THE WRITING LAB

...FROM THE EDITOR...

As the academic year ends and you look forward to relaxing, repairing frayed nerves, and planning for next fall, the articles in this issue offer interesting reading and assistance with your preparations. Reflecting on recent proposals for an International Writing Center Week (to hold a week-long celebration that invites visitors to learn about your services), Katie Theriault considers the when and why of such a week. She and Jon Olson, IWCA President, would appreciate hearing your response.

Next, Pamela Childers and Jan Straka offer their perspectives on having worked together as Jan, an ESL student, improves his writing skills. Kelly Jones Benhase, Vicki Russell, and Laura Cella review a new manual for your tutors' reading lists next fall, on tutoring ESL students. If you don't yet have non-traditional tutors on staff, Frances Applequist presents a strong rationale for including them. And Matthew Buttermore includes a technique for helping writers find their thesis.

As we close this year's volume of *WLN*, our Managing Editor, Mitch Simpson, and I wish you a relaxing, restful few months with time to enjoy balmy breezes and ignore long "to do" lists. We look forward to meeting up with you next fall.

• *Muriel Harris, editor*

...INSIDE...

Reflections on an international writing center week: There and back again

In January, after a few months serving as the assistant director of Colby College's Farnham Writers' Center, I signed up for the WCenter listeserv.[1] I had no idea what I was getting myself into. Soon, e-mails were arriving every hour, and rapid-fire dialogue and debate tapped into creativity that I didn't even know I had. Instantly, I was a participant in a world of which I had only heard during my time as a student tutor.

For a few weeks after first signing on to WCenter, I timidly stood on the cyber sidelines (I had read these people during my tutor training; how could I possibly—gulp—talk to them?). One day, my interest was peaked by a series of posts to the listserv about publicity, including ideas like open houses, cookie socials, and the creation and distribution of a newsletter. I found myself thinking about how to concentrate these initiatives over a short period of time. How could we heighten the visibility of local writing centers within the context of their respective communities as well as build a more

global awareness of writing center work? I swallowed hard and tried my hand at making a post. "Is there a week designated as a National Writing Center Week?" I wondered aloud to the list.

Replies came back quickly. There was no such week, they informed me, but I

should select one. Wow. This was easy. Voices chimed in from all corners of the country. "Why don't we make it international?" Jon Olson wanted to know. Great idea, Jon—thanks. A flurry of frenetic visions danced through my head. Open houses, open mic nights, workshops, sandwich boards. . . . marches on Washington. When should we have it? April. November. First week. Last week. Hmmm. . . .

A week-long series of events would no doubt heighten the visibility of writing center work. The question seems to be when we want to engineer this visibility. As many participants in the listserv dialogue about this very question pointed out, Spring could be an effective time to hold this week. The Spring brings not only beautiful weather to many parts of the world, but also a relative slump in the administrative duties that writing center directors (as professors, administrators, committee members, and generally overextended individuals) are expected to fulfill. Additionally, many national and regional conferences tend to clutter our Fall schedules, leaving Spring more amenable to major events. Given my recent experiences of trying to oversee a writing center while simultaneously planning and instructing Colby's tutor training course, I agreed with my colleagues' suggestions that a time with relatively few administrative responsibilities would seem an attractive and practical time to organize an international writing center week.

Great. We're good to go. The listserv chatter moved on to new topics, and at Jon's request, I began to prepare a formal proposal that detailed my vision of an international writing center week. But something nipped at the edges of my consciousness, an itch I just couldn't seem to scratch. I started talking about my ideas with the people around me, my tutors. They responded to my ideas with enthusiasm—"An International Writing Center Week? That would be so

cool!"—but not without serious reservations—"In the Spring? I'd never be able to make it. Why not the Fall?"

Why not the Fall? As I took a closer look at the students around me, I questioned myself. My tutors were bustling in and out of the center (more flustered than usual), stopping for a few minutes to vent to me or to each other about the projects that were due yesterday, the hassles of finalizing study abroad arrangements, the difficulties of securing a job and housing after graduation. Beginning in March or so, staff members who had arrived like clockwork for all of their shifts, were suddenly desperately pleading to swap shifts with someone. Rarely did we have perfect attendance at our staff meetings, a sharp contrast to our fully attended Fall meetings. Only two tutors were able to attend our regional conference, half the number who crowded into a van to go to the International Writing Centers Association/ National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, in Hershey, in the Fall. Many of my tutors seemed ready to cry at the drop of a hat. And some did. In particular, my senior tutors, who so readily had taken on extra (read: unpaid) responsibilities throughout the year, seemed most affected by the anxieties arriving with the end of the year.

I continued to turn over the idea in my head. Surrounded by my student-tutors, and still so close to my own experiences as a student, I could not help but wander down memory lane. I remembered constantly battling the urge to play frisbee as I wrote my final papers and finished (or started) independent projects. I pictured my calendar, each day's box filled with reminders of get-togethers with professors, thank you dinners, and awards banquets. During my senior year, the time-crunch had been exacerbated. I had juggled job applications, various versions of cover letters and resumes, and travel for interviews, all while taking advantage of every moment to spend

time with the friends I'd be leaving behind. And I spent a lot of time in the pub. And even more time crying.

Why not the Fall, indeed?

An early Fall event could capture the enthusiasm that ushers in a new year and could connect students to the writing center before the semester gets into full swing. Students are more apt to attend events while their energy is high and their schedules more flexible. First-year students in particular would benefit from such timing, as they explore a wealth of campus resources. Likewise, tutors, who would be essential to the organization, promotion, and execution of a writing center week, would be more available and able to fully engage. The staff could come together to participate in a shared experience that would bond old and new tutors as a cohesive group before the year gets underway— and divergent class and work schedules inevitably fragment our community. Veteran tutors would set a high standard of investment and participation for the entering tutors—a fitting way, as one of my senior tutors articulated, "to pass the torch."

Moreover, an event in the Fall could jump-start an entire year of accessibility regardless of students' class standings. First-year writers could begin using their centers early in their careers. Sophomores and juniors would be gently nudged back through our doors. And seniors would have the benefit of using their writing center from the very start of a thesis, fellowship proposal, or other culminating writing projects that mark the end of a student's college experience. We could build momentum early and carry it through the year, rather than cutting it off at the pass, as is a strong possibility with a Spring event.

As I continued to chew on the idea of this international week, I also continued teaching Colby's training course for students interested in becoming tutors in our writing center. Reflecting back on the first weeks of the course, I noticed parallels between early class discussions and the ways in which we, as writing center administrators and staff members, were engaging our own conversations about locating an international writing center week on our calendars. I call on this connection now, and offer it up as a framework for understanding the risks and rewards of our scheduling options.

