THE //RITING LAB

...FROM THE EDITOR...

As I noted last month, next September's issue of the newsletter will start our twenty-fifth year of printing, and it would be interesting to commemorate that first quarter of a century in some way. As yet, I have no great suggestions for this landmark occasion, but I'm hoping you do—and will send them along.

One possibility is to have at least one article each month of Volume 25 (September, 2000 to June 2001) focusing on the newsletter or our communal writing center history. Stories, insights, personal experiences, etc. are all welcome as are more extended reflections and essays, and if you have only a paragraph or two to share, we'll run "reminiscences columns" collecting some that have been sent in. Some of you have been in the newsletter group since those first few issues were scotch-taped together at my kitchen table, run off on a mimeograph, and sent to you. Others joined us later as the newsletter evolved into colored paper, offset printing, and now desktop publishing.

Please do contemplate this challenge to offer some historical perspective. If you have questions, call me at 765-494-3723 or e-mail me at harrism@cc.purdue.edu.

• Muriel Harris, editor

...INSIDE...

Discovering disciplinary rhetorical practices: Tutors as guides, not masters

Whenever an interviewer descended on our Writing Center, we were invariably asked: "Are all of the tutors English majors?" Writing Center personnel often find that many across their campuses want to attach the Writing Center to one discipline—ironically one from which the WMU Writing Center is administratively far-removed. Regardless of a writing center's administrative location, generating discussions about disciplines other than English, or encouraging writers from other disciplines to visit the writing center is hard work. Whether we ignore or acknowledge disciplinary boundaries, we must still decide what aspects of disciplinarity might best be discussed from the various locations of writing centers. What might a writing center's sometimes "discipline-free" location allow that is more difficult to accomplish within a given discipline? Grimm points to one answer when she argues for writing centers to "talk more frankly with students about what is lost and what is gained as we move among

communities" (530). The writing center can be a free and productive space for discussion of a campus's disciplinary communities, particularly of what Geisler calls the "rhetorical processes" (or practices) of a discipline.

As Geisler shows, and as many in writing centers know from experience, such discussions are not easily generated, partly because "frankness" seems antithetical to a writing center ethos of democratic encouragement. Making matters more complicated, the "idea of

a rhetorical process" may be even more elusive than "the idea of a writing center," to paraphrase North. Picture the writer who ventures into the writing center expecting proofreading and is met by a tutorial treatise on what is lost and found as truths are constructed differently across disciplinary communities. Nevertheless, the idea of disciplinarity, that is, a recognition that writing in the deepest sense differs significantly across the disciplines, can still be woven into tutorial discussions. That "frank" discussion can open the door to many other discussions of writing in different communities. As Grimm argues, writing centers can offer an inordinate number of perspectives on the complexities of written discourse.

How then to train tutors to generate these multi-layered discussions of disciplinary writing? At first glance, the "directive tutoring" model, offered by Shamoon and Burns, might provide a means to introduce and apply Geisler's ideas of rhetorical processes. Shamoon and Burns argue for a return to some directive tutoring and use the master/apprentice relationship of the musical master class as a model. The apprentice performs and the master—a professional—directs the student to improvements. Translated to the writing center, tutors would assume more control of the tutorial and student text; the "master" tutor might give more answers, ask fewer questions, generate more text and offer more substantial revisions.

Initially, it seems logical that tutors *must* have achieved some of their writing success by mastering some of the rhetorical practices of their various fields. Why not adapt the master class model and allow tutors to be more directive about those successful strategies? Why not encourage them to act like "master writers," expounding on the intricacies of argument and evidence across the disciplines? These discussions would probably be frank, and students might revel in their access

to the secrets of "successful" writing for Professors X, Y, and Z. The more I considered this model for discussions of disciplinarity, though, the more my answer moved from "Sure" to "Perhaps" to "Probably not." To their credit, Shamoon and Burns critique the dogma of "non-directive" tutoring and open the door to discussions of disciplinarity in tutorials. However, many significant differences exist between the instructional model of the musical master class and tutoring in a writing center:

1) *A master class differs from studio music lessons*. Studio music instruction is a far more common correlative to the one-to-one writing center tutorial. A studio music teacher usually works individually with a student, developing a long-term relationship with the apprentice. In a master class, a group of students is unlikely to interact because their attention is on the master, who may offer only one class. One student performs and waits for the master to pass judgment or offer suggestions. Other students wait their turn and say little or nothing about the work of other students. In writing groups, the patterns of interaction between tutor and student(s) will generally include interaction between everyone in the group.

2) *When words fail, the musical instructor reaches for the instrument*. The imitation that occurs when James Galway reaches for his flute occurs because the music itself can be a much clearer model than the words which are used to describe it. Writing tutors are not afforded this luxury. Alert to students who want their texts dictated by tutors, tutors often struggle *not* to give wordings to be imitated. When a musician says, "It should sound like this," the student listens for nuances of interpretation. When a writing tutor says, "It should sound like this," the student may transcribe text verbatim. Tutors rely on words about words, while musicians rely on words and music about music.

3) *Music lessons are about interpretation, more than production.* Even with the appropriate nod to theories of "text" and "intertextuality," important differences remain between the music student who labors over an interpretation of a Beethoven sonata and the writer who begins with a blank sheet of paper. Most music students start with a circumscribed set of notes on the page and develop interpretations by varying tempos, emphases, phrasing, and loudness. Although many writers are responding to written prompts, they must produce their own texts, complete with the "interpretive" details of style and emphasis.

4) *The musical master's interpretation is difficult to avoid.* While many students bring embryonic and fluid texts to the writing center, musical master classes are premised on the assumption that the "text" is set, that students have mastered "the notes." Focussing on the nuances of phrasing and dynamics, the master may find it difficult to avoid imposing an interpretation. And, the master's status accredits the interpretation in such a way that the student is not likely to challenge it. Some writing tutors may also wear the title of "master," whether they seek it or not, but many struggle not to foist their own text or interpretations onto other students.

5) *Musical instruction requires talking about the body.* Although some writing theorists have discussed writing and the body, it is not nearly the factor in "production" that it is for a musician. Writing tutors are not likely to dwell on how a writer holds a pen or a pencil, but a violin instructor will be very concerned about the physical positioning of the bow. Unlike writing tutors, musical instructors may have some license to touch a student, for instance to position an organist's foot, a singer's diaphragm, or a trumpeter's chin.

