THE WRITING LAB

...FROM THE EDITOR...

I intended to start this note to everyone with a "welcome back" at the start of a new academic year. But now that we are an international group (note the announcement of the IWCA conference, on page 9), with the *Writing Lab Newsletter* going out around the globe, including to our friends Down Under (who will soon be experiencing warmer weather as winter recedes), I should more appropriately just say hello to all at the start of the next volume of the newsletter.

But whether we are looking forward to summer or settling back into work, we are all concerned with assessment. In this issue you'll find two essays, one by Neal Lerner and the other by Beth Kalikoff, dealing with the complexities of proper assessment that remains true to the theory and practice of our work. Melissa Wagner offers some useful and practical advice for new tutors to keep in mind as they work with ESL students; Bruce Closser shares his experience with electronic tutoring; and Bonnie Devet and Adam Brakenbury reflect on a successful training method in their Writing Lab.

I wish us all well as we begin or bring to a close our academic year.

• Muriel Harris, editor

...INSIDE...

Choosing beans wisely

Over three years ago, I published a study in *The Writing Lab Newsletter* in which I attempted to present a quantitative argument for writing center "effectiveness" (Lerner). Now, with increasing pressures for us to demonstrate our contribution to "outcomes," and with the word "assessment" adopted as a mantra by everyone from federal and state legislators to provosts and department heads, I want to reveal an embarrassing truth: my study was flawed, both statistically and logically. In what follows, I will point out those flaws and provide a cautionary tale as we engage in counting activities and statistical analyses. However, I do not want to discourage such research; instead, I want to move away from positioning writing center directors as little more than the ticket tearers at the writing center turnstiles. I believe we need to link writing center outcomes to larger writing center values and theories, as well as to college/university-wide goals. In essence, I call for us to be evaluated on our own terms, to lend our expertise to discussions of outcomes assessment, and to pursue our goal to make writing—and writing centers—central to improvement of teaching and learning.

Effects on what?

First, some background on effectiveness studies, mine or others that have seen the light of publication.[1] The question I and others ask is: Do students who use the writing center get better grades (whether on individual papers or in classes) than students who do not use the writing center? This question seems fairly straightforward and fairly fundamental to our work; after all, if writing centers were not achieving some positive results, they would

not have proliferated as they have in the last 25 years. Still, when studying this question in the mode of what Cindy Johanek labels "scientific inquiry" (24), the answer is extraordinarily complicated, befitting the complexities of both the writing process and the students we see. For instance, let's simply take the outcome of grades in expository writing classes and compare students who used the writing center with those who did not. And suppose we find that students who used the writing center received better grades. The complication is that we don't know if students were starting from the same point. Perhaps students who used the writing center (particularly if all usage was voluntary) were more likely to get better grades because they were more motivated or more in touch with the need to seek feedback or more likely to revise than students who never showed up at our turnstiles, er, doors. Many of us who teach in the classroom know the phenomenon of the writer who received a B+ coming to our offices to discuss our comments, while those who got the C- accept their fates and move on to the next task. Thus, what we need is some means to provide an equal starting point, and for me that starting point was SAT verbal scores.

Correlation complication

In my study, I "leveled" writing center users and non-users by comparing students with similar SAT verbal scores. After all, as I explained then, this was a number that I had easy access to—as many of us do—and has long been used to place students into different levels of first-year composi-

tion. Sure, some of us doubt the relationship between performance on the SAT verbal and students' writing ability, but the SAT is also a measure that administrators know well, one with a certain built-in credibility (in some circles, at least). Once I performed this grouping, I found the following:

> Students at the lowest end of the SAT verbal benefited the most; on a one-hundred point scale, the mean grade of this group was five points higher than students within the same SAT verbal range who did not come to the Writing Center. . . . Thus, students with the weakest starting skills (according to their SAT verbal scores) came to the Writing Center most often and benefited the most. (3)

Implicit in this finding are three assumptions (or "warrants" in Stephen Toulmin's language of argument), each of which needs careful scrutiny to reveal just how flawed my study and others like it are:

> *1) Students with lower SAT verbal scores are at a disadvantage in first-year composition; in other words, there is a strong relationship between SAT verbal scores and final grades in first-year composition*: This assumption is central to my methodology as I described above. But just how strong is this relationship? To answer that question, I ran a correlation analysis on my college's first-year students' SAT verbal scores and Expository Writing course grades for the year 1997. What I found was quite startling and is summarized in the following table:

SAT Verbal and Expository Writing I Grades—overall correlation	.38
Correlation for students who visited the Writing Center	.29
Correlation for students who did not visit the Writing Center	.31
SAT Math and Expository Writing I Grades—overall correlation	.54

The way to read these numbers is to consider that correlation coefficients range from .00 to 1.00, where .00 is complete divergence and 1.00 is complete agreement.[2] In other words, if two people were arguing about some topic, a coefficient of .38 would mean that they agreed less than forty percent of the time. This number might be okay for some purposes, but in arms negotiation and statistical analysis, it is not. The numbers in the table on page 2 essentially show that for the MCPHS class who started in 1997 there is an extremely weak relationship between SAT verbal scores and Expository Writing I grades for both students who came to the writing center and those who did not (and take it for what it's worth that the relationship between SAT math and Expository Writing I grades is actually stronger!).

Just to make sure that the class starting in 1997 wasn't an anomaly, I ran the correlation analysis on three years' worth of first-year students, this time using their average grade of two semesters of Expository Writing (two semesters are required at my college, and students' grades between the two are usually quite consistent). I found the following:

| SAT Verbal and Expository Writing Grades—overall correlation | .19 |
| SAT Math and Expository Writing Grades—overall correlation | .26 |

Once again, the assumption that students with lower SAT verbal scores will do more poorly in Expository Writing than those with higher scores is statistically false, at least at my college (and consider using SAT math next time you place those first-year students!).

2) *Final grade in first-year composition is an indication of a student's writing ability*: It does not take much to dispute this assumption. I don't have to go very far back in my experience as a classroom teacher to think of many students whose final grades seemed in no way reflective of how well they might write. Attendance policies, timeliness of assignment completion, effort and motivation all distort that final course grade as a true representative of students' skills as writers.

3) *Students will receive the same grade in first-year composition regardless of the instructor*: My study and others like it usually report student grades over a range of classes. The danger here is not accounting for "teacher effects." We all know the colleague who relishes her reputation as the "tough grader" or the one who will give a B+ to anything that is typed and double spaced. Reporting average grades across individual classes is not a particularly sound research method.