Let me step back in time a few months and explain. At about the same time that I made my first foray onto WCenter, I noticed a particular dynamic emerging in the training course I was instructing. That is, our class discussions were becoming stymied by the group's tendency to consider *how* to tutor, before understanding theoretically *what* tutoring is or *why* it happens. Students were rushing to the practical before having fully developed a theoretical context. Among tutors-to-be, this move is a common one, I think, probably driven by a combination of nervous excitement and anticipation. I understood why it was happening, but I struggled with how to side-step it. How does one argue for the value of theoretical thinking?

As I prepared for class one night, trying on different strategies for broaching this rather vague issue, I drummed my pencil eraser on an empty legal pad. This idea of "why" was an abstraction, after all, the value of which is purely relative and subjective. I needed a concrete way to convey my thoughts on the importance of building an ideological framework through which to understand practical concerns. Suddenly, I heard the words of one of my high school English teachers, Mrs. Nelson, echoing in my head. Throughout my senior year, she had wanted my classmates and me to understand the reason many of the eighteenth-century dramas we read (which seemed almost farcical in nature) had been well received when they were first performed. She claimed audiences had enjoyed the seemingly unre-alistic plays because they had engaged in a "willing suspension of disbelief." That is, theatre-goers had removed themselves from the often troubling realities of daily life and allowed themselves to participate in a parallel world, in which rules were broken and barriers—social class restrictions, familial dramas, money troubles—were lifted. In short, it was like adults playing make-believe without the fear of being called children. Snapping back to reality, I scribbled the words "willing suspension of disbelief" on my legal pad and finished preparing for that night's class. Thanks, Mrs. Nelson.

In class, I told my students about Mrs. Nelson and her ideas about "willing suspension of disbelief." Many were skeptics, and throughout the remainder of the course, I invoked the phrase to call them back from the precipice of the practical, and into the world of wondering and what-ifs. I think that now, at the end of the semester, they understand the mixed metaphors enough to understand that sometimes, it's worth remembering *why* before we think about *how*.

So what's the connection? Well, in the interest of complicating the issues at hand, I urge us all to approach the question of when to name an international writing center week from this ideological perspective. Let's engage in a willing suspension of disbelief. Admittedly, this is not easy to do. Our lives, it seems, are driven by practical concerns. We have papers to grade, conferences and meetings to plan and attend, the dog to walk, the car to have repaired. I myself am not immune to the minutiae of daily life, especially at work. In fact, someone recently asked the person who had tossed out the idea of the (inter)national writing center week to elaborate on her vision for it. In response, I jotted off a quick e-mail (workshops, speakers, newsletters, open houses, visits to other centers, etc.) and checked it off my list of things to do. I did not give much consideration to what my response meant,

or how it might compare with alternative visions. After my attempts to cast discussions in an ideological framework (and as I compose this article), however, I now find myself thinking a little harder about my thinking. Why these particular events? What did I/we hope to accomplish through them? I found my answer in the words of Jean Donovan Sanborn, the founder of the Farnham Writers' Center, who invoked the words of E.M. Forester: "Only connect." Thanks, Jean.

Thus, my vision is based on the premise that human connections are the core of writing center work. I would argue for some central components to the week, all facilitating some form of connection: writer to writer, writing center to faculty and administration, writing center to local community, and writing center to writing center. Events that we would plan for the week might speak to each of these possibilities, separately or in combination. In this way, we could build a time to make interpersonal connections while simultaneously promoting writing centers, our own and each others'.

After all, when we step away from the logistics for a moment and imagine there were no conferences to attend, no papers to grade, no weekly meetings on the Committee on Committees, no budgetary limitations. . . . When we lift the restrictions on our thought, when we suspend disbelief. . . . What remains?

Students, and more specifically, student writers. They would still would be bringing in papers, even without all the administrative details that legitimize our centers and us. Writers would be talking together. Ideas would be exchanged and developed; laughs and sobs would be shared. These moments are truly at the heart of our desire to make better writers. Without students—without writers—we would not exist. They are our life-blood.

But alas, we cannot abandon the practical. There are also very tangible benefits to scheduling the week for the Fall. We could get a headstart on the networking that reconnects us with colleagues and administrators who buoy our respective centers from year to year. An early event could also help us to reach out to new faculty and staff and establish lines of communication. In our own writing center, for instance, this year's open house—an event that lasted no more than a few hours—allowed me to meet the new head librarian as well as many of the reference librarians. Because of the conversations and strategies we shared in October, our center was able to begin a "Spontaneous Writing Board" in the library, and the reference librarians (one of whom is brand new to the College) have visited our staff meetings and training class in order to present on Colby's electronic resources. I can only imagine the relationships that would be built if we held these kinds of events consecutively, over the course of a week.

Moreover, a writing center week seems perfect fodder for conference proposals. Think of the rich panels that we could create through visiting each other's centers, from building relationships in the greater community, and by experimenting with a major (inter)national publicity event. The writing center week could be a bridge between people and ideas, a bridge that, when crossed early enough, can lead us to ideas and collaborations enough to carry us through a year's worth of conferences.

In writing this article, I offer up a way to think carefully and critically about our options. My own process brought me from my desk to my podium to my high school to my tutoring days and back again. Along the way, I listened to the voices that shaped each of my experiences and let them guide

me to my current contention. The voices remind me that the week should be for students as much as for writing center staff members and administrators. And I urge us all to use the question of when to have this week as a means of examining our very motivations for having it, by tapping into the communities around us.

Take some time to suspend the disbelief and let's see what happens together. My own journey led me to believe in the value of having an international writing center week in the Fall; I am anxious to find out where your own personal processes bring each of you. Please send your comments both to Jon Olson at jeo3@psu.edu and to me at katheria@colby.edu. Thanks, all.

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[1] As many of you know, the WCenter listserv is a space for writing center administrators and staff members to share ideas, communicate about hot topics, strategize, and forge the bonds that make our community so strong.

Joining WCenter

To join WCenter, go to the following Web site:

<http://lyris.acs.ttu.edu/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=wcenter&text_mode=0&lang=eng>

Developing lifelong language skills in a writing center

Introduction

Jan Straka has been an exchange student at The McCallie School in Chattanooga, Tennessee for the 2003-2004 school year. At the end of this academic year, he will return to the Czech Republic to complete his secondary education. Jan then hopes to attend college in the United States. Our writing center offers independent study courses for students who wish to focus on specific aspects of writing. These courses offer students small-group, even one-to-one, instruction. What follows are Jan's experiences in learning skills he can apply to the learning of any language through writing and my perspective on working with this special young man.

Jan's perspective

As a foreign exchange student coming to the United States for one year, I remained so stupefied by the new environment at the beginning of my adventure that I initially did not realize the existence of a writing center at The McCallie School. Thus, my early essays were really bad, yet I hoped some deus ex machina would suddenly provide me with astonishing writing skills so that I could astound teachers with my papers. This, of course, never happened, and as my confusion of living in a different society vanished, I eventually found my way to the writing center with a final version of my economics paper. Dr. Childers found out immediately that my allegedly finished semester research project was, in fact, only a horrible draft. I still wonder how I could write papers without an introduction, thesis, connection of paragraphs, and conclusion, all supported by horrible English without any idea of proper punctuation. After hard work and a great deal of help, I managed to turn the paper in and get a good grade. Haunted by the memories of the first

draft, I started an independent study on writing in the next semester. Only a few weeks showed that the regular meetings with Dr. Childers not only boosted my English grades, but also brought unexpected lessons useful for the rest of my life.