6) *A master "producer/interpreter" is not necessarily a master instructor.*

Examples abound in all fields—including music and writing—of masters who cannot teach. Particularly in the arts, lore abounds about the many who *can* but cannot explain their abilities, much less teach them to novices. Of course, many artists and producers are also excellent instructors, but one capacity does not guarantee the other. For this reason, tutor applicants who write well, may or may not be effective tutors.

7) *The musical master learns little in the master class.* Though master musicians may be intrigued by elements in a performance, their job is to impart knowledge, not acquire it. Master musicians are not likely to comment on how much they *learned* in a master class. In writing centers, tutors often offer testimonials to how much tutoring improved their own writing. Granted, many tutors are students working a few hours a week, while master musicians are often professionals with long musical careers, but such contextual differences affect pedagogy and complicate the possibility of creating a writing center cadre of "masters."

8) *The master class is premised on "committed" and "selected" students.* It is an honor, though sometimes a terrifying one, to be chosen to work with the master musician. The master works with a small number of the strongest student musicians. Although some student writers are selected to visit writing centers and may be terrified about the prospect, they are unlikely to consider it an honor.

9) *The master class borders on performance.* One cannot overlook the audience as a participant in a master class. Both the master and the students perform for others in the room, adding a theatrical element to their exchanges. The exchanges between a tutor and a writer may have theatrical moments, but these are generally "performed" without an audience.

Shamoon and Burns do offer a helpful metaphor for directive tutoring, but tutors aren't necessarily "masters," and performances at Carnegie Hall are rarely foremost in the minds of those who visit the writing center. In spite of this critique (and insightful critiques from Cynthia Haynes and tutors who worked with Irene Clark), Shamoon and Burns remind us all that tutors *can and do* introduce topics into a tutorial which may not be articulated by the writer. Falling somewhere in the middle of a "directive/non-directive" continuum, tutors *can and do* introduce topics which writers may never have considered, or for which they lack terminology.

Perhaps chief among these topics is disciplinary rhetorical practices. Geisler, Bazerman, David Russell, and others have described how these practices are generally left unarticulated within the disciplines. The writing center—existing as it does on the margins—can introduce and stimulate such discussions. Tinberg and Cupples offer a flexible, evaluative rubric for talking about any disciplinary writing, but equipping students to notice and discuss the changes is also useful. Tutors need not pretend to have knowledge of all disciplines, but can begin noticing the rhetorical practices of various disciplines for which they write, and raising these issues in tutorials.

The following series of strategies and questions may help tutors initiate discussions of unique and consistent features in writing across the disciplines. These are not intended to be sequential, or all-encompassing. Each functions like a gentle push or nudge away from the myth of acontextual writing and toward a greater awareness of disciplinary contexts. It is impossible to predict which push or how many pushes are needed before the myth is exposed. Because these conversations originate in the writing center, where writers and tutors may come from any number of disciplines, these "pushes" are not designed to promote

instruction about how the members of Disciplines X, Y, and Z write. Rather, they are designed to equip writers with their own questions and answers as they move across the university and into their chosen fields.

1) *Raise the subject.* To many, the idea that writing does different (and similar) things in different disciplines is a novel or suspect idea, or these differences may just be written off as differences among instructors. Even if the discussion is broached, it may sputter out because students and professors lack a sufficient and comprehensive vocabulary of terms about disciplinary communication. Thus, the default discussion may not go beyond issues of form and style. Such students may notice only the structure of a lab report or resumé and do little more than replicate it, or they may separate disciplines into those where it's acceptable or unacceptable to use first person pronouns. Another telling example, common to writing centers, is the student who believes that mastering the MLA or APA style will guarantee written competence within a discipline. These are all starting points for discussions about disciplinary discourse, but the discussion can go much further. When tutors raise the subject, they may discuss types of issues and topics, relations between writers and audiences, levels of vocabulary, roles for writers, length and structure, the role and definition of "research," and the role and definition of "evidence."

2) *Probe and complicate terms about writing. Beware of dichotomies.* "Formal/informal," "academic/personal," and "fact/opinion," are all common parlance in discussions about writing, but exact distinctions are difficult. Making matters worse, the prevalent definitions may not go beyond the superficial features of a text. For many students, "formal" means nothing more than "no contractions" or "opinion" means that it's OK to say "I think."

The dichotomies also discourage students from seeing many other positions along these continua. Other common terms that are worthy of exploration: "correct," "rules," "tone," "awkward," "grammar," and "form." Using any of these terms without reflection or without examination perpetuates the idea that they are quantifiable, existing apart from disciplinary rhetorical gestures. A sociologist and an engineer may find each other's prose awkward, for example, outside of their respective disciplines.

3) *Contextualize "evidence," "argument," and "thesis."* Each of these "logical" constructs is subject to disciplinary variations. Is a thesis necessary and where does it go? What kinds of theses, evidence, and arguments are acceptable, important, or effective? What degree of certainty is appropriate for a particular thesis or argument, and what gestures reflect this? What counts as "good" evidence? Something seen, heard in class, read, or experienced? How might writers find answers to these questions? All of these questions add a rhetorical dimension to the idea of "proof."

4) *Encourage writers to think of themselves (and their classmates) and their professors (and others in their field) as parts of the writing process.* Student writers and professors as readers are quick to divorce themselves from papers, so that the paper succeeds or fails, rather than the writer or reader. Tutors can remind students that writers and readers both share the responsibility for acknowledging their roles in the paper. From there, writers may consider how they are different writers (and readers) in different courses, or how the writing for a course does or doesn't fit with the stated goals for the course. Tutors might go further with the idea of "role," asking if the assignment asks the writer to write as a disciplinary expert, apprentice, or amateur (Geisler's

term), or an outsider, or as a member of a larger public. The discussion might go in a different direction with questions about how involved in a field a professor appears to be, and how the field is treated (or ignored) in class.

5) *Explore the idea of genre.* What kinds of discourses do nurses, or managers, or historians, or computer scientists, or musicologists generate? How are these related to the genres that are read in class? Are "standard" genres, like the essay, assigned? If so, how do they seem to change in different fields? Genre theorists also pose questions about how a genre is defined. Is it defined by its function, its form, its style, its audience, or some combination, for example? A resumé is defined by a combination of all four, for instance, though many who read or write them overlook one or more of these important genre-defining elements.