Given that each of these assumptions is fundamental to the validity of my research findings and that each is significantly flawed, either statistically or logically, I am afraid that the *Beans* article and those studies pursuing similar methodology are full of legumes. In fact, after rejecting these assumptions, one could make the following alternative reading of my findings: If the relationship between SAT verbal and first-year composition grades is weak, then the fact that first-year composition grades were about the same for both groups could suggest that it makes no difference whether or not students use the writing center. Their grade will be the same! Needless to say, this finding is not one I'll be touting in my promotional materials.[3]

Does this mean we give up trying to study writing center "effects" and instead rely on our felt sense that the work we do benefits our communities?

Of course not; instead, I argue for a research agenda—whether quantitative or qualitative—that examines effects with far more impact than course or paper grades. Tying writing center sessions to such "small" measures is a level of scrutiny to which few other entities are subject. For instance, by semester's end in Introduction to Psychology, if all students have not demonstrated that they have learned the concepts of that course (as reflected in their final grades), is the instructor or program held accountable? More likely, the students are blamed for not taking advantage of the learning opportunities offered. And offering learning opportunities is really all we can do in our writing centers. We need to assess our effects, but I am calling for much more meaningful effects than most of us have examined in the past.

Towards effective writing center assessment

Assessment does not have to be shrouded in mystery. It is an activity that all of us can do and, in fact, should do if writing centers are to continue to develop both individually and as an academic field. Over the last year, I have learned a great deal about assessment through my involvement with first-year experience research and programs.[4] The first-year seminar class pioneered by John Gardner and colleagues at the University of South Carolina—and now probably as common as the college writing center—has been called the most assessed course in higher education (Barefoot). I have learned from these experiences that assessment starts with some simple but powerful questions: What do you want to know? Why do you want to know it? How will you go about investigating it? How will you tell if you've found it? (Cuseo)

As an example of how writing center assessment can evolve from these questions and be tied to larger issues, I offer the following:
Question: How does the writing center contribute to students' social

and academic integration into the college?

Why ask? Successful academic and social integration is key to student retention, learning, and success (see, for example, Tinto). These outcomes have value to both the institution and the writing center.

How to investigate? Offices of Institutional Research and other offices/departments at many institutions already gather data on student retention, performance, and satisfaction. Share resources, investigate the presence of the writing center as a factor in retention, in students' longer-term academic progress (e.g., end-of-year GPA rather than one course or one paper), and in student satisfaction with their larger college experience (as opposed to satisfaction with a writing center session itself). You might find that students who have not used the writing center are strong supporters of its services, and these voices are often left out of our surveys of satisfaction or studies of effects on paper grades.[5]

Overall, I want to applaud all efforts at expanding the ways that writing centers researchers are contributing to what we know about our field, including the potential outcomes that writing center visits might bring about. My intention in this article is certainly not to squelch attempts to assess effectiveness through statistical means; I fully agree with Johanek's call for more scientific inquiry in composition studies and less reliance on narrative and anecdote as the basis for knowledge building. However, those studies need to be statistically and logically sound, and we need to conduct assessment on our terms, particularly before those terms are handed to us by those who might not have a clue. Assessment should be tied to our values and theories, as well as to larger institutional goals as described in college or departmental strategic plans or mission statements. A look at most institutions' mission will reveal values and beliefs that are quite

aligned with our writing center goals. For instance, my college strives toward "student-centered learning" and "innovative teaching," two goals that certainly ring true with writing center work.

The move toward "measurable" outcomes can thus be a potential opportunity rather than an impending threat. As I wrote more than three years ago, I look forward to seeing the results of our research and toward refining just what it is we know about the impact of our writing centers.

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Notes

[1] The number of published quantitative studies on writing center "effects" is surprisingly few. Stephen Newmann used methodology quite similar to mine in examining the relationship between writing center attendance and expository writing grades. David Roberts compared students taught in a "traditional" composition classroom versus those taught in a tutoring center, and examined the effects on students' writing quality, writing apprehension, and understanding "of the nature of the writing process." Mark Waldo examined the effects on paper grades for students.

[2] Actually, correlation coefficients range from –1.00 to +1.00. If I had shown a correlation of, for example, -.85 for the relationship between SAT verbal scores and first-year composition grades, it would mean that students with higher SAT scores were quite likely to do poorly in composition or vice-versa. What is important for the numbers I report is that correlations close to zero, whether positive or negative, indicate that the two factors have little relationship to each other.

[3] It is worth noting that Roberts found similar results: classroom instruction and writing center instruction contributed about the same to students' development as writers; however, Roberts pointed out that writing center instruction cost less—one instructor could teach "several courses in a single location" (58) all at the same time! This argument might warm the cockles of some particularly bottom-line-minded administrators' hearts.

[4] There are many web resources for assessment, but three particularly useful ones are the North Carolina State Assessment web site (<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/resource.htm>), the First-Year Assessment Listserv (<http://www.brevard.edu/fyc/Listserv.htm>), and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation (<http://ericae.net>).

[5] The larger issues I refer to do not necessarily have to reflect dollars-and-cents matters such as retention. Studying the writing center's contribution to the development of students' writing processes is a relatively untapped area—and a focus on processes rather than products surely represents the goals and values of our field.

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From coercion to collaboration: A mosaic approach to writing center assessment[1]

Assessing our writing center work can be like attending a piñata party of a cousin we hate. We swing wildly, aiming our statistics and testimonials right and left, in hopes of breaking open the administrative coffers and showering funding down upon our heads. Sometimes we get candy, although never enough. Other times we wind up only with a stick of gum and a bad attitude. Either way, it's a coercive game, and we want to play something else.

With a great grinding of gears, I will switch metaphor: When writing centers employ one or even two kinds of evaluations, they risk bad attitudes while sacrificing the opportunity to learn and to teach. Instead, I would like to consider a mosaic strategy of assessment: a series of evaluations that are textured, various, and complementary. Mosaic strategies give us reliable and detailed information about what we accomplish. They also create new opportunities for collaboration while providing colleagues and administrators with a fresh look at our pedagogies. Lastly, mosaic strategies allow us to practice our practices, those we use to help students become better writers.

This essay begins with a brief history of failed evaluation: the kind of failure I describe characterizes that of many early writing center evaluation strategies and includes a counter-narrative of directorial hubris. The rest of the essay offers five complementary assessment strategies to consider, six reasons to use a mosaic strategy, and two questions for future consideration.