I have never been taught how to write by my teachers. Thus, the first bundle of advice from Dr. Childers not only improved my English writing, but also will benefit the creation of papers in my native language; I learned to state a thesis, and, most importantly, to put it at the beginning of a paper in the first paragraph. Moreover, exercises in punctuation and ameliorated handling of transition words have made my contemplations understandable even to a native speaker. On the other hand, my word choice remains a little bit awkward sometimes, and grammar mistakes occur every time. Nevertheless, I get better with each new assignment, as Dr. Childers patiently helps me correct my mistakes. I somehow expected all the progress mentioned above at the beginninig of our studies; however, I have remained surprised as Dr. Childers utters words I had almost never used before: freewrite, draft, and rewrite.

In spite of my skepticism at the beginning, freewriting has proved to be one of the most helpful composition methods for me. This paper is a product of a freewrite I created a few weeks ago; I did not worry about anything I learned to that point and typed everything that popped in my mind. The result turned out extraordinarily well; furthermore, I can use the original freewrite ideas in other assignments, too.

My pride hurt as Dr. Childers kept asking me for revisions of the first assignments. I thought I was not capable

of writing good papers. My attitude changed sharply during work on a response to an essay about Holocaust humor that I read in a college textbook for the independent study. As always, I quickly created a 1500-word paper, immediately labeled by Dr. Childers as a draft. I reluctantly started revising and became more and more amazed as my essay changed its shape. I came up with new interesting ideas and continued adding them while simultaneously cutting old ones. The final product was intriguing—only one sentence remained the same from the initial paper. Moreover, processing of the assignment showed me a lot about my own ideas. I got to know myself better through writing.

Also, I have been opened to rewriting since then; I always wonder where the paper will lead me. Although topics and styles change, the amazement of finding new ideas in my mind lasts. Furthermore, I understand that not every good idea might fit in a certain paper. As I was working on an assignment about my experience with learning English, I fell in love with an essay by Malcolm X and wanted to incorporate some of his thoughts in my already finished paper. I rewrote the new paragraph I yearned to add at least ten times, and I did not count the number of conclusions I came up with. After typing about 2000 words in all those unused paragraphs, I finally gave up and cut the idea completely. I am not angry about the time I lost. I can still consider all the deleted work as a freewrite and use it in another essay.

I wanted to become a good writer. After hard work, I might. Nevertheless, no matter which level of English proficiency I achieve, I understand that writing is not only about good grades, successful applications, or winning

contests. I learned to be more open to new things and gained a new attitude towards any work.

Doc's perspective

When Jan, a high school junior from the Czech Republic, first came to the writing center with his economics paper, I wasn't sure what he was trying to prove. His teacher knew he needed help with the research format for parenthetical references and Works Cited, but that was only a minor problem. Like many ESL students, Jan had trouble communicating exactly what he wanted to say about what he had read in a persuasive manner in his second language. He also knew what he wanted to keep in his paper. We locked horns, then talked about how he could keep his ideas if he introduced the topic with a clear introductory paragraph. After hours of revision, Jan was able to explain in English what he had trouble writing in the paper before. Finally, he felt comfortable and confident with a draft. Once he could express his ideas clearly, the formatting problems became easy to resolve.

Jan then decided that he wanted to take an independent writing course with me this semester, so we collaborated on writing the proposal with Jan describing what he wanted to do (improve his English by getting more experience writing) and my explaining the process by which we would do this. I suggested using Gary Goshgarian's *Exploring Language*, 10th edition (Pearson Longman, 2003) because of the variety of essays with optional writing activities. Jan could pick essays that interested him and then he could respond in writing. He agreed and excitedly began picking the first essays he wanted to read.

Because of Jan's structured method of writing as an ESL student, I asked him to do a freewrite describing his writing process. This metacognitive activity enabled him to reflect on the way he had been writing his papers for English class. What he discovered from this process was that once he felt free

to type all thoughts onto the computer monitor, his ideas flowed much more. He didn't worry about using articles correctly, for instance, so he was able to get down more ideas. He sent me long e-mails that he then would revise, cut and amend before editing. He became extremely excited about discovering his own ideas all written in English!

When Jan read an essay he chose on Holocaust humor from the 9th edition of *Exploring Language*, I was concerned that he would not be able to communicate his ideas clearly in English. This topic was indeed a difficult one to discuss for first language students. Through many drafts with conferences that included long discussions before the next draft, Jan changed his perspective, clarified his thoughts, revised his examples for emphasis, and clearly conveyed his point on a very sophisticated level.

Now Jan has been reading essays on language in the section of the text entitled "From Silence to Language" and comparing his experience with finding English as his second language. After writing a draft about his own experiences learning English, he read an essay by Malcolm X entitled "Homemade Education," which gave him another example for his essay. His excitement at this discovery has caused him to make other changes in his paper to include a quotation from this essay and to eliminate an allusion to Orwell's *1984*. It is fun to watch his ideas take shape, and go in different directions. Just this week he is rediscovering this essay in hopes of reaching a point where he feels confident with what he has done. Now, through lengthy discussions, he has decided that his sections on the Malcolm X essay would work better as a different essay because they distract from the focus of the rest of the original essay.

Yes, we sometimes have comprehension problems when I don't understand his saying that he didn't learn English from the "craddle" and have to read

aloud to pick up missing articles with nouns. However, we're enjoying our play with language and ideas so much that the challenge makes it all the more fun.

But our work together is also serious business for both of us. We discuss language issues, topics of essays, and new writing processes. Jan. like many writers, has discovered that some pieces must be revised again and again in search of the best way to communicate our ideas.

Pamela B. Childers and Jan Straka
The McCallie School
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

November 4-6, 2004: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in St. Cloud, MN
Contact: Frankie Condon, Department of English, 720 Fourth Avenue South, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498. Web site: <http://www.ku.edu/~mwca/>.

October 19-23, 2005: International Writing Centers Association, in Minneapolis, MN

Book Review

Bruce, Shanti, and Ben Rafoth, eds. *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors.* Portsmouth: NH: Heinemann Boynton/Cook, 2004. ISBN: 0-325-00644-X. $20. (To order, call 1-800-225-5800 or visit www.heinemann.com)

Reviewed by Kelly Jones Benhase and Vicki Russell, Duke University, Durham, NC

In his talk at the 2004 Conference on College Composition and Communication, Paul Kei Matsuda continued to call for transforming composition by integrating the work of second language (L2) learners into the field. If we take this challenge to heart, writing centers must address the extent to which we consider ESL writers as different from other writers. *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* won't necessarily transform writing center work. It does, however, have the powerful potential to improve the understanding tutors bring to working with ESL writers, thereby enhancing the quality and efficacy of our sessions. By highlighting the challenges of guiding students while still honoring their agency, these chapters encourage the kind of integration that Matsuda calls for. They challenge us to test both our own culturally constructed assumptions and those of our students.

