanne Simpson; the correct title of the volume is *The Writing Center: New Directions*. The bibliography was omitted from Muriel Harris' essay, but all the works to which she refers can be recovered from other essays in the collection, except Candice Johnson and Linda Houston's "Effective Writing Lab Tutors: Collaboration is the Key," *Writing Lab Newsletter* 18.5 (Jan. 1994): 4-5. Mistakes like this are confusing and frustrating to readers, especially novice ones, and I wish these had been caught in the editorial process. The bibliographies are very uneven; there's an appendix of "additional" readings on type and teaching that repeats works cited in individual essay bibliographies. One central bibliography for the whole book could have solved these problems. Finally, the excellent Appendix to which you refer bears specific prohibitions against duplication, so handy copies can't be made to keep in the writing center for reference.

There seems to be a little more about the MBTI's connection to writing theory emerging; let's hope that Thompson's collection stirs enough interest to convince other writers to explore its applications and potentials for writing center and classroom use in greater depth. Enough for now—have a great semester, and I'll see you at the Southeastern WCA conference.

Cheers, Jo

Dear Jo,

I hope you are right. I would look forward to another volume. I do think this book demonstrates how valuable type theory will be to writing theory and instruction. I am glad these writers opened up new avenues for conversation. I know they left me puzzling over type theory and new ways of teaching and learning. I am always thankful for that. Talk to you soon. Enjoyed our discussion.

Best, Steve

South Atlantic Modern Language Association

Call for Papers
November 5-7, 1998
Atlanta, Georgia
"Predictions and Possibilities: The Theory and Practice of Teaching Composition in the Next Century"

Papers are invited on a range of topics in teaching composition, including the future role of writing labs for teaching of writing. Preference will be given to speakers who present, rather than read their papers, so describe how the presentation will be made. Length: 15-20 minutes. Send completed papers or 150-300 word abstracts by March 1, 1998 to Bonnie Devet, English/Communication, SAMLA, College of Charleston, 66 George St., Charleston, SC 29424.
Fax: 803-953-3180

NWCA News from Joan Mullin, President

Anyone on WCenter will know that the third National Writing Centers Association Conference was a great one. While we all have our personal and professional reasons for claiming this, the most common was the exceptional camaraderie among participants, the willingness to exchange ideas, to listen to each other, to encourage. However, I'd like to emphasize the new challenges that arose. For the first time, NWCA offered an active writing center at a conference site. Instead of just talking about what we do, participants served as tutors for each others' work in progress. This modest beginning of actively demonstrating to our colleagues what writing consultation entails continued its operation in the book stalls at NCTE in November; those who attended brought manuscripts in progress, grants, memos, brochures or other PR on which they wanted feedback.

At the conference there were also informative sessions on tutoring, training, publicity and theory. Many more sessions addressed political strategies for positioning the writing center in our institutions, and for engaging in outreach to faculty and community. The former often had to do with fighting budget cut-backs that reduce resources at all levels, and the latter often concerned itself with surviving and expanding by connecting to university mission statements and strategic planning. These sessions clearly indicate that centers can become central to educational settings. In one sense we've grown tremendously, but because of that, we become subject to new problems that demand new solutions.

Both of these thrusts in writing center work—the active center and a changed, more central role in our institutions—announce a professionalization of our discipline. A third strand contributing to our changing status emerged in the conference challenges to our research. Some participants noted that writing center scholars must be sure to do their research homework before publishing; they warn against an impending stagnation of our enterprises due to continual reiterations of similar practices. Some presenters, noting that successful practices are always context specific, pointed to the need for theorizing our practices so that they can be more widely adapted to other sites. Other sessions demonstrated how to set up a research study, how to interpret data, how to present it. This last noticeable trend in our organization—a concentration on our research and its presentation—points to the necessity for an informed research agenda that communicates the most pertinent resources to the greatest number of colleagues.

In a small attempt to foster communication, the executive board of NWCA established an electronic list on which we conduct business. Because everyone cannot make every conference meeting, and because, when we do meet, our agenda is extensive, we not only use the list but will be conducting our NCTE board meeting via a MOO.

We've come a long way over the last twenty years, and have taken several giant steps since the first NWCA conference four years ago. At this year's conference we recognized Byron Stay as one of those instrumental in these changes by presenting him with the Outstanding Service Award. We recently elected Bob Barnett, Beth Boquet, Carol Haviland, Jeanette Jordon, Sara Kimball, and Bobbie Silk to the executive board—people who have become strong voices on WCenter and at our conferences. We extend our thanks to outgoing board members and will continue to draw on their expertise. At NWCA we also elected Michael Pemberton as the second vice president who, when he succeeds to the position, will be the first to serve as president for a two-year term. As others have done before me, I step out of the presidency of a viable, active association, with enthusiastic members, controversy, work to do, and leadership. Please continue this progress by extending your support and that never-ending writing center energy to Al DeCiccio, this year's NWCA president.

Writing Center Director University of Delaware

Director, University Writing Center, professional non-tenure track appointment, with possible secondary faculty appointment in appropriate department. Salary competitive. Heads staff of 19; directs basic writing program; coordinates tutoring services for the University students and some ESL instruction. Administrative experience with advanced degree in composition, rhetoric, linguistics, or English. Substantial grant experience, and/or writing center administration preferred. Letter of application and curriculum vitae by November 14 for initial screening at MLA. Final deadline for all applications is January 31, 1998. Applications to Professor Mark Amsler, Chair, Search Committee, English, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware 19716-2537. The University of Delaware is an Equal Opportunity Employer which encourages applications from minority group members and women.

Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

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

March 6: Northern California Writing Centers Association, in Belmont, CA
Contact Marc Wolterbeek, English, College of Notre Dame, 1500 Ralston, Belmont, CA 94002-1997. Phone: 650-508-3708; e-mail: Mwolterbeek@cnd.edu

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

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

April 2-4: Texas Assn. of Writing Centers, in San Antonio, TX
Contact: Lady Falls Brown, 213 English Dept., Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409-3091; e-mail: ykflb@ttacs1.ttu.edu

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

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

THE WRITING LAB
NEWSLETTER

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