History of failed evaluation

The University of Washington's ten-year-old Tacoma Campus offers an interdisciplinary two-year undergraduate curriculum—junior and senior years—and graduate programs. Some demographic information: 74% of our students are women; 44% are between the ages of 30 and 40; 79% are employed outside the home; 58% care for dependent children or adults at home. Most students want to complete undergraduate or graduate degrees, increase their competitiveness in the job market, advance in their careers, or change careers (UWT Fact Sheet, 1998). Generally, students at UWT want what many adult learners want, nation-wide, according to market surveys by the University of Phoenix: time- and cost-effective education and a high level of service (Pepicello).

What does it mean to provide a high level of service while offering adult learners a "time-effective" education? In UWT's case, it means that Writing Center administrators suffer from a slight case of schizophrenia: we are obliged to provide high levels of service to students who don't believe that they have the time to fill out evaluation forms, forms that might actually tell us what kinds of service they want or how successful our efforts have been.

Like other writing centers before us, we designed an evaluation form for writers to fill out after their conferences. Like other writing centers before us, we found that this single strategy did not serve us, for three reasons: (1) UWT students perceive themselves as having little enough time to go to the Writing Center and even less to fill out evaluations. They gave perfunctory answers or left the Center without completing a form. (2) The Writing Center's peer consultants tended to distribute evaluations only to students who they believed would fill the forms with compliments; (3) As Muriel Harris and others discovered, most writing centers find that their emphasis on ungraded individual instruction sends students away in a fog of appreciation. The evaluation forms were more like thank-you notes. Negative feedback emphasized street noise and building temperature. In that year, we only received one negative evaluation: the writer was disappointed that her draft was not proofread.

From 1995 to 1997, we used a double-strand assessment method. First, we recorded the number of writers and conferences per quarter, breaking numbers down by academic program, course, number of conferences per writer, and conference subject. We

published these statistics online, with some home-grown analysis, once a quarter. This self-justifying assessment strand kept the budgetary wolf from the door while giving the campus community general information about what students worked on in conferences. During that period, we also solicited and received informal feedback.

Yet, of course, numbers are a blunt instrument and hallway comments an anecdotal, if significant, source. We needed to learn more. Why did students choose to come in for a conference? Why did some avoid us? What did students—and faculty—know about our work? How accurate was that knowledge? How could we improve our work? What were we doing right?

Five complementary assessment strategies

To learn more—and to learn more systematically—we experimented with three additional evaluation methods in the spring, while continuing to solicit feedback and to crunch numbers. We sponsored a faculty focus group, a survey of Writing Center peer consultants, and a random survey mailing to students. All three methods were revealing on their own, and even more so when the results were overlaid upon each other.

An undergraduate peer consultant ran the faculty focus group. I fought this exclusion like a pit bull but was finally persuaded that my presence would influence, shape, even taint the discussion. I am forced to admit that, once again, my colleagues were correct. The questions asked for information we wanted:

- Are there any kinds of services you would like to see the Writing Center employ?
- What do you believe is the Writing Center's role in making students better writers?
- How could the Writing Center better meet your needs as a faculty member?
- How might the Writing Center evaluate its own work?

The consultant recorded the session, with the permission of the faculty members, and transcribed the discussion. Even though the focus group consisted of only three faculty members from two academic programs, the discussion was illuminating, giving us information we had not gathered by crunching numbers, collecting hallway compliments, and listening to complaints.

For example, we learned the faculty members had questions about the Writing Center's responsibilities to writers perceived as "remedial." Was it the Writing Center's job to bring such students up to the college level? Can and should the Writing Center assist such writers? What was the Center's responsibility to good students who could be better? We also learned faculty members longed to know more about the effectiveness of our assistance. Their ruminations about how to measure the effectiveness of the Writing Center's instruction were tentative: each prospective method was problematic.

The survey of Writing Center peer consultants was also illuminating. While all of the consultants said the Center was meeting its goals, several of them observed the need for a mission statement, rather than the one-sentence statement of purpose we had. Our staffers were frustrated by the fact student writers did not know what kinds of assistance we could provide and what kinds we couldn't. The student survey, mailed to 15% of our enrolled students, had a 27% return rate; the particular academic programs were represented proportionally. I will skip the summary and tell you only two things that you already know: (1) the students articulated the same confusions and concerns that were discussed in the faculty focus group and reflected in the staff survey; (2) this overlapping information had not been available through post-conference evaluations, informal feedback, and crunched numbers.

Five reasons to use a mosaic strategy

The first reason to develop a mosaic strategy of evaluation is the most obvious: with three or five approaches to assessment, it's possible to discern and analyze patterns of response with some degree of confidence. After seeing the same kinds of results articulated in three different ways, readers gather the scope as well as the depth of the pattern, the first steps to planning whether to change, what to change, and why.

The second reason to consider a mosaic strategy complements the first. A combination of quantifiable and ethnographic data provides a richer and more textured understanding of how our work is perceived. Gail Okawa said that, in the 1980s, the University of Washington's Educational Opportunity Program Writing Center measured its success by measuring student usage: "much effort was spent in clarifying and quantifying this usage" (188). Usage is an important measure, but it is the first, not the last measure.

Practicing our instructional practices is a third reason to use multiple and complementary means of assessments. That is: our pedagogy is collaborative, our instructional strategies various. On our best days, we listen more than we talk. In Ronald Heckelman's "The Writing Center as a Managerial Site," he urges us to "learn creatively to listen to what people—administrators, colleagues, tutors, students—say" (3). Doing so allows us to "anticipate possible problems . . . .Create policies for possible contingencies. Communicate these to everyone in the center. Cultivate relationships. . . " (2). Listening to what several campus communities say to us helps build community. Robert Barnett's argument for mission statements makes a similar point: "In addition to defining the writing center 'self,' a well-written goals and objectives statement will also define necessary relationships with the entire university community . . . " (130). In some ways, evaluations help develop the necessary relationships that our goals define.

Listening to multiple campus communities does more than strengthen and re-

flect our commitment to collaboration: it also has the potential to teach our colleagues more about what we do. Survey questions convey at least as much as they request. They help us convey the way we'd "like the writing center . . . to be perceived by colleagues, students, and the institution" (Heckelman 2). Amanda Corcoran writes that "the writing center must educate consultants, student writers, and faculty, so that they know the our services are as well as the limits of our responsibilities (11). A carefully designed set of open-ended questions can help us to educate writers and colleagues.