As Ilona Leki asks in the forward, how might "the promise of the writing center . . . be better realized for L2 students?" The book's three parts—"Cultural Contexts," "The ESL Tutoring Session," and "A Broader View"—contain chapters written by 15 individuals, including writing center directors and composition graduate students and instructors. In addition to providing a strong theoretical foundation, a number of chapters also focus on very specific pragmatic concerns tutors may have in working with non-native speakers. This volume will be useful not only to peer tutors, but also to faculty and graduate student tutors as well as to instructors. Since not every chapter will appeal to all of these audiences, this review attempts to help readers assess the pertinence of each chapter.

The "Cultural Contexts" section establishes a cultural and linguistic bedrock for the book by exploring two salient questions: How do non-native speakers perceive and gain knowledge? What are the multiple theories of how humans learn second, third, and even fourth languages? As the point of departure for what follows, the opening chapter on "Insights Into Cultural Divides" (ch. 1) considers how cultural differences can influence assumptions and practices in often-unexamined ways. Author Nancy Hayward's view of cultural expectations when working with ESL writers will most likely be of particular interest to peer tutors who have limited experience with cultural differences.

In the next chapter (ch. 2), Theresa Tseng gets to the linguistic heart of the matter by focusing on four major approaches to second language theory acquisition. As she says, "One theory cannot tell the story of second language learning" (32). In this way, Tseng contextualizes the concept of contrastive rhetoric discussed in a number of these chapters. Her ability to clearly explain highly technical theory, plus her own experience as an L2 learner of English, makes this fascinating reading for those with a keen interest in linguistics and its relevance to tutoring.

A strength of the book is that theoretical concerns aren't swept aside. Even the pragmatic sounding "The ESL Tutoring Session " section points out that as we "read" our tutees, we need to consider every student who comes into our center as somehow unique. After co-editor Shanti Bruce's "Getting Started" (ch.3), which is geared primarily to peer tutors, comes a fascinating cluster of chapters that deal with the tutor's positioning his or herself in relation to the tutee's work. In "Reading an ESL Writer's Text" (ch. 4), Paul Kei Matsuda and Michelle Cox argue for seeing differences in ESL writing as "not necessarily signs of deficiency" and offer some careful generalizations of factors that may affect ESL writing. Using work done by Carol Severino and others that categorizes possible stances from which tutors may respond, Matsuda and Cox offer useful strategies for focusing on what's important in ESL papers.

Carol Severino takes up the notion of "Avoiding Appropriation" (ch. 5) of a writer's text by positioning appropriation on a continuum of control and authority. She offers ten excellent principles for ensuring that tutors work to honor the agency of the writer. In "Earth Aches By Midnight: Helping ESL Writers Clarify Their Intended Meaning" (ch. 6), Amy Jo Minett follows by thoughtfully analyzing what may cause tutors to misunderstand ESL writers' meanings, with suggestions for how to avoid jumping to conclusions about their intentions.

The next two chapters expand the range that exists within best practice, depending on the needs of the tutee. What approaches to working with ESL writers are available and how do we choose what is best? Jennifer Staben and Kathryn Dempsey Nordhaus's

"Looking at The Whole Text" (ch. 7), emphasizing "talk before text," is followed by Cynthia Linville's sentence-level focus in "Editing Line-by-Line" (ch. 8), which stresses the need to support ESL writers in improving their ability to edit their own work by focusing on patterns of error.

The next cluster's usefulness isn't limited to tutors working with ESL writers. Co-editor Ben Rafoth's "Tutoring Online" (ch. 9), about online tutoring and the efficacy of focused endnote comments, will benefit anyone who comments on student papers. Kurt Bouman's "Raising Questions about Plagiarism" (ch.10) offers a complete and sophisticated look at the problematic issue of academic integrity, including the benefits and challenges of American academic conventions. Paula Gillespie's "Is This My Job?" (ch.11) focuses on how tutors conceive of their job and its boundaries, encouraging us to realize, for example, that a student's request "is sometimes not our job." Kevin Dvorak's "Creative Writing Workshops for ESL Writers" (ch. 12) reimagines writing centers as locations for creative writing workshops that encourage ESL writers to take risks and enjoy writing.

The final section of the book, called "A Broader View," offers the kind of reflection that may happen rarely in a busy writing center: How do things look from an ESL student's perspective? Although a number of this volume's chapters offer authors' personal insights into learning a language or living in another country, Gerd Bräuer's "The Role of Writing in Higher Education Abroad" (ch. 13) focuses on the experience and insight of students from other countries. This chapter is particularly interesting when Bräuer describes differences between "Anglo-American" and "Continental" ways of writing.

Following in the vein of viewing our work with ESL students more broadly, Rafoth's "Trying to Explain English?" (ch. 14) positions English as a "global phenomenon" and looks carefully at certain characteristics that make English vexing both to learners as well as to tutors trying to explain this language to non-native speakers. For example, his discussion of predictable and nonpredictable adjectives offers a perfect example of something native-speaking tutors could explain effectively only by having learned the linguistic rule behind the choice, something Rafoth urges us to do. In the final chapter of the book, "Conversations with ESL Writers," Shanti Bruce (ch. 15) urges us to "[return] the focus from theories of culture and linguistic concerns to the individual student." Readers will meet Sami from Saudi Arabia, Jung-jun from Korea, Zahara from Uganda, and Helene from Germany—all students who came to the writing center with varying degrees of confidence and insecurity. Through their words, we gain a better understanding of the challenges ESL students face.

Overall, this volume powerfully involves its readers in a larger conversation about ESL writers, from its useful glossary to the way chapter authors refer to the work in other chapters. Most refreshingly, the volume avoids the unnecessary and often counterproductive dichotomy between nondirective and directive tutoring common in discussions about working with ESL writers. Taken as a whole, the volume problematizes tutor reaction to error, with a number of chapters urging that tutors be what Staben and Nordhaus describe as "direct, rather than directive."

In essence, those of us who are native speakers are in one sense L2 learners of the ESL writers we tutor. As Bruce states in the sentence that closes *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors*: "The incentive to keep working and to keep learning lies in the possibility that each new day will bring one more student closer to understanding and enjoying the process of learning to write in English." Thankfully, this volume offers all of us a wealth of ways for writing centers to "read" our students—and ourselves—more completely.