6) *Consider styles and formats as rhetorical gestures.* Like other writing centers, the WMU Writing Center offers a workshop on "Writing with Sources." The session on MLA and APA styles begins with a brief discussion of the actual organizations, the history of these handbooks, and the larger purposes for the guidelines. Just as we try to link grammatical conventions to rhetorical decisions (Martha Kolln), we try to flesh out the rhetorical communities behind the APA and MLA guidelines. Why, for instance, are dates positioned so differently in the two citation systems? Such systems provide insights into what is and was valued in a disciplinary community.

7) *Encourage and equip writers to talk with professors.* When tutors "push" with questions about disciplinary writing, they are also equipping writers to ask those questions and others in discussions with professors. Too often, tutors encourage students to check with professors only when the question involves evaluation. When tu-

tors get questions for which the answers depend on professors' grading criteria, tutors are quick to say "You'll have to check with your professor." They might also suggest to students that many other topics are worthy of discussion during class or professors' office hours. In so doing, student writers may prompt professors to further reflection about writing in their classrooms and disciplines.

When the perennial complaints sound about students who can't write, I find myself taking the students' side. Students are not only asked to function as apprentice writers in disciplines where they will never function as masters, but are also asked to serve these various apprenticeships with minimal explicit instruction. If we return to the realm of music, the student who may have been proficient in Bach minuets is suddenly expected to excel in ragtime, jazz, minimalism, classical accompaniment, and the music of John Tesh—all with minimal instruction. Like the master musicians, writing center tutors can offer some insights

into the differences among the different situations for writing. Unlike the master musicians, writing center tutors can provide tools for students to equip themselves for the delicate and complex maneuvering required of writers across the disciplines. The discipline-free location of many writing centers frees (and even compels) tutors to engage in these discussions.

<div align="right">Elizabeth A. Hoger
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Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

October 14-16: Rocky Mountain Writing Centers Association, in Sante Fe, NM
Contact: Jane Nelson, Director; University of Wyoming Writing Center; Coe Library; Laramie, WY 82072. E-mail: jnelson@uwyo.edu; fax: 307-766-4822

October 28-29: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in Springfield, MO
Contact: Allison Witz, Hawley Academic Resource Center, Simpson College, 701 North C Street, Indianola, IA 50125; phone: 515-961-1524; fax: 515-961-1363; e-mail: witz@storm.simpson.edu

November 5-6: Pacific Coast Writing Centers Association, in San Bernardino, CA
Contact: Carol Peterson Haviland, English Dept., California State University, San Bernardino, 5500 Univ. Pkwy., San Bernardino, CA 92407; phone: 909-880 5833; fax: 909-880-7086; cph@csusb.edu

February 3-5: Southeastern Writing Center Association, in Savannah, GA
Contact: Christina Van Dyke, Dept. of Languages, Literature, and Philosophy, Armstrong Atlantic State University, 11935 Abercorn St.,Savannah, GA 31419-1997; phone: 912-921-2330; fax: 912-927-5399; vandykch@mail.armstrong.edu

March 24-25: South Central Writing Centers Association, in Fort Worth, TX
Contact: Jeanette Harris (j.harris@tcu.edu), Texas Christian University or Lady Falls Brown (L.Brown@ttacs.ttu.edu) Texas Tech University.

March 30: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Lansing, MI
Contact: J. Pennington. Conference website: http://www.lansing.cc.mi.us/~penningj/ecwca2000.htm

Textbook publisher tutoring guides: A review essay

Capossela, Toni-Lee. *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Peer Tutoring*. New York: Harcourt, 1998.

Gillespie, Paula, and Neal Lerner. *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring*. Boston: Allyn, 2000.

Murphy, Christina, and Steve Sherwood. *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*. New York: St. Martin's, 1995.

Ryan, Leigh. *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford, 1998.

The first guide for writing center tutors published by a major textbook company, Leigh Ryan's *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, appeared five years ago, and it was followed by other tutoring guides with the publisher's name in the title: in 1995 *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors* by Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood, in 1998 a second edition of *The Bedford Guide* and *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Peer Tutoring* by Toni-Lee Capossela, and now *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring* by Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner.

It is useful to examine the approaches to tutoring and to tutor training in these books as a group, partly as a guide for textbook decisions, partly because, if the history of textbooks in composition instruction is any indication, textbook companies' involvement in tutor training is an important development for writing centers. Copies of these books are often available free to writing centers, typically as an ancillary when a writing program adopts a major textbook by the publisher, making it likely that these books will supplant older books published by university presses and NCTE, such as Emily Meyer and Louise Z. Smith's *The Practical Tutor* and Martha Maxwell's *When Tutor Meets Student*, as the central text in many tutor training programs.

Ryan's *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, the shortest of the books, takes a how-to approach. The book has seven chapters and three appendices,

covering professional behavior and principles, providing an overview of the writing process and ways tutors can help writers with each stage, and explaining how to conduct a conference, to tutor students with special problems such as writer's block, to make use of computer resources, to work with different genres, and to deal with difficult tutoring situations such as unresponsive students.

Ryan's book is the most directive of the four books. The first chapter gives students a short list of admonitions about "professional" behavior ("never write any part of a student's paper"; "Honor the confidentiality of the tutoring relationship" [1-2]) and other advice to help tutors "observe certain principles of conduct in their relationships with students, teachers and other tutors" and to guide them in "difficult situations" (1). Chapters are divided into short sections and subsections, often briefly describing a term, concept, or genre or directing tutors to look up a term in a textbook or other source, with brief, direct advice and instructions, often followed by an example. Peppered throughout the book are highlighted lists of guidelines, strategies, and considerations; brief explanations of concepts set off in boxes from the rest of the text; and checklists for assessing papers and conference situations. Ryan's voice dominates until the appendices, providing fewer extended passages from student writings, conference transcripts and published articles than any other book. Individual pieces of advice about conducting tutorials are given with short explanations and

brief examples from individual conferences. Ryan has a chapter describing the writing process, with explanations of prewriting and other activities that tutors might have writers engage in. Each section of this chapter, on a different stage of the writing process, begins with a brief overview of the situation for quick reference, activities for the writer, and kinds of conference techniques that a tutor can draw on for a problem related to that stage. Under "Prewriting," for example, Ryan writes:

> CONDITION: Student is unsure about where or how to begin.
> ACTIVITIES: Discuss. Brainstorm. Freewrite. Collect/list/select.
> TUTOR: Questions. Reflects or mirrors. Suggests. Supports.

Ryan often focuses on information that tutors need to know about writing in general and writing in the disciplines and in the workplace, as well as about usage and mechanics, and she frequently asks tutors to look up this information in other resources in the writing center, such as textbooks, providing a greater sense of a writing center as a resource center for information on writing than any other manual.