The fourth reason to consider the use of a mosaic approach represents a more earth-bound commitment to collaboration: buy-in. Heckelman suggests that "Sharing 'ownership' of the center with as many people as possible enhances commitment and loyalty" (3). Such buy-in is especially important to writing centers that don't send the names of student visitors to their professors. Did Kari Ann go to the writing center? Or not? What'd she do there? What'd the consultant do? What's going on in there? Evaluations share ownership of the center: those who participate in a survey or focus group are invested in the results of the assessment and in the writing center.

The next reason to use a mosaic strategy draws on evolutionary theory and realpolitik. Humans have a cockroach-like impulse to keep still in hopes that no one turns the rock over. Writing center administrators are perhaps even more roach-like than most: we are often so marginalized, underfunded, and misunderstood that we don't want more feedback. Why should we risk turning our own rock over only to have someone notice and crush us? Yet the rather Orwellian truth is that if we don't actively develop sound assessment methods, methods that help us define ourselves and achieve our goals, we make ourselves vulnerable to methods we consider unsound.

Lastly, Muriel Harris and others have identified evaluations as a rich research site for student consultants or professional staffers. A mosaic approach offers more data and the opportunity to study quantifiable and ethnographic results in relation to each other as well as in relation to scholarly questions of pedagogy and assessment. Complementary evaluations offer opportunities for service learning, too: their study brings about "cognitive and social growth" for the future teachers and administrators who participate and "program enhancement for their institutions" (DeCiccio 6).

Conclusion

Replacing the coercive piñata party with a textured mosaic project may help us connect our administrative and creative lives. Mosaic evaluation strategies are tools for teaching and learning as well as for evaluation. Yet any huckster-esque attempt to sell a product, process, or service must be greeted with open-minded skepticism (and a protective hand on the wallet). In that spirit, I'd like to conclude this essay with a few questions for future research and rumination.

What are the assessment strategies that tell us what we want to find out? Edward Lotto and Irene Clark, for example, have praised the weekly staff meeting as a source of information. The Writing Center of the University of Texas at Austin sends all faculty a survey that blends quantifiable with ethnographic questions. Their web site includes the questions and the results. It's a joy to read. What combination of evaluations is right for a particular context, issue, or university?

Secondly, how can we responsibly employ a mosaic approach without spending all our days assessing our work instead of doing it? How big an emphasis should we give evaluation?

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[1]Bronwyn Pughe introduced me to the idea of a mosaic evaluation strategy and alerted me to the instructional possibilities of surveys.

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TUTORS' COLUMN

A guide to your first session with an ESL student

As tutors we deal daily with different languages, different perspectives, different cultures, and different styles of writing. But mix all of these factors together at one time and they can make for a frustrating tutorial session. Learning how to work with ESL students can be a challenge for even the most skilled reading and writing tutor.

It was not a conscious choice on my part to begin tutoring ESL students. I just happened to be tutoring during the busiest times of the day when many walk-ins came. I tutored one ESL student and then another, and before I knew it I was tutoring them every day. I thought that I would be a competent ESL reading and writing tutor since I had studied a foreign language for five years and since I had been traveling to foreign countries for four years. I had experienced what most ESL students probably experience every day, the feelings of not understanding what people are saying and the feelings of helplessness that come along with not understanding. These experiences help me to better understand where ESL students were coming from. During each of my trips, I gained new respect for the ESL students at the University who immersed themselves in a foreign culture in order to facilitate learning. But my trips didn't prepare me for the tutorial setting. I ended countless sessions frustrated and overwhelmed. It took continuous work and patience to figure out the best way to deal with combining different languages, different perspectives, different cultures, and different styles of writing in order to advance as a tutor. Now I spend most of my tutoring hours working with ESL students. I'm going to share with you the strategies that I use when tutor-ing ESL students. Hopefully they will help make your first ESL tutorial session less frustrating.

Difficulties of learning English

Since most ESL students come to the United States to study and improve their English, there will be a language barrier between the student and the tutor. Years of studying English in a school setting, like studying any foreign language, does not make anyone bilingual or even comfortable with speaking and writing that language. In fact, English can be one of the most difficult languages to learn and speak. The language barrier can make both you and the learner feel uncomfortable and intimidated. It is the job of tutors to make the learner, and themselves, feel comfortable. Try to keep in mind ESL learners are most likely frustrated with the amount of time they have to spend writing papers in English. They have to write papers with a dictionary constantly in one hand, and many will become frustrated with not being able to find the right words. This could prove to be exasperating for anyone.

Getting comfortable: Talking and listening

The best way to make ESL learners feel more comfortable is to talk to them. I find most foreign students to be interesting, and sometimes it is nice to get to know more about them. Many of them have unique stories about why they came to the United States and how they got here. Within minutes, both you and the learner will be more relaxed. Idle talk will also give you an idea of how well the learner can speak English, and it will give you time to adjust to his or her accent while he or she adjusts to yours. I have tutored many ESL students who have had thick accents. I had to have them repeat themselves three or four times before I could understand what they were saying. By the time we were done with the paper, I had no troubles understanding because it just took time to get used to how the learner spoke.

Understanding the assignment

Many ESL students have problems understanding the assignment and what they are supposed to write about. This is a good place to start before you actually begin assessing any papers. Ask about the assignment and what kind of paper he or she is writing. There have been various times this year when a learner has handed me the textbook and the class handout explaining the assignment, wondering exactly what it meant. Other times, ESL students have made appointments just to talk about particular assignments. Not only do they not understand the assignment, but many may not understand the type of paper they are supposed to write. For example, they might not understand what a classification paper should cover or what they should do for an observation paper.

Assessing the paper

Once both you and the learner fully understand the assignment, you can assess the paper. It might be a good idea to look at some old papers first so you can find out what writing level the ESL student is at or to find out what his or her recurring problems may be—grammar, organization, punctuation. Don't read the whole paper, but only look at the professor's comments. If the learner doesn't bring another paper along, take the opportunity to talk to

him/her again and simply ask. Most ESL students know the areas of the English language where they do not excel. Ask them what *they* would like *you* to look for.