Reviewed by Laurie Cella (University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT)

When I taught a tutor practicum class for the first time in 2001, my goal was to highlight ESL training. As I constructed my syllabus, I trekked over to the library on a regular basis to copy articles by scholars like Judith Powers, Muriel Harris, Tony Silva, and Jennifer Ritter. These articles proved extremely useful as I educated myself on the topic of ESL tutoring strategies. In the fall of 2000, I was lucky enough to meet Jennifer Ritter at the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, and she agreed to give a presentation to my tutors on ESL strategies. The tutors were amazed that Jennifer, a published author, would drive through a New England snowstorm in order to share ESL tutoring strategies over dinner at a local restaurant! For me, Ritter's snowy trip demonstrated her commitment to the cause of ESL training, and for the tutors, Ritter's advice was helpful because she gave a number of practical suggestions balanced by just the right amount of theory.

It is this balance of personal warmth, theoretical background, and practical advice that characterizes Ben Rafoth and Shanti Bruce's new collection of essays, *Tutoring ESL Writers*. This collection fills a key void in writing

center scholarship; to my knowledge, there is no other book designed primarily to train tutors on the most effective ways of tutoring ESL students. Of course, none of the authors promise any magical solutions, but they do emphasize that tutoring ESL students requires empathy for the particular difficulties of managing a second language in a foreign academic context.

In their introduction, the editors explain that the three sections of their collection, "Cultural Contexts," "The ESL Tutoring Session," and "A Broader View," provide the cultural, theoretical, and practical context tutors need to confidently address the specific challenges ESL students pose. They have selected tutor-friendly articles that cover issues as varied as contrastive rhetoric (Nancy Hayward), strategies for teaching students to edit their own work (Cynthia Linville), and the benefits of creative writing workshops as a means of encouraging ESL writers to imagine the English language in a playful, even fun, way (Kevin Dvorak). A common theme running throughout this book is a familiar one: tutors must negotiate competing impulses when working with ESL students. The tutors in my practicum classes always want to know where to draw the line between a helpful and an aggressively directive approach; the authors in this collection offer practical and creative ways to solve this dilemma.

For example, in Chapter 5, Carol Severino offers a personal example to dramatize the dangers of an overly directive approach. She explains that, as a second language learner in Italy, she had been proud of her essay "Una Viaggio a Venezia" because she felt that it had accurately represented her experience in Venice. Severino then describes the loss she felt when her Italian professor rewrote her Italian essay using more sophisticated language. She uses this moment as a segue into a short history of appropriation and ends with a practical ten point list of sug-

gestions designed to help tutors negotiate the line between a helpful and an overly directive approach. Throughout her article, Severino includes the experiences and suggestions of the University of Iowa tutors, which effectively allows tutors to have a real voice in the discussion. Severino's narrative dramatizes the need for a respectful attention to students' texts and an empathetic awareness of their struggle to create and sustain a writerly identity in a foreign language.

Kurt Bouman's discussion of plagiarism in Chapter 10 echoes the theme of cultural awareness, for he demonstrates that the very definitions of plagiarism change from culture to culture. He points out that some ESL students who appear to be plagiarizing may instead be adhering to their own cultural expectations for creating persuasive texts. Bouman suggests that one way to broach the topic of plagiarism is to ask students to describe the writing process they learned in their home country. This approach allows students to identify how their own techniques for citation differ from the expectations of an American academic audience. He argues that even when tutors suspect purposeful fraud within a student text, they should view this potentially uncomfortable tutoring moment as a site for instruction. Bouman ends his article with a number of possible plagiarism scenarios that would stimulate a thoughtful in-class discussion.

In Chapter 14, Ben Rafoth provides some examples of tricky grammatical constructions that would also provide fodder for a useful discussion in class. One of the tutors currently enrolled in my practicum class recently confessed that she had never been "good at" grammar and so she was worried about her future performance as a tutor. As I reassured her, I was reminded of Rafoth's charge for all tutors to quell their fears of grammar and investigate the very questions that confound them. For instance, he presents the problem of pluralizing the "headless com-

pound" and argues that attention to compelling questions like this will open new and amazing doors of language for the inquisitive tutor. (By the way, a headless compound is a word like Walkman, which is pluralized by simply adding an *s*. Cool.)

Shanti Bruce and Ben Rafoth have produced a collection of particularly teachable essays, each article representing an important link in the on-going discussion of the rich possibilities and challenges of working with ESL students. The last chapter of the book is composed of Shanti Bruce's interviews with a number of ESL students whose opinions of the writing center provide a useful addition to the discussion. It seems only appropriate that the book's editors, whose main premise is that ESL students have much to offer tutors, both culturally and linguistically, would allow the ESL students to have the last word. Next semester, I won't need to trek to the library to create my own ESL packet; this collection will serve as my new staple in the Spring 2005 Tutor Practicum class.

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The challenges and contributions of nontraditional tutors

The contribution of nontraditional tutors to a writing center depends upon their actions and reactions to their unique challenges. Those challenges include knowing how to handle the perceptions and expectations of the student writers who come to a writing center for help; learning to utilize their nontraditional talents; recognizing boundaries that are blurred by their experiences; understanding the cultural differences between themselves, peer tutors and writers; and working with a director whose culture and experiences may also be different than theirs. The contributions of nontraditional tutors are inseparable from their actions and reactions to the challenges they face. Many adults who return to academia as a result of career changes are disoriented in their new role of student, and unprepared for the role of peer tutor in a college writing center. However, the psychology that enables adults to return to college also enables them to evaluate their contributions and make modifications where necessary. The psychology is there, they are ready to learn, they are ready to meet their challenges, they are ready to make a contribution, but they may need a little help. They may need help to understand student perceptions, to utilize their unique talents, to recognize boundaries, and to understand the cultural differences between themselves and peer writers, peer tutors, and even writing center directors. These are all elements in the composite that makes nontraditional tutors valuable members of a writing center team.

Understanding student perceptions

Understanding perceptions is an element in the success of a nontraditional tutor; but where will this understanding come from? Casey Jones details the difficulties in measuring the success of a writing center. It is similarly difficult to measure the way student writers perceive nontraditional tutors. To begin exploring this area, I conducted a small, informal survey. Questionnaires went to twenty-one students from elementary schools, high schools, and colleges in New Jersey, North Carolina, and California; to both traditional and nontraditional students; to people who have never been tutored and to people who have been tutored; to both ESL writers and to writers for whom English is the first language; and to younger tutors. The anonymous surveys identified the participants by age and experience with being tutored, and the answers were entered into a computer database. Although survey experts would be disappointed in the small number of participants (twenty-one), and a statistician might have fun with the answers to individual questions, the most important factor for me is the differences in the overall perceptions of peer tutors and nontraditional tutors.