Although *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* is the most directive of the four books, it encourages tutors (like writers) to select from many strategies and suggestions, the first chapter suggesting that tutors reflect about their experiences in a journal. The very brevity of the book implies that it is only an introduction to the complicated subjects of writing and tutoring students about writing. This is the manual

I would choose in situations that allow little time for orientation and training, where tutors must learn on the job and need clear guidelines for conducting conferences, hopefully followed by regular meetings and conversations with tutors to help them reflect about what they are doing.

In contrast, in Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood's *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, as the title implies, the authors' voices are subordinated to those of the authors of the eleven articles that make up the bulk of the book. Murphy and Sherwood each contribute one of the articles, but otherwise we hear them only in a 17-page introductory chapter, in brief introductions to the readings, and in a short last chapter that points readers to additional print and electronic sources. Rather than provide one perspective on tutoring, the readings often disagree with each other. Stephen North's "The Idea of a Writing Center" is countered by Andrea Lunsford's "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center." Jeff Brooks' "Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work" is critiqued implicitly by Irene Lurkis Clark's "Collaboration and Ethics in Writing Center Pedagogy" and by Judith K. Powers' "Rethinking Writing Center Conferencing Strategies for the ESL Writer." Murphy and Sherwood's introduction encourages readers to take a dialogical approach in reading the articles, to assess what each author argues in the light of conflicting arguments. *The St. Martin's Sourcebook* works well as the sole text in a tutor-training program where tutors discuss readings extensively or as a supplement to any of the three manuals.

The readings are organized into four sections: "Theoretical Constructs," "Interpersonal Dynamics," "Responding to Texts," and "Affirming Diversity," a section of articles on ESL students, older students, and students with learning disabilities. The book focuses on theoretical principles and even more on interpersonal concerns in tutoring, devoting fewer words than the other books on specific tutoring practices. The sourcebook, Murphy and Sherwood explain, should aid tutors in developing "an informed practice," helping them "draw on experience informed by insight and an evolving personal philosophy" that will allow them to bring to the conference "the technical skill and creativity needed to teach writing successfully" (4). Murphy and Sherwood divide the tutorial into three stages: the "pretextual stage," in which the "tutor and student begin the process of developing the interpersonal relationship that will guide their collaborations" (5); the "textual stage," which considers the text itself; and the "posttextual stage," which "provides closure to the tutorial and . . . offers a template, or model, for future learning experiences" (14). Murphy and Sherwood recommend Ryan for those who want a how-to manual, as well as other books that focus on practice, but rather than provide specific instructions to meet situations, Murphy and Sherwood want tutors to consider and discuss their options considering the problems of each tutoring situation. Formulas would conflict with the book's emphasis on the individual, interpersonal, contextual nature of each tutorial and on the need for the tutor to develop an informed theory and practice.

Toni-Lee Capossela's *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Peer Tutoring* is both a how-to guide and sourcebook combining aspects of the Bedford and St. Martin's books, longer than those two books combined. The twelve chapters include a chapter defining a peer consultant, two chapters on getting to know the writer and beginning a conference, four chapters that cover stages of the writing process, and then chapters on dealing with teacher comments, different genres, different kinds of writers, and computers. The 22 readings generally alternate professional and scholarly articles with narrative essays written by peer consultants. Although Capossela includes a number of writing center articles on theory, tutoring practices, technology, and working with nontraditional students, she also includes general composition articles by Peter Elbow, Linda Flower and John Hayes, Nancy Sommers, Mina Shaughnessy, Richard Lanham, and Lil Brannon and C. H. Knoblauch (as well as a column by Russell Baker) on subjects like revision, editing, the thesis statement, basic writers, teacher responses to student writing, and student interpretations of writing assignments. Readers receive a much more extensive introduction to the writing process and general composition scholarship throughout *The Harcourt Brace Guide* than in any of the other books. Capossela integrates the two halves of *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Peer Tutoring* with assignments at the end of each of the first 12 chapters that ask students to read, compare, and write about the readings.

In its first half Capossela is similar to Ryan, with a number of lists of directives and descriptions of consulting strategies, but the book shares Murphy and Sherwood's emphasis on tutors engaging in reflective practice. While the guide explains many of the principles and practices of minimalist tutoring, several of the readings question the wisdom of applying this approach universally, and the assignments often ask students to assess the arguments in a reading, to address conflicting claims between two articles, or to question how well a specific approach would work in a troublesome situation. But while Murphy and Sherwood focus on epistemological and interpersonal issues, Capossela stresses questions of hierarchy: the first chapter rejects the term "tutor" as too authoritarian, arguing that a peer consultant should not act as a surrogate teacher, and the readings begin with John Trimbur's argu-

ment that peer tutors need to avoid becoming professionals or paraprofessionals. (Ryan, in contrast, begins her book with a chapter on "Being Professional" that identifies one of the roles of the tutor as "writing expert.")

Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner's *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring* takes the most nondirective approach to tutor training. As the Preface explains, the book's organization tries to "mirror the structure of tutor training," where students observe several hours of conferences, take part in mock tutorials, keep a journal, and meet frequently to discuss ideas, observations, and experiences before beginning tutoring themselves. As such, *The Allyn & Bacon Guide* would be my choice as the central text for a tutor-training course. The first three chapters provide students with an overview of the tutoring and writing processes. Chapters four through eight guide students from examining their expectations about tutoring and writing to observing tutorials, role-playing, and taking notes to "Tutoring for Real." The remaining six chapters discuss a collection of different concerns. Several of the chapters cover subjects common in the other books—working with ESL students, tutoring online, and dealing with various difficult situations. But Gillespie and Lerner also cover subjects generally ignored in the other books with chapters on "Reading in the Writing Center" and "Writing Center Ethics," as well as a chapter on "Discourse Analysis" that encourages tutors to engage in research by analyzing their tutorials. Throughout *The Allyn & Bacon Guide* Gillespie and Lerner address the pleasures and anxieties of tutoring, more than any other book.

Gillespie and Lerner's explanations of nondirective tutoring distinguish tutoring from editing, emphasize students' ownership of the text, urge tutors to ask writers to read their text aloud, and advocate dealing with global, higher-order concerns in a paper before later-order, sentence-level mat-

ters. Gillespie and Lerner frame their explanations more as advice than as directives, and their voices often recede into the background in favor of tutors' narratives and commentaries, conference transcripts, sample papers, and suggestions culled from WCenter and workshops at regional writing center conferences. *The Allyn & Bacon Guide* is dominated more by the voices of peer tutors than any other book. Rather than define what a tutor does, the first chapter reproduces stories by tutors that describe their early assumptions and often how their first writing center experiences challenged those assumptions, and as the book leads the reader through its tutor-training process, Gillespie and Lerner expect readers to assess and discuss the papers, conference transcripts, and tutor narratives increasingly on their own as they gain experience with the book's guidelines for observation, note-taking, and analysis.