Correcting the paper

When reading papers, there are certain things you should keep in mind. There are basically two types of ESL learners: those who want you to correct everything, not caring about why the corrections are being made, and those who want you to explain in detail why every miniscule change is made. Either extreme can become intimidating and stressful. It is not your job to correct the mistakes that are in the paper because if you do, ESL students will not learn anything and will continue to make the same mistakes. In my experience, the best way to get inactive learners involved is to "turn the tables" on them. Most of the time it doesn't work to just ask them if they understand. Inactive learners will just nod and say, "Yes." Try first having them read the part in question and then ask them if they can see anything wrong with it. If that doesn't work, write the correct way and ask them if they can see a difference. Then ask if they can tell you why one is correct and why one is wrong. This process will get the learners involved, and before you know it, they will be asking more questions without the prompting.

Working with over-active ESL learn-ers can be just as frustrating. Many times, the frustrations stem from not being *able* to or *knowing* how to explain why the changes are being made. If you don't know how to explain a change, try using examples. I rely on examples in all of my tutorial sessions to show why I think a change needs to be made. Sometimes an example will teach learners more just because you can show them where and how the principle is used in the real world specifically rather than generally.

Culture clashes

Not only is the language barrier a factor but culture clashes can also arise. Every culture has different views that can conflict with the way you have grown up. That doesn't mean that they are wrong. There have been many times when I have experienced a culture clash with one of my ESL learners. I have become upset when reading papers written by ESL students that talk about women as if they should not have the same rights as men or that assume the role of a woman is to get married and make her husband happy. This has happened more than once, and each time I have wanted to stop reading the paper to discuss the students' ideas. It can be hard not to challenge views that conflict with your own. But as a tutor, you must remember that you are there to help learners write their ideas down, not to change their ideas. It can be a tough task to concentrate on a paper that you do not agree with. If

you keep in mind that all cultures are different and that all cultures have varying views about world issues, you might be able to separate yourself from the issue.

Try to keep these ideas in mind as you tutor ESL students. Hopefully they will make tutoring ESL students easier for you. But remember, what works for me may not work for you. You need to experiment with different tutoring strategies to find the best for you. Use these ideas only as a foundation and build from them with each new tutorial session:

Tips for tutoring ESL students
• Use small talk to get comfortable.
• Get a full understanding of the assignment.
• Make sure both of you understand the format of the paper that is supposed to be used.
• Look at previously written papers to get an idea of the writing level of the ESL student.
• Know what the ESL student wants you to do.
• Get the ESL student involved by asking questions and by giving examples.
• Separate yourself from the issue and main ideas of the paper.

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Somewhere in space: The story of one composition class' experience in the electronic writing center

Everyone appreciates the power of story to entertain, to inform, and to teach. What follows is the story of our writing center's initial attempts to extend its services beyond the clearly prescribed physical space of the face-to-face conference to the borderless realm of cyber-space. In telling our story, I will detail various aspects of our evolution into a computer-assisted writing facility, and seek to understand the implications of our first extended efforts to work with a group of college writers who existed for us only somewhere in electronic space.

The evolution of our University Writing Center into a computer-assisted writing lab has been traditional. For thirteen or so years, college students (and the occasional faculty member) brought their writing to the center for a reader's response, hoping to produce a better draft, earn a better grade, and, hopefully, learn something about their writing processes. Like many other writing centers, ours recently joined the electronic age. On a limited budget, we bought several working computers discarded during a computer lab upgrade, and installed them in the Writing Center. We expected to work with clients more efficiently by responding to text on disk where changes could be implemented more immediately. We assumed that computers could facilitate all aspects of the writing process from idea generation to revision and editing. And we thought that some students might feel more comfortable working with computers than with pen and pencil.

Our logical next step was to put our writing center on the Internet. We developed a simple web page stating our mission, introducing our consultants, informing potential clients of our hours, and detailing the services we offer. We included in our web page an offer to respond to writers who wished to send their work to us electronically on the assumption that some individuals in the academic environment would appreciate the flexibility of the electronic conference, particularly those who may be unable to visit the writing center during its normal operating hours, or who, because they find sharing their writing with others painful, may appreciate the relative anonymity of the electronic conference.

In preparing to respond to cyber clients, we sent our own writing to other writing centers offering similar services. We compared responses we received (or, as was often the case, didn't receive), and concluded that effective on-line conferences wouldn't happen by chance; consultants needed training in order to transfer the traits of a one-to-one conference to the electronic environment. We studied the elements of effective conferences: establishing rapport with clients, diagnosing their writing, providing effective and relevant responses, and assessing the success of our one-on-one, real-time conferences. Our consultants practiced sending and responding to each other's papers via e-mail. We studied transcripts of our electronic responses, looking at how effectively we inspired confidence, how appropriately we diagnosed writing problems, how clearly we presented solutions to these problems, and how effectively (or even whether) we attempted to determine the client's level of satisfaction with the session.

In the three years since we went on-line, we've received occasional writing projects electronically. Many were from students in our nursing masters program who were conducting research projects at remote locations and whose advisors had recommended they get help with their writing. Occasionally the odd (in the sense of occasional) non-Andrews student sent us a paper. The only regular and sustained electronic conferences between us and students on campus were from students in freshman-level composition classes whose teachers required their students to send e-mail papers to us for practice's sake. Aside from these contacts, and a few now-and-then surveys from other electronic writing centers wanting information on how we trained our tutors to do on-line conferences, this part of our operation has been relatively quiet.

At the beginning of the 1998 fall quarter, shortly after conducting a workshop on using our electronic writing center for a group of English teachers, I received a request from a high school English teacher who taught several states away, for the writing center to respond to her students' writing. She would be teaching a college-level, English 101 freshman composition class by special arrangement with a nearby college. We arranged for the fourteen advanced high school seniors enrolled in the course to send us drafts of each of the four essays (description, classification, definition, argument/persuasion) they wrote during the fifteen-

week semester; in turn, Writing Center consultants would provide responses to each draft.

Over the time period of the project, at least 94 exchanges between consultants in the writing center and students in the program, including transcripts of sessions, students' acknowledgments of sessions, responses from them to the sessions, or expressions of thankfulness were received and saved. Not every student sent every essay for a response, but writing center consultants provided 71 responses to essays; the majority of responses were sent by one consultant who had been part of our initial on-line training. At the conclusion of the project I sent a brief questionnaire to each of the students involved, asking each to comment on whether, and in what ways, he or she had found the experience useful, what difficulties were encountered, and whether our services might be recommended to another student. The small sample size of fourteen responses justifies only an anecdotal analysis; still, the comments were informative.