The questions asked students whether they preferred a peer tutor or nontraditional tutor (or both) for the following types of writing assistance:
• Whom do you expect to know more about the organization of an academic research paper?
• Whom do you expect to be more knowledgeable about MLA and APA formatting?
• Whom do you assume would know more about grammar and punctuation?
• Whom are you more likely to seek out if you need a writing tutor?
• Whom do you expect to be better at brainstorming an idea for a paper?
• Whom do you expect to better understand the pressure you are under during midterms and finals?
• Whom do you expect to be better at clarifying a thesis, topic sentences, and a conclusion?
• Whom do you expect to know more about conducting research for a paper?
• Whom do you expect to better be able to interpret the requirements of an assignment?

Let's look at the largest and smallest percentages for answers in each category:
• In the "Under 24" age group, 40.5% of the answers favored peer tutors, while 36% of the answers indicated faith in both peer and nontraditional tutors. This majority favors peer tutors, but a significant percent favors both peer and nontraditional tutors. For this group of students with ongoing exposure to teachers and parents, the presence of both nontraditional tutors and peer tutors could benefit a writing center.

• In the "24 - 34" age group, 39% of the answers favored peer tutors, and 39% of the answers favored nontraditional tutors. This group is separating or already separated from parental authority, and integrating into an adult world. For this age group the presence of both peer and nontraditional tutors could help a writing center.

• In the "35 - 45" age group 56% of the answers indicated faith in both peer and nontraditional tutors, while 39% of the answers favored nontraditional tutors. In this age group it is normal for people to have young families, and work side by side with multi-generational staffs from different ethnic back-

grounds. The majority of the "35 - 45" answers indicated faith in both peer and nontraditional tutors. For this group the presence of nontraditional tutors could be important for a writing center.

- In the "Over 45" age group 55.6% of the answers favored nontraditional tutors, while 28.5% of the answers indicated faith in both groups. Many of these subjects are watching younger, less experienced, people in their workforce catching up or bypassing them. At home, unprepared children may be asserting independence. The majority of the "Over 45" answers indicated faith in nontraditional tutors. For this group it is imperative to have nontraditional tutors present in a writing center.

Essentially, the "Under 24" and "Over 45" age groups put more faith in the tutors closest to their ages, while the "24 – 34" and "34 – 44" age groups split the credit between peer and nontraditional tutors. Therefore, some students will expect more experience and expertise than the nontraditional may possess, while others will expect the nontraditional to be out-of-date and out of touch. To succeed, a writing center must meet the needs of all student writers, and also elevate writer perceptions of all the tutors. To do this, both peer and nontraditional tutors must be trained to succeed with both peer and nontraditional writers. Despite this need, the information and guidance available for peer tutors working with nontraditional writers is not balanced by proportional information and guidance for nontraditional tutors. Dropping a nontraditional into a tutor's seat may give a writing center an initial draw for nontraditional writers, but it is not enough to bring those writers back. Along with the same training as their peers, nontraditional tutors also need training and literature that addresses their unique problems and guides them through their challenges.

Some of the challenges for nontradi-

tional tutors are linked to their return to college after life in the workforce or as a homemaker. Since there is so little that deals with nontraditional tutoring, let's look at something aimed at nontraditional students. Cynthia Haynes-Burton discusses nontraditional students and their "loss of stability and identity" (103) and asserts that "the most extreme effect of the process of change is the feeling of displacement" (104). Although nontraditional tutors like myself, whose careers included seminars and classes, have few adjustment problems, it is easy to see why nontraditional students who have never attended a college class might find the adjustment difficult. One problem common to most of us is that few professional backgrounds prepare a person for synergetic tutoring—tutoring which externalizes the normally internal process of writing, and tutors must explain rules they unconsciously follow. While it might be assumed that adults returning to college from the collaborative environment of a work force would be prepared for the role of writing center tutor, the reality is that the face-to-face, side-by-side, synergetic act of tutoring is not the same as collaborating on a project in business. There is also a hierarchal flow of tutor to student, which is not that common to collaborative projects in the work force. In contrast to co-workers on a business project whose need for visibility might prompt them to both defend their contribution and conform to corporate guidelines, some student writers come to a writing center wanting to be told exactly what to write, while others resist conforming to assignment parameters that involve extensive rewriting. Either way, a tutor's guidance can be ignored or rejected, and the final decisions on college papers are out of the tutors' hands. Nontraditional tutors, however, have life and work experiences that give them unique talents that can be cultivated and directed to the benefit of these writers and the center.

The cultivation and direction of their unique talents

When a nontraditional student be-

comes a tutor, he or she comes in with resources that a skillful writing center director can tap. Judy S. Richardson discusses the nontraditional student's adaptability, accumulated reservoir of skills and experience, and internal motivations to learn (139). Nontraditional students return to college because they are adaptable to the changing needs in their life or work, and they come equipped with a variety of skills cultivated during their past experiences. The willingness of a nontraditional student to take on the extra hours and work of being a tutor is an indication of additional motivation. Haynes-Burton also discusses the typically well-developed organizational skills of nontraditional students (106). Organized nontraditional students make organized nontraditional tutors. The homemaker who successfully juggled multiple children, meals, errands, carpooling, cleaning, and shopping knows how to prioritize; the executive who spent years presenting proposals to his or her board knows how to target an audience; the secretary who spent twenty years creating professional reports and presentations knows how to arrange information on a page; and a builder who spent a lifetime fitting together multi-dimensional, physical puzzles, knows how to think in multi-faceted stages. Nontraditional tutors who learn to utilize their unique talents become key factors in the success of their writing centers; but the lines a tutor should not cross may be blurred by a nontraditional tutor's previous roles.

Peer tutors and the traps they must avoid

Molly Wingate warns tutors about the temptation to proofread, rather than teach proofreading; the temptation to supply an answer, as opposed to offering suggestions; and the temptation to supply a topic, rather than brainstorm ideas (9-13). Similarly, Muriel Harris states that "tutors need to define for themselves the degree of intervention that is appropriate in a student's work." She also discusses administration concerns about cheating, and student expectations that the work will be done

for them. Peer tutors struggle with these lines, but nontraditional tutors often find the boundaries even harder to see. For example, one ESL student came to me with a paper for a class in constitutional law. In her paper she needed to address the issue of separation of church and state. She wanted to argue that an individual state should not kick out the Catholic Church, but she was not able to find out which state had separated from the Catholics. From over thirty-five years as a voting citizen of the United States, I understood that the term, "separation of church and state" is a national conceptualized ideal, and not specific to any *one* religion being tossed out of any *one* state. So, where was my line between cheating and guiding? Should writing tutors support misunderstandings caused by language barriers? Would non-English professors want to grade ESL misunderstandings? Peer tutors sometimes struggle to see the lines between what they should and should not do; however, non-traditionals experience extra layers of gauze, including a parental layer, through which they need to see.