Stressing listening and adaptability as the most important qualities in a tutor, Gillespie and Lerner's approach to tutor training here parallels their approach to tutoring by respecting the authority and judgment of the tutor, avoiding pushing one approach to tutoring on the reader, encouraging continual reflection and discussion about one's assumptions and approaches to tutoring, and paying heed to the expectations, apprehensions, and emotions of the new tutor. Their critique of a generally unsuccessful tutorial by a tutor who likes to give writers tips points out the problems of this directive approach while acknowledging the tutor's reasons for taking this approach and her effectiveness with other writers. Gillespie and Lerner often question and complicate the positions that they put forth, warning tutors that a writer's cultural background, circumstances, expectations, and the give and take between tutor and writer require tutors to carefully assess how they interpret what is happening in a conference and what strategies they employ to help each writer.

All four books share central concepts about writing and tutoring. All but Murphy and Sherwood present a model of the writing process based largely on research about prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing from the 1970s and early 1980s, Ryan and Capossela getting into genre and WAC studies as well. All four books provide instruction in minimalist tutoring, where the tutor engages in a dialogue with the writer, listening, questioning, and helping writers make their own decisions more than offering advice and giving instruction. But each book, in different ways and to varying degrees, also discourages tutors from treating minimalist tutoring as a formula that works for every writer in every tutorial; *St. Martin's*, *Harcourt Brace*, and *Allyn & Bacon* especially encourage tutors to develop a flexible approach that is sensitive to the individuality of the writer and the tutoring situation.

But beyond these commonalities, each book has a different idea about what tutors need to know and perhaps what knowledge writing center research should pursue. Ryan takes a streamlined approach, providing a quick explanation about writing and conducting conferences for tutors to get started. Murphy and Sherwood, however, encourage more study of interpersonal dynamics drawing on psychoanalysis and creativity theory. Capossela's book provides peer consultants with more extensive knowledge about writing and about classroom teaching of writing than the other texts and stresses how important questions of power and hierarchy regarding consultants, students, and teachers are in developing effective approaches to working with writers. Discourse analysis is central to Gillespie and Lerner's vision of tutor training and writing center research.

Although all but the St. Martin's book devote a chapter to computers and OWLs, these chapters seem like afterthoughts in books in which the

face-to-face conference is the paradigm for tutoring. Each book discusses online tutoring, but they disagree about what else tutors need to know about computers, sometimes discussing the effects of word-processing on the writing process (Capossela), face-to-face tutoring at a computer (Ryan), conducting research on the World Wide Web (Ryan), and online resources for writers such as OWLs (Ryan). The books' guidelines for tutoring online are considerably briefer, more general, and more tentative than for tutoring face to face; Ryan and Capossela, in fact, devote more words to describing technologies, the effects of word-processing, and the debate about online vs. face-to-face tutoring than to developing guidelines for tutors. The three books left me with a sense that, because practices for tutoring online (or for dealing with other computer issues) are not as established as face-to-face tutoring practices, we're still very much feeling our way about how to deal with computers in tutoring training. These books may provide helpful starting points, but they leave it up to writing center directors to figure out how to incorporate computers into tutor training.

All four books devote at least a chapter to types of students and situations that can pose difficulties for tutors. As informative and helpful as these discussions are, they are also problematic, as any textbook discussion regarding student identities must be. Each book discusses ESL writers (all but Ryan providing a full chapter or article on the subject), generally showing tutors how to adapt the practices of minimalist tutoring with ESL students. Each book also provides information about students with learning disabilities. Other categories that appear include older students, basic writers, students who speak nonstandard dialects, angry students, unresponsive students, students with writing anxiety, dependent students, and students who come to the writing center just before a paper is due. Although these categories, based largely on the problems that different students pose to tutors, do help tutors prepare for the typical difficult situations that many will encounter, they also imply a "normal" or "ideal" client for writing centers and may encourage tutors to see clients as "them" not "us." The authors generally recognize this problem, especially in discussing ESL and LD students, and caution against stereotyping or regarding a difference in culture, learning style, or language as a deficiency.

It may be a good idea for tutor-training programs to raise the issue of how their textbooks characterize students, peer tutors as well as clients, including how the books seem to envision their readers. Murphy and Sherwood, Capossela, and Gillespie and Lerner all emphasize the influence of each student's cultures on how he may respond to a writing assignment and act in a tutorial, but they provide little detail about how tutors can take students' different cultures into account. Only Murphy and Sherwood, by including Anne DiPardo's "'Whispers of Coming and Going': Lessons from Fannie," provide analysis of how a tutor's cultural background might affect her performance as a tutor (although Gillespie and Lerner's tutor stories do get into how tutors' past experiences affect how they approach tutoring). When peer tutor guides characterize and categorize students, they cannot help but enter into writing centers' clash of concepts about student identities: beliefs about professionalism, commonalities among writers, the importance of cultural differences, and the individuality of each writer, as well as the categories we develop to deal with recurring problems created by the personal, cultural, interpersonal, and institutional circumstances that a tutor often has little or no opportunity to investigate in any detail.

It is encouraging to see that each textbook publisher tutoring book takes a different approach to tutor training. As a group these books make it easier for writing center directors to find a book appropriate to their pedagogy and circumstances. Writing center directors who depend on free ancillaries, therefore, may want to get involved in the writing program's textbook decisions.

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When the teacher is also the tutor

In her *Writing Lab Newsletter* article, Christina Van Dyke makes a case for pulling together the disparate approaches of teacher-centered product-writing and student-centered process-writing by making the writing center a training facility for future teachers. Some universities are already working toward a synthesis of pedagogical methods by inviting faculty-wide participation in both the undergraduate tutorial and the graduate teaching practicum.

I earned my bachelor's degree in English literary studies at Utah State University in Logan while working as both a Rhetoric Associate and a Writing Center tutor. Though the methods vary slightly, each program's goals are the same, as RAs and tutors work with writing directors to help students develop more effective patterns of writing. Both programs are peer-oriented, with the conception and development of the student's paper as a point of focus, where ideas evolve and expand through one-on-one discussion.