Generally speaking, the students who sent their writing to us were pleased with the responses they received. Without exception, each student reporting having a positive experience, noting again and again how their consultants made them feel at ease about their writing projects. They appreciated the fact that their consultants took the time to "tell [them] who he was and how he could help [them] with [their] writing" or to ask "how [their] day was going" or make other "little nice comments about [their] essays." Students appreciated what many of them called, "the personal touch" which made them feel comfortable and at ease. One student remarked, "Maybe I'm a better writer than I thought! :)" This parenthetical remark with its electronic smiley face, suggests that the consultant's responses not only helped the writer improve her writing, but also increased her confidence in herself as a writer.

Equally significant was the repeated comment from students that the on-line conferences "took off some of the pressure." Those students who made this observation did not explain themselves, but one might conclude either that the students' ability to submit a paper to someone without having to actually confront them in person made the process somewhat easier, or that the students appreciated knowing that they had an easy and convenient method of submitting their writing to someone for a response before it was evaluated. Either observation suggests that these students found the project successful. As Stacey remarked,

> I never saw them or actually met any of them [the consultants] but I did feel like they would be honest with me and that they would answer any of my questions and not make fun of me for asking dumb questions.... I also liked when they said their opinion of the topic as far as whether they liked it; it made it easier to talk to them because then both of us were kind of on the same level.

The substance of a conference is, of course, making an appropriate diagnosis of student's writing and providing a clear response to that problem. A writer should leave a session with the sense that the consultant made useful suggestions for revision. On this point our electronic sessions were, as a rule, reasonably successful. Our clients noted that their consultants "obviously . . . know their stuff." Gwen's remarks were typical: "They did a great job at finding most of the problems in my papers. I was very pleased with most of the suggestions. . . . They noticed several problems that I didn't find. I really appreciated the comments made about my papers." Predictably, the students who sent their papers to us felt pleased that they had gotten better grades because of the responses they received to their work; but several of the students perceived that their electronic conferences had been instructional and that

they had, as a result, grown as writers. As Nick observed, "my consultant gave me a new and honest glance at my paper, from someone who didn't know me well, and wasn't bothered by the possibility of offending me. I needed honesty."

I always encourage my writing center consultants to make an effort to assess the success of their conferences before the client leaves. Consultants are instructed to determine to what extent the clients understand and will be able to use the responses they receive to affect an improvement in their writing. When I asked the students in our project whether they felt their consultants had made such an effort in their sessions, the responses would suggest that this aspect of the on-line session did not translate as effectively to the electronic conference. Only two of the fourteen clients made any effort to answer this question, and the two who did had mixed remarks. One noted that "I don't recall the consultants I came into contact with ever asking me to respond with how it turned out or how their opinions helped me." The other observed that her consultant

> always asked me to e-mail back and tell if I understood the comments or if they were helpful. I appreciated that because I knew that the tutor cared and wanted feedback to make sure the responses were helping. . . . Someone else also said they wanted to read my paper again when I got it completely finished because they were interested in the topic and that made me feel kind of important.

Apart from this apparent failure, the sessions appeared to have worked well. Several students observed that "it was good to hear from someone else's opinion besides your classmates. Specially if it is from an experienced writer." The students seemed impressed that they could submit their writing to someone who "had a college education, which my classmates don't, and also the consultants had more time

to correct [my] writing than my classmates. . . . Often my classmates didn't see anything wrong with my essays, so it was very useful to get a more advanced opinion." The consultants gave students "a better understanding of [their] own writing and also gave [them another] perspective of [their] own writing," thus opening up "a lot of room for thought."

The criticisms we received were few but significant. All of the students complained about the delay in receiving responses to their essays, but seemed to understand that this difficulty was unavoidable and that our real-time clients received priority. A common theme in the remaining criticisms pertained to the lack of a face-to-face, one-to-one, personal connection between the consultant and the writer. The problems that arose when writing conferences occurred not in real space, but somewhere in electronic space where writer and consultant were separated from each other, raise serious questions about the potential of on-line writing conferences. All of the students in the project indicated they missed being able to talk directly to the consultant. They were uncomfortable with the lack of "a face-to face meeting. Instead [they] had to rely on e-mail and it was a slow process." Comments from the other students were similar; "the only down side to using e-mail," Ryan noted, "was the lack of personal interaction. If I did have a question about a comment I couldn't really ask what they meant." Clearly our clients recognized that the absence of personal contact with consultants diminished the success of the session. Writers were unable to discuss their writing with a consultant, follow up on a comment, seek clarification, or respond in any way to the consultant's responses.

The difficulties associated with disconnected writers and consultants are further complicated when the consultants' responses in any way threaten the writer. Summer pointed out that the comments "seemed to overwhelm me

in ways. I [would] go to check for a reply and when it came there was so much to fix it intimidated me." Such a comment is not unusual for real-time writing center clients who sometimes feel that their consultants will "tear up" their writing. Most consultants are able to notice and minimize these reactions. Unfortunately, the on-line session where writer and consultant work removed from each other in space does not easily allow the consultant to gauge the writer's reaction to a response and to make appropriate adjustments.

Thomas Carnicelli, in "The Writing Conference: A One-to-One Conversation," carefully examines students' responses to both written comments and face-to-face conferences. Through an analysis of "typical and recurring" responses to one-to-one conferences from 1800 students in 92 sections of freshman composition taught at the University of New Hampshire, Carnicelli provides objective evidence of the effectiveness of one-to-one conferences over written comments. The arguments that Carnicelli offers in defense of the conference approach to teaching composition and in criticism of written comments might be equally applied to real-time and electronic writing center conferences since, in many ways, writing center consultants and conference teachers employ the same strategies. Both rely on individualized instruction which is more effective than group instruction. Carnicelli's research suggests that because their own writing was the subject of the discussion, students learn more about themselves as writers from a conference than they typically do when discussions center on writing generally. To one degree or another, the same should be true of the writing center consultation. Like the students in Carnicelli's study, our real-time writing center clients appreciate and comment favorably on the individual attention their writing receives. Writing center consultants' effectiveness grows out of the oral nature of their re-

sponses; consultants are able to engage student writers in discussions about their writing and make use of information they learn from their discussion in formulating a response. As a result, students learn more from their oral responses than they might if the responses had been written.