From the beginning I loved tutoring, but I have a layer of parental instincts, and a layer of grandmotherly instincts. In the beginning, I let some of the sessions run over by 50%. My experience as a published author also gave me a cautious respect for the lyrical voice of ethnic or regional students who wrote with natural grace or romantic dialect. Because I didn't want to squash a distinct voice with minute details of grammar and punctuation, the boundary lines of tutoring became even fuzzier. That fuzzy line became almost invisible when I privately tutored a handicapped girl who had been taught at home for four years. Her medication, constant pain, and episodes of medical crisis activated my maternal sympathies and made it difficult for me to push for the level of performance she needed to attain.

However, my struggles to find the lines I should not cross were balanced by my nontraditional experiences and personal and professional development. Like many other nontraditional students, I have worked in a series of jobs and roles, each one involving different guidelines and procedures. Each job taught me to evaluate my performance and make adjustments. I bring that process into my tutoring. When I encounter a difficult tutoring situation, I evaluate my performance to determine whether I crossed a line and, if so, at what point I may have crossed it. My history, this process, is helping me to adapt and to learn. I am learning to help students with individual needs to individual extents. I am learning to help ESL students bring their point across without handing them an "A" paper, and I am learning how to guide student writers in extreme circumstances without doing the work for them. Most importantly, I've learned that I am among the students who are working from within a distinct culture.

Culture is most often thought of as a difference between nationalities

Nationality is not the only cultural consideration in a writing center. Janelle B. Mathis states, "Culture is about different economic systems, social skills, and languages" (230). These are differences that appear between generations in the United States. Writing center directors who neglect the expressive social dimension of the tutoring process are simply not going to be as effective as directors who understand it. In the writing center where I tutor, I watched a male peer tutor help a male peer writer. They were both athletes, and everything about their communication signaled their culture. They straddled their chairs the same way. They moved toward and away from each other with a similar rhythm. The facial expression of one appeared on the other, and their tones of voice were modulated to the same key. At a point in which the writer wanted the tutor to think for him, the tutor pushed the paper and the responsibility back at him like passing the ball on the basketball court. At the end of their session,

they slapped each other on the back and the writer went away nodding his head over the paper he had marked up. Any of the other tutors could have tutored that paper just as skillfully, but I'm convinced that the shared culture between the athletes added to the success of the session, and the presence of a tutor-athlete made it acceptable for other athletes to come to the center—even though they might be tutored by me. So, what are the effects of culture for a nontraditional tutor?

Cultural differences do impact a tutoring session

On a level field any well-trained tutor can help any writer. However, culture is one thing that influences the level of the playing field. I remember a nontraditional writer who came into the center already agitated and aggressive. She had been hostile when she made the appointment, so the secretary signed her into my timeslot, hoping the closeness in our ages would improve the session. After the writer attacked my lack of teaching certification and credentials, she spent the first fifteen minutes of a fifty-minute session trying to get me to condemn the grammar and punctuation in her professor's four-sentence assignment. I explained that, even if I found an error in her professor's paragraph, it would not matter: professors were graded when they were in school, and we are graded now. She remained abrasive, insisting that a professor who makes a punctuation or grammar mistake in the assignment has no right to take points off her work for punctuation or grammar mistakes. Twenty years as a secretary gave me ample experience with antagonistic people. I gently, but firmly, treated the grammar and punctuation of the assignment as a non-issue and repeatedly guided her back into her paper. In the last twenty minutes we worked on a missing thesis, buried topic sentences, paragraphs that started with quotations, and sentences that ended in prepositions. Although we found many problems, she appeared calmer by the end of the session. She expressed her readiness to make her changes, but left the

center still determined to take the professor's four-sentence assignment to be judged by a real "English" teacher. After the writer left, a peer tutor who had witnessed the session sighed with relief, and said that she was afraid the angry woman might have "run right over" her. Through maturity and experience, I came into the center with the behaviors needed to handle the situation, but I still had not done it alone. I had the help of my writing center director, and the support of the peer tutors who accept me as an equal.

The guidance of an active director and the presence of peer tutors who accept dissimilar team members are critical factors in the success of a nontraditional tutor.

The challenges faced by nontraditional tutors need to be recognized and addressed, but the director must not fall into the trap of singling out the nontraditional as separate from the peer tutors. It is a fine, tight wire for a writing center director to walk. Muriel Harris observed that, "Writing centers, because of their variations from institution to institution, do not have a single model to follow or a mold by which to shape themselves. As a result, there are no clear cut guidelines for matters such as administrative structure." The director sets the tone for the tutors. In my writing center our director is an available source of guidance and support. He made it clear from the beginning that it was our writing center more than his, our challenges and our successes. He teaches us together but helps us individually. He unifies us as a team and harmonizes us as a group.

The unification and harmonizing of a writing center team creates an environment in which nontraditional tutors can evaluate their contributions and make modifications where necessary.

In the cooperative and supportive enclave of a well-directed writing center, nontraditional tutors can develop positive responses to their personal challenges, and learn to utilize their unique talents. Writing center directors who

understand that nontraditional tutors have cultural difficulties with tutoring boundaries can better help them recognize those boundaries; and peer tutors who accept their dissimilar team members help their centers to flourish.

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$\mathcal{T}$UTORS' COLUMN

The common thread: A guide for essay writing

In my short time tutoring writers in the University of Findlay's Writing Center, I have been witness to the many difficulties students have when writing. All tutors have seen them, repeated grammatical errors, conversational and non-specific terms like "some stuff," and "lots of things." These are all equally annoying; to me, however, these smaller issues are not what concern me most when tutoring. This is not to say these errors are not worth spending time on to remedy, especially if there is a repetition of the same type of error. However, there is something that is more important to focus on when writing the typical college-level, thesis-driven essay, which in turn may cause the writer to catch and fix these mistakes. This focus is what I will call the "common thread." Quite simply, this is just focus by the writer on the paper and the directions it takes.

It seems that paper writing in college can be very easily compartmentalized, each section of a paper having its own purpose and appropriate material. Often students bring this mindset with them from their secondary educations, where the five paragraph, five to seven sentences per paragraph essay is still required. With these rules chained like weights to their feet, students enter their basic freshman composition class and run into this weird word, "thesis." This generally causes some confusion, and tutors hear things like, "Well, I think this is my thesis. . . . I don't know, what do *you* think my thesis is?" However, most students are able to move beyond this stage in the game. They quickly realize that college writ-

ing is not that much different from high school. Professors are generally less lenient, and there is that thesis thing that has to be in the introduction, but as long as you can identify some main arguments and throw some quotes in there to back them up, you'll pass with flying colors. Granted, most English professors and TA's would not condone this method for "getting through" their classes, but with so many students, as long as the paper is meeting set requirements, it is hard to do anything but pass it.

Of course, a paper written in this format is not automatically poor; in fact I am sure we have all composed essays in this manner, and probably some very good ones. What I am concerned with here is what the students are focused on when writing these papers. Students often seem to be filling out checklists: "Thesis . . . got it, five main points . . . got it, conclusion . . . got it." This method can get the job done, so to speak, but many times it seems to result in a paper that shifts and changes subjects. When the paper shifts and changes so many times, the paper usually ends up as a jumble of several ideas or arguments—nothing is communicated.