Rhetoric Associates work with instructors and students in classes other than composition, such as philosophy, literature, science, and math. RAs, who know the assignment and are aware of what the instructors want, read the paper in private and make comments in writing on such things as style, organization, voice, and so on. Then the RAs meet with the students to talk about the goals, weaknesses, and successes of the paper, helping writers articulate their own ideas for improvement.

Writing Center tutors are handed the paper on the spot. They first talk with students about the goals of the paper and the expectations of the instructor, then they read the paper aloud with the students, commenting on the material and asking questions as they go. At USU, both RAs and Writing Center tutors are hired and trained as undergraduates to help peers re-think their writing process, articulate their concerns, and discover ways to make their writing work better for them. These sessions are highly effective because tutors are friendly and objective peers, not graders, and discussion takes place in a relaxed atmosphere where writers are not pressured to please, but invited to participate.

Well-trained undergraduate tutors acquire people-skills that transfer to graduate-level teaching. But it is important at this point for the training to go on, to help these new teachers apply their one-to-one student-centered tutoring skills to the classroom setting, where they are now regarded as the authority and not the peer.

For me, training began with a writing center tutorial and continued three years later with a graduate instructor seminar and practicum. I also had instruction as an RA, but for the purpose of this essay, I will focus on my writing center training.

I was hired as a sophomore in the fall of 1993. For the next three quarters I faithfully attended English 492, the tutoring seminar directed by Andrea Peterson, and I worked in the Writing Center to apply what I learned. The goals for the course, outlined in the syllabus, were

- To develop an awareness of the variety of levels of writing, both within the English department and university-wide.
- To establish effective interpersonal relationships in a tutor\tutee situation.
- To acquire an appreciation for the necessity of accurate, responsible record keeping.
- To become an integral part of the Writing Center hierarchy.

The third goal on the list, record-keeping, had to do with checking students in and keeping track of their progress. Later on in my teaching career, I would benefit from this conscientious practice in the Writing Center. Experienced teachers know the value of precise record-keeping to prevent misunderstandings with students' grades. Another valuable career skill the Writing Center provided was that of Goal 4, becoming an integral part of the system. The tutors respected the students; the directors respected the tutors. We learned to work together; we knew we could depend on each other. There were no cross-purposes in the Writing Center.

In our tutor-training sessions, we learned to appreciate diversity, to recognize that writing styles and situations come in all forms. We studied different "types" of students and student writing, we practiced together, we tape-recorded (with the students' permission) and wrote about our tutoring sessions. We shared different situations with each other in our weekly tutorial, compared our experiences with textbook examples, read the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, and followed the advice of Donald Murray, Peter Elbow, Muriel Harris, and other experts in the field.

We listened to guest speakers: teachers of composition, rhetoricians, technical writing teachers, literature teachers. Student teachers who had watched us work reported back to us on the low points and highlights of our tutoring sessions. We took lots of notes in class,

and practiced, practiced, practiced the techniques we found most helpful to our personal style of tutoring and to each tutoring situation.

The following are some of the notes I saved from 492, the hints and suggestions I followed and still try to follow as a teacher:

- Don't impose your style on their paper. Read the student as well as the paper. Ask questions and then give examples if needed, but as models, not prescriptions. Talk about concepts, ideas. Open up the conversation, then wait for the writer to carry it forth.

- All writing is communicating. Write for your readers as if you were talking to them face to face.

- Writers do not need your words to mimic. They need the principles from which their own phrases will evolve.

- These are only suggestions. Tell writers why you are making suggestions, how something isn't working for you. Show them how to bring an unclear phrase or section to light by putting it down on paper the way they've just told it to you.

- Always compliment, honestly and specifically, on something the writer has done well, or some potential you see in the paper.

- Different methods work for different people at different times. Adjust to the situation by reading the body language, facial expression, tone of voice. Notice the person in relation to the paper. Respect the paper as personal property.

We studied special cases, ESL students' papers, papers from students with learning disabilities. We learned how to slow down, how to give students time to relax and formulate capable answers to open-ended questions. We read papers aloud to help them understand how an outsider interprets their writing. And we helped them discover patterns of error so they could begin to correct them on their own as we read.

We welcomed input from teachers and professors who would be sending their students to us with specific assignments. Technical writing instructors gave us guidelines for helping students to construct effective business documents, to prepare reports to meet the needs of a particular audience, to begin every paragraph with a strong core sentence, to state problems and solutions directly and concisely.

We invited research-writing teachers to share successful strategies for incorporating personal knowledge with source material to make a paper interesting, informative, and persuasive. In fact, I learned more about the particulars of research writing in the writing center than I did in the regular classroom.

I graduated from the Writing Center when I got my degree, but I didn't have to give up tutoring. Instead, I came back the next year as a graduate instructor. GIs at USU are required to put in four hours a week tutoring at the Writing Center during their first quarter of teaching. And the training continued. At the 692 workshop and practicum, I would discover how to take everything I'd learned as an undergraduate tutor and apply it to my own classroom as a teacher of writing.

The first objective for 692, "Learn to evaluate your students' writing and progress," was an extension of the 492 goals which called for an awareness of the many levels of writing ability. With my tutoring experience, I knew how much the levels varied. This awareness gave me an edge in the 692 grading calibration sessions, and I was confident that I could grade papers fairly. I didn't even have to wonder if that responsibility would affect the casual rapport I wanted to establish with my students, because the 101 handbook committee had put together a thorough grading system with a grid for every assignment. I could be totally objective with grading and still be the students' advocate, sympathizing with them and helping them work toward the goals of each assignment.

The second objective in the 692 syllabus was to "Participate in Writing Center tutoring sessions." An easy one for me. Third objective: "Learn how to conduct student-teacher conferences." This is where tutoring and teaching converge. Teachers with tutoring experience are better able to "establish effective interpersonal relationships" with their students, and the benefits carry over to the classroom. Teachers who are experienced tutors ask the kinds of questions that get meaningful responses. They help students learn to relax and talk about writing.

The conversation continues in the classroom because teachers who've made the transition from tutorial to practicum have learned how to prompt class discussion, which actively involves students in their own learning.