Carnicelli suggests that to make a writing conference work most effectively, teachers (and by analogy, writing center consultants) must read a paper carefully, offer appropriate encouragement, ask the right questions, evaluate the paper, make specific suggestions for revising the paper, and, perhaps most importantly, listen carefully to students' assessment of their own writing. The first of these six tasks can be accomplished effectively (to greater or lesser degree depending on the consultants' skills and training) in both real-time and electronic sessions. Writing center consultants conducting on-line conferences can read papers as carefully as they can in the one-to-one conference, and perhaps more so since they often have the luxury of time. Our typical consultations are a half hour in length; however, consultants working with electronic clients may spend an hour or more reading, diagnosing, and formulating a response to a paper. Since they do not have the 30-minute time constraint, their responses may actually be better formulated and expressed. They may not, necessarily, be more appropriate or relevant.

The electronic conference limits a consultant's ability to offer appropriate encouragement, ask the right questions and listen carefully to students' assessment of their writing. This raises serious questions about whether consultants can effectively read and evaluate student writing and offer appropriate suggestions for revision in the electronic conference. Without the students' physical presence, consultants have no way of discussing their writing with them and, therefore, have incomplete information to work with. Con-

sultants know only what clients tell them about their writing; given the responses we received in our project, that may not be much. We generally knew little beyond the basic nature of the assignment, and typically nothing about the writers' purposes in writing or their intended audiences or what specific questions or problems they had with their writing. Even more troubling is the fact that in the electronic conference, where a one-time response is typical, the consultant never learned whether the client understood the response. As Eddie observed, "Most of the time it was nicely done, but sometimes it was kinda vague." Had this been a face-to-face, real-time conference, the consultant could have determined that the client needed additional explanation.

Timing was always an issue. The writers in our project did not send their papers to us with sufficient advanced time to permit exchanges about the writing, thus asking the right questions about the writing was, if not impossible, highly unlikely. Equally frustrating was the consultants' inability to offer encouragement about students' writing. True, the consultant could offer general remarks about how the paper seemed to work or what its strong points were, but true encouragement, the kind that responds to particular concerns raised in the conference, was difficult if not impossible in the electronic conference. The comments of several students indicated serious concerns which were present but undetec-

ted by the consultant and thus went unaddressed. Mariela observed that "when they answered back my e-mails it was kind of frustrating because it showed how bad of a writer I was." Stacey complained that "at one point, one of the tutors was kind of like, this whole thing sucks and you have a ton of work to do. That kind of hurt my feelings and I didn't feel like listening to what he had to say." In each case, consultants certainly meant no harm, but in the electronic exchange the consultants could not know how their comments were received and had no opportunity to find out, and then modify their comments appropriately.

Electronic conferencing forced consultants and clients out of the shared space of the writing center into the remoteness of cyber space where consultants had no alternative but to fall back on the less effective strategy of marginal notation. As Carnicelli observes, composition teachers who respond to student writing in the form of marginal comments, "work in a vacuum." They make assumptions about their students' writing which may or may not be accurate. They may or may not know clearly their students' intentions, and they enjoy no immediate opportunity to discuss these intentions with their students. Because they have no interaction with their students, they have no opportunity to make use of their students' knowledge in formulating their responses, they cannot clarify complex ideas, or know whether general observations should

be made more specific, or adjust their responses so that they are received as intended. Consequently, their potential for providing useful guidance their students might use in revising their texts is thereby minimized.

The on-line writing conference presented similar constraints. The consultant never dialogued directly with the client about the paper, but worked a draft removed, responding only to what appeared in the text, but not discussing the response with the writer. This raises serious concerns about the ultimate effectiveness of the electronic writing center. In formulating responses, our consultants were essentially employing the strategies of the traditional, marginal comments. While one might argue that some response is preferable to no response, one might also argue that the qualities of the one-to-one writing conference cannot be completely duplicated in the on-line conference; thus it will, necessarily, always be less effective than a visit in real-time to the writing center.

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Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

Sept. 14-15, 2001: Midwest Writing Center Association, in Iowa City, IA
    Contact: SuEllen Shaw, shaws@mnstate.edu, or Cinda Coggins, CCoggins66@aol.com. Conference website: <www.ku.edu/~MWCA>.

April 11-13, 2002: International Writing Centers Association, in Savannah, GA
    Contact: Donna Sewell, Dept. of English, Valdosta State University, Valdosta, GA 31698. Phone: 229-333-5946; fax: 229-259-5529; e-mail: dsewell@valdosta.edu.

Writing Center Director Trinity College

Trinity College, in Washington D.C., seeks a Writing Center Director who will report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and be affiliated with the English Program. The Director will supervise the Writing Center, work closely with Academic Support Services, hold writing conferences with the students, and train peer advisors. The director will also work with the faculty to implement a Writing Across the Curriculum program and teach a limited number of courses each year.

Qualifications: master's degree in related field, 3-5 years teaching and/or administrative experience in related areas, and excellent interpersonal and organizational skills.

This position will remain open until filled. Please send letter of interest, résumé, writing samples, course syllabi, and three references to Carole King, Trinity College, 125 Michigan Ave, NE, Washington, DC 20017. Fax 202-884-9123, email: humanresources@trinitydc.edu.Trinity College is an EEO employer and welcomes applications from women and minorities.

Back volumes of the *Writing Lab Newsletter* on paper and online

We heartily commend Jo Koster (Winthrop University) on her innovative choice for her yearly donations to her university. She recently donated a complete set of past issues of the *Writing Lab Newsletter* to her university library. Should you feel so inclined to do the same or want a complete set of print copies for your writing center, we are now offering "fire sale" prices for the print versions of $5/volume for the first 22 volumes (10 issues per volume) and $15/volume for the most recent 3 volumes. Contact Mary Jo Turley (mjturley@purdue.edu; 765-494-7268), our Managing Editor, for more information or to acquire back volumes.

With superb and diligent work by Mary Jo Turley, our Managing Editor, and Erin Karper, our OWL Technical Coordinator, Volumes 1-20 of the newsletter, in PDF format, are now also available on our OWL, at no cost: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/lab/newsletter/volumes/index.html>. There is also an article database that can be searched to locate articles in specific issues. And Richard Haswell tells us that the newsletter will soon be indexed and included in CompPile: <www.comppile .tamucc.edu>.