Looking back through my 692 response journals, I see how the readings, the teaching experience, and the class discussions all combined to extend the knowledge I had acquired as a tutor in the Writing Center. I find links between tutoring and teaching in almost every journal entry. For example:

I want to help my students realize the value of individuality. When I was a tutor, I was on the same level with my tutees, and I let them know they were the authors of their work, that I was only there to help them find the gaps and make their individual voice credible, believable. I enjoyed reading their papers, I of-

fered suggestions for improvement, and I didn't have to give them a grade. Now grading is an issue, but it should be the only thing that changes. I still want to give my students the freedom to write, not to please me, but to find their true voice in a difficult world.

As a teacher who is also a tutor, I try to honor diversity and teach my students to honor it. I direct the peer response groups in my classes to ask each other the kinds of questions that will stretch their minds. I persist in asking students to respect each others' different backgrounds and abilities so they can learn how to effectively question their own ideals and biases. I send my students to the Writing Center, where tutors can help them articulate their ideas without alienating their audience. I insist that they employ the process of writing and re-writing to help themselves understand how they make judgments and come to conclusions, and why.

When I continually ask my students the questions that help them appeal to diverse audiences, they gradually learn how to ask those questions on their own. When they start to answer those questions in their writing, they've begun to expand their way of thinking. And that, as a teacher, is all I can hope for.

It's been nearly a year since I've worked in the Writing Center, and now that I've made the transition from tutor to teacher, I'm more aware of the opposing pedagogical methods Van Dyke examined in her essay. I've heard rumblings around the faculty lounge that suggest a resentment, or at least a misunderstanding by some composition teachers and others about the goals of the Writing Center. And I've wondered: Since every new USU graduate instructor has to have at least a quarter of tutoring experience, how could they misunderstand? But now I realize what it must be. These new GIs have already

accepted the role of teacher as authority. They didn't have the advantage of being a peer to their students first, and learning how to draw out each student's voice through careful one-to-one discussion as equals, or allies.

As a teacher who still considers herself a tutor, I always try to remember the first two goals in the 492 tutorial, to have an awareness of writing levels and to establish interpersonal skills. I learned, in my three years of undergraduate tutoring, that just as every personality is different, every paper requires a different tutoring approach depending on each writer's educational level, personal experience, acquisition of grammatical skills, and social adaptation, as well as other factors.

Graduate instructors who begin their tutor training at the same time they begin teaching classes never get the chance to develop the kind of interpersonal skills that would allow them to form a partnership with their students. They can become aware of different writing levels and abilities, but they might miss the chance to discover and perpetuate the unique individuality of each student's personal writing voice.

Because of my experience as a writing center tutor, I was asked to participate in a graduate instructor seminar while I was still an undergraduate. I demonstrated a tutoring session and outlined strategies for first-time graduate-instructor-tutors. When I attended the seminar as a GI the next year, I did so with two other long-time writing center tutors who were also beginning GIs. We took our tutor-training seriously, but we had fun at it too, and we tried to present that aspect at the seminar to other new GIs who would soon be spending time in the Writing Center. But one thing we couldn't give them is practice, especially not at the undergraduate level. And some of them missed the point, as I said earlier.

Discordant pedagogical methods

leave students confused and faculty members resentful. If every writing center invited participation in tutorial training for every level of the writing program, from undergraduate to graduate instructor to full professor, the discord would be resolved. Of course, differences of opinion would still occur, but as every well-trained tutor knows, difference is what helps open-minded peers and associates expand their horizons and improve their lives, not to mention their writing.

Writing centers prepare tutors to be teachers, and they prepare them to be administrators or business people or psychologists. Tutors who take their training seriously will graduate from the writing center with a variety of skills that can make them successful in any profession they choose.

Back to the start: yes, we can make the pedagogical approaches converge. We can start by training teachers to first be tutors. They, in turn, will make the writing center an integral part of the composition classroom, where collaborative instruction gives each student the opportunity to become an active participant in the process of writing, and everyone benefits.

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Composition Studies

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Composition Studies, first published as *Freshman English News* in 1972, is the oldest independent scholarly journal in rhetoric and composition. *CS/FEN* publishes essays on theories of composition and rhetoric, the teaching and administration of writing and rhetoric at all post-secondary levels, and disciplinary/institutional issues of interest to the field's teacher-scholars. Each issue includes Course Designs, an innovative feature on curricular development in writing and rhetoric of interest to teachers at all post-secondary levels. *CS/FEN* also includes lengthy review essays, written by rhetoric and composition's leading authors, of current scholarly books in the field.

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TUTORS' COLUMN

"There is no greater urge than the urge to edit someone else's writing"

I am a detail-oriented person. A perfectionist. A neat-freak, if you harbor some resentment. I like to organize sock drawers. My CDs are in chronological order, my books are arranged in descending height from left to right. My idea of a good time is color-coding files on my hard drive. And boy can I spot when something on my dresser is not in its proper resting place.

Fortunately—or unfortunately, as the case may be—I also read and write in much the same manner. This attention to detail usually ensures that I produce a neat, clean, high-quality product. But this has also been one inclination that I've had to modify during my experience this past semester as an intern in the Washington College Writing Center.

Oscar Wilde said that there is no greater urge than the urge to edit someone else's writing—how true that is! But the very first lesson we learned in our reading was that the purpose of the Writing Center is much loftier than to be simply a "grammar fix-it shop." Steven North argues quite convincingly that "in a writing center the object is to make sure that the writers, and not necessarily their texts, are what get changed by instruction . . . to produce better writers, not better writing" (North 27). North suggests that the key to achieving this goal is to reject the "'proofreading-shop-in-the basement' mentality that undermines the pedagogical efforts of the writing center" and focus on the bigger issues in the paper—like the purpose, the ideas, the organization (North 33).

Emily Meyer and Louise Smith, authors of *The Practical Tutor*, frown upon "editing" a student's paper also, but for different reasons. First they differentiate between conceptual comments which "address the ideas in a paper as if it is a work-in process," and editorial comments that "treat surface errors as if the paper was a finished product" (Meyer 136). They go on to explain that editorial comments interrupt the writer's revision process and make the writer dependent on a proofreader, and caution that those who suggest editorial comments are acting as judges of a final product (Meyer 137).

After a few class discussions, I was convinced. Yes! Process over product! The writer, not the writing! I soon came to realize, however, that for me, at least, focusing on conceptual comments—especially when editorial ones begged to make themselves heard—is extremely difficult. I know more about the rules of punctuation and grammar than I do about how to organize an argument. It's harder for me to tell what is structurally wrong with a paper than it is for me to say, "Whoops! Comma splice!" Locating good ideas—and communicating them in an effective and organized manner— is more challenging than producing a neat, pretty paper. And when in my conferences I felt anxious, I clung to what I felt most sure of—sentence-level comments— like a child learning how to swim clings to the pool side.