Call for Proposals

Manuscripts of original research on teaching college-level writing are being sought for a follow-up volume to *Composing Research: A Contextualist Paradigm for Rhetoric and Composition* (Utah State UP, 2000). Proposals for manuscripts that directly apply this contextualist model to classroom, conference, and/or writing center practices will be preferred. The working title for this volume is *Composing Contextualist Research: Studies in Writing Instruction.* A range of topics related to the teaching of writing will be considered. Deadline for proposals detailing the rationale and research method(s): October 31, 2001. Response letters will be sent approximately December 15, 2001. Final manuscripts due approximately February 22, 2002. Send proposals (Chicago style, one hard copy and one disk, Microsoft Word) including a cover letter with e-mail, phone, and fax, to Cindy Johanek, English Department, Denison University, Granville, OH 43023. For more information, e-mail johanek@denison.edu.

"Proved upon our pulses": Training consultants in the nature of writing labs

Lab Director on training needs–Dr. Devet

At the beginning of each fall, as directors carry out training, we try to help all consultants—new and returning—to understand that they are part of a community where multiplicity exists, where there is no one right way to be a consultant, and where knowledge is created, not necessarily "found."

How can directors train consultants in these concepts? Lecturing is not the best means since doing so violates the informal nature of the one-to-one writing lab world. And merely asserting principles or axioms does not work either. As John Keats wrote over 180 years ago, "axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses" (279). Unless consultants

"feel" the principles, how can they work in a lab with confidence and surety?

A simple training technique can, indeed, embody the concepts consultants should feel and thus know. This technique involves using index cards and a box. After our lab had been open a few weeks in the fall, all consultants—

those returning for their second or third year as well as new ones working their first month in the lab—were given three index cards. Then, they were asked to do the following:

Think back over your work in the lab so far this term. Was there a situation that you were unsure how to handle? That is, what questions do you have about your work in the lab? Write your question anonymously on each card.

The consultants were given only three codicils: avoid questions, such as "What is a comma splice?"; remember that no question is unimportant; and, finally, be honest. The consultants then deposited their cards in a box which was brought to the next staff meeting. Consultants passed around the box with its cards safely inside, each drawing out a card, reading its question, and pitching in to provide possible answers.

What did I, as a lab director, notice that the box and the cards revealed about the writing lab experience? First, the act of drawing cards from the box replicated the randomness of a writing lab consultation; no one could know what questions would come from the box just as no one can know what questions will arise as clients and consultant work together.

In addition, the cards' questions elicited varied responses, indicative of the fact that there are myriad ways to handle consultations. For example, one card asked, "How do we consultants deal with the client who breaks down crying?" Two answers provided by the consultants showed different approaches, based on the personality of the tutor and the client. One consultant suggested avoidance and empathy: "I saw the frustration of the client settling in. I was overwhelming her, so I backed off and told her I was only asking questions because it's a good paper. I had to step back, or I would have

started to cry, too." Another consultant, however, said that she would offer the client an alternative: "I think I would let the client leave the room to regain his composure, to save face. Then, I would offer to work together another time." These varied responses were exactly what the box technique should reveal about being a consultant: there is no one right way to do the job—only possibilities based on both the client and consultant.

The cards in the box also showed that part of the job of working in a lab is dealing with emotions. For instance, a card expressed one consultant's fear: "What do I do after ending a consultation feeling no progress was made?" Answers were, again, different: "This consultant is being too down on himself. It's unlikely the client came away without getting something from the session." This reply demonstrates the sympathy for which all consultants are famous—sympathy directed here towards a fellow tutor, not just a client. Another consultant provided an affirmation: "This client *has* achieved something: he has been through the 'trauma' of his first visit to the lab and broken the ice. He will be ready to return." Still a third consultant suggested a practical way to handle the card's question: "At the end of the session, the consultant can recap so both client and consultant feel as if something has been accomplished." Here the responses indicated that consultants know dealing with emotions–both of clients and of tutors–is vital to the writing lab experience.

Responses to another card's question demonstrated an additional feature of working in a lab: handling a problem in a consultation means using concrete as well as affective measures. The card asked, "How do you reassure a client that to be a good writer does not take natural ability but practice? Many clients come to the lab feeling they will *never* be good at writing." Consultants

provided different answers: "To reassure clients, I use two methods. First, I ask them what they *are* good at. Then, I suggest they write each day like keeping a diary." Another consultant explained that using one's own personal experience may be an effective way to deal with this client: "I use my own situation. I have to correct my own papers several times. I try to be a role model. Most clients do not realize that they, too, have a process. If I can help my clients find their process, they use it in the future."

What else did the training session with the box and the cards reveal about the nature of writing labs? As is fitting with labs, the voice of a consultant who was there should now be heard.

Reaction of Adam Brakenbury, peer consultant

I felt that the box training session provided consultants with an environment in which they could experience precisely the type of conversation they should aim for in a writing lab consultation.

For instance, during the training session, the discussion did not always stick to the original topic. When we discussed the card with the question "What do we tell a student who has a very unusual interpretation of a work, one that seems completely wrong?", we consultants began to bring up other concerns, such as how we can help clients who do not even understand the words in an assignment, words such as *thesis* or *theme*. So, the discussion was flexible, with consultants talking about almost any problem that concerned them.

This open discussion is just what every consultation in the lab should be. I always ask my clients what they want to talk about first. Many times they say, "Maybe grammar, and organization, too." Of course, this response roughly translates as, "I have no idea." We can help these students discover questions and problems that need to be

addressed if we allow the consultation to be flexible. And, so, the training session gave all consultants an example to follow for fostering an open conversation with our clients.

And because consultants have unique personalities and styles in the lab, we all learned from the training session that there is almost always more than one right answer to a question. So, what I liked best about the training session was that, as we shared ideas, it was OK for us to disagree with one another. The consultants did not feel compelled to reach a consensus on every issue.

It is the same in a consultation. Although I would like to think that every word that comes out of my mouth is gospel truth, often a client will respond to one of my suggestions with, "Well, that's a good idea, but I think this would work better." This re-

sponse is great because the client is thinking and maintaining control of the paper.

So, the box training session was like a consultation among the consultants, providing an example of what an ideal writing lab consultation should be like. In the end, I acquired much more confidence as a consultant, and I think that all of the consultants gained a more accurate feeling for our roles as consultants in the lab.

Conclusion—Dr. Devet, Lab Director

In the nineteenth century, the French artist Edgar Degas said, "The artist does not draw what he sees but what he must make others see." As a lab director, I feel this concept of helping others to understand is central to training consultants. Perhaps the box with its cards is a gimmick towards this end,

but using it does help to prove upon the consultants' pulses the basic nature of labs: the randomness; the need for varied responses; the emotional engagement; and, most important, the fact that labs are places where knowledge is created both between consultant and client as well as among consultants themselves.

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