Just before my first conference, I was so nervous that I thought I had caught the stomach virus. While I may not have gotten the virus, I certainly didn't have control over the conference. The student gave a long explanation about the background of his paper, and my attempts to steer him back to the topic ("So what was the assignment?" and "How long is it to be?") just led to more tangents. I then asked him to start reading his paper aloud. Probably because he was familiar with his work, he read like the wind. Although I was nervously trying to concentrate, I had no idea what was going on in the paragraph. Determined to value the process over the product, I probed for a thesis. Frustrated, he pointed to various sentences in the introduction before embarking on more long-winded explanations, attempting to make sure his "idiot tutor" got it. Surely I had done nothing at this point to prove my competency.

To return to the "child learning to swim" metaphor, I felt I was drowning. So I abandoned the lack of focus problem and desperately clung to hints I was confident in making: sentence-level revisions. This had two positive consequences: First, my comments seemed to assure the student that I could help him, and second, he was able to see instant "improvement" and feel he was getting somewhere. I, on the other hand, felt like a sell-out: I knew I had higher orders of business, but I copped out and stuck to the easy stuff.

The second time around, I was still somewhat nervous but less so than before. I met the same student again. After reading a few paragraphs, I sus-

pected the same problem that I had seen in his first paper: no thesis. So I asked him questions about how he felt about the material and about the issues he described in his paper. This took some prodding, but once he verbalized his opinion, we were off and running with a "baby thesis." Just my luck—time seemed to run out the second we had made the breakthrough. Before I knew it, he was packing up his things and heading off to some band rehearsal—without making a note, dashing all my feelings of accomplishment and excitement. Still, I had made progress: I had spent more time with conceptual comments than editorial ones, and I was slowly building up my self-confidence.

During a conference a week later, I made the most dramatic improvement as a tutor. A student came in with a few hand-written pages of what would be a 15-20 page term paper. I read the first paragraph and superficially commented on her word choice. This discussion led us in the direction that the conference should have gone in the first place. It turned out that she wasn't even confident about her topic yet; sentence-level revisions were completely inappropriate at this stage of the writing process. Thus, we spent the remainder of the conference discussing various topic ideas, narrowing down the topic to fit the scope of the paper, thinking of supporting ideas for a thesis, and making a rough outline of the paper. At the end of the hour, the student left the Center confident—and enthusiastic!—about writing her term paper. This session showed me how to provide helpful tutorial help without depending on sentence-level comments. I simply functioned as a sounding-board off which the student bounced ideas, adding a few of my own observations as a writer that seemed pertinent.

The last conference I held seemed a sort of "check-up" for my recently-acquired tutorial priorities. The student brought in a paper that had been handed back to him to revise. The professor's comments on the paper were mostly sentence-level revisions, with a few questions about content and accuracy. While the professor urged the student to "proofread better," I found that misspellings and subject/verb disagreements were the least of his worries—or at least they should have been. There was a loose, artificial structure to the paper; ideas were vague, haphazard, repetitive, and unfocused. Closer investigation revealed that the student really didn't care. He figured that if he changed the marked words and phrases, his grade would improve—and he was not committed to revising the paper much beyond that. I struggled through the conference, torn between commenting on the obvious lack of organization and ideas and giving the student what he wanted—sentence-level revisions. In the end, I compromised. We reworked the first few sections into a logical progression of ideas and moved paragraphs around, and I encouraged him to expand when he verbalized what sounded like the beginning of an arguable thesis. But as we went though the paper, I also pointed out some of the mechanical errors. This conference demonstrated to me how a teacher's—or a tutor's—superficial and misguided editorial comments can leave a student trapped between what will make a good grade and what will make a good paper.

Looking back on the progress I made away from dependency on editorial comments, I see that reverting back to such comments was a way to make myself feel more comfortable and adept in a situation where I felt uncomfortable and without confidence. (After re-reading that last sentence, I think I sound like a junkie: "Hello, my name is Jen, and I was addicted to editorial comments.") Still, it seems as if my "addiction," and my subsequent "recovery," are somewhat normal for a person with my background (and sock drawer) who attempts to tutor for the first time. Over the relatively short four-week period, my tutoring practices evolved from self-consciously trying to prove myself to catering naturally to the student's individual needs. And after all, as Meyer and Smith conclude, sentence-level revisions do have their place: "Writers need to . . . integrate both the conceptual and editorial comments into their own ongoing composing process, so that by revising one particular paper they acquire understanding that can be applied to many compositions" (137). And that, I've come to understand, is the highest goal of the Writing Center.

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NWCA News from Eric Hobson, President

Although it may not seem possible, the 4th NWCA Conference has now been over for six months. In the intervening time the NWCA Board and the officers of the Mid-Atlantic Writing Center Association have been working on the background details needed to make formal arrangements for the 5th installment of this conference. The process is now at an advanced enough stage to announce that the 5th NWCA Conference will be held in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 2-4, 2000.

NWCA 2000 is hosted by the Mid-Atlantic Writing Center Association and will be chaired by Terry Riley and Barbara Gaal Lutz. NWCA members should expect to receive further information about the conference by mail and e-mail during the coming months as specific details are settled on. For example, the schedule for the solicitation, review, and selection of proposals for the program is almost finalized, and it will be widely advertised. As confer-

ence-related information becomes available it will be in the *Writing Lab Newsletter* and posted on the NWCA homepage at<http://departments.colgate.edu/diw/NWCA.html>

Thirteen months is not a long time when one realizes the time it will take to get ready for this meeting. However, as the previous four conferences have proven, NWCA and its collaborating regional organizations know how to craft memorable and useful conference programs. With NWCA 2000 in Terry and Barbara's capable hands, we can expect that this high standard will once again be realized. Baltimore has much to offer, and I know that the conference planning committee will do their utmost to ensure that those of us who attend the meeting will experience Baltimore's best.

Located on the east coast in close proximity to several international air-

ports, this meeting offers the writing center community a greater chance to meet and work with writing center colleagues from around the world. I hope that we will do everything possible to encourage our colleagues from Europe and Africa, as well as those throughout the Pacific Rim, to attend this conference so that we can learn from their efforts in contexts both similar and vastly different from those most common to North American educational settings. There is much to learn from such interaction.

Get out your calendars and reserve November 2-4, 2000 as a time for you to spend with your writing center friends and colleagues. The time will pass rapidly, and so I will see you there, soon.

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