So how might we remedy this problem? Some might suggest loosening the format of the basic college essay, shying away from a strong emphasis on a thesis or ignoring it altogether. I would reject this proposal. On the contrary, I think a strong thesis statement can be a capable tool in aiding struggling writers in focusing their papers. So if I like the concept of

a thesis statement, but I don't like a compartmentalization of papers—what approach would I advocate? In every paper, whether the traditional thesis-driven essay or another format, there needs to be a certain level of focus: all arguments and evidence need to be working towards one goal. This goal would be the point of the paper—what the writer is trying to accomplish or "say."

I propose a concept that can provide the focus a thesis-driven essay is intended to create without requiring the presence of the traditional strong thesis. This *common thread* is a concept that can be used in any type of academic paper, and really in any kind of writing, to keep the arguments focused in order to accomplish something through the paper. I advise the writers I work with that there needs to be this focus in their paper—to ask themselves, "what is this paper driving at?" This is the common thread. For most papers, this will usually involve some sort of thesis statement. This can be useful because with each new line of thought, each new paragraph, and each successive sentence, the writer needs to be considering how what he or she is writing applies to the paper. The same is true for papers that lack a strong thesis. For instance, if a writer chooses not to state any conclusions until the end of the paper, and work towards those conclusions through a series of arguments, the same concept applies. Throughout all the arguments and examples, a writer must maintain a common thread.

While I will not go so far as to say

that this tool will be a cure for all writing ills, I do submit that it will help to remedy, with their guidance, many of the problems writing tutors encounter. Beyond the focus that will be added to

Topic Sentence
support
example
evidence
Concluding Sentence

↓

Para. 1

↓

Para. 2

↓

Para. x

↓
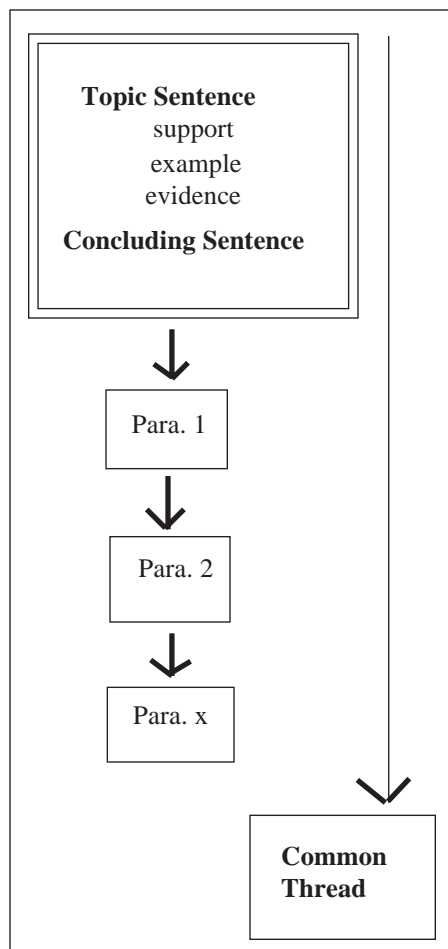
Common Thread

the paper, when writers concern themselves with each paragraph and each sentence, checking to make sure it works in with the common thread, they will be more likely to pick up on deficiencies that may have plagued them before. In checking each paragraph, writers may realize they need to step from one paragraph to another without any sudden or awkward breaks in subjects. In looking at the evidence they include, they may realize that in order for them to maintain focus, they need to say something intelligent about the citation, namely what it proves and how it fits in with the argument being made. Also, with increased focus on each sentence and how it affects the

What's new and/or interesting on your Web site?

WLN invites writing center folks who want to share some special feature or new material on their OWL to let us know. Send your URL, a title, and a sentence or two about what to look for, to the editor (harrism@cc.purdue.edu).

Delmar College—Online Newsletter

<http://www.delmar.edu/engl/wrtctr/newsletter/>

We have a new link that features our Writing Center's current newsletter and archived issues, so that our virtual readers can keep up with what's happening at our center.

Rachel Perkes
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Southwest Missouri State University—15-year Report of our Writing Center

<http://www.smsu.edu/writingcenter>

We have always prepared annual reports, but we decided it was important to take a longitudinal look at our work as well. Reviewing the last 15 years has been quite insightful for us. We've been able to document significant changes in the Writing Center's appearance, philosophy, and operations based on feedback from the university community. The report prompted us to reexamine/revise our mission statement and objectives so that they more accurately reflect who we are now versus who we were in 1988.

Our 15-year report is available online (and in hard copy) so that administrators, faculty, students, and writing center practitioners elsewhere can get a better sense of the work that happens in our Writing Center.

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entire paper, sentences may start to have a greater level of clarity.

Thus we see how a simple redirection of focus and a bit more academic diligence can improve writing. Once again, this is not a panacea for a beginning writer's woes, but I think it can be an effective tool in improving writing,

especially for those writers intimidated by the task before them. The common thread gives writers something to come back to and check the viability of their arguments as well as the entire paper.

Matthew Buttermore
University of Findlay
Findlay, OH

Director of the Center for Academic Assistance
Clayton College & State University

CCSU is seeking candidates for Director of the Center for Academic Assistance. The Director is responsible for providing leadership in developing and administrating comprehensive academic support services designed to assist all CCSU students, whether enrolled in credit or noncredit courses. The Director's duties include managing the academic and administrative functions of the Center, including performing needs assessments; upgrading materials, technology, and equipment; developing and implementing new programs; and providing student support services, such as developmental English and math courses, peer tutoring, and ESL support.

Required Qualifications: A doctorate in a related area, e.g. English, TESOL, math, reading, composition, or developmental education; teaching and administrative experience at the college level, including demonstrated success in implementing academic support services or serving students with weak academic backgrounds or other special needs, i.e. ESL; experience in developing, proposing, and managing a unit budget; experience in use of technology in instruction and scholarship; demonstrated ability to build an effective team among staff with diverse functions and needs; demonstrated effectiveness in communicating with internal and external constituencies of the Center, i.e. Center staff, CCSU administrators, faculty, staff, and students, and representatives of other institutions.

Preference will be shown to candidates with the following qualifications: experience in providing support for students preparing to take standardized tests, such as the Georgia Regents' Test or the GRE; experience managing an academic support center, writing center, or peer tutoring program where emphasis is placed on assisting students across the four-year curriculum; grant writing experience.

 Contact Information: A qualified applicant should send a letter of interest and current Curriculum Vitae, including the names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of at least three potential references to (e-mail applications are encouraged): Dr. Ray Wallace, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, Chair of the Director of CAA Search Committee, Clayton College & State University, 5900 North Lee Street, Morrow, GA 30260. E-mail: raywallace @mail.clayton.edu. Web Site : <www.clayton.edu>.

The expected starting date is July 1, 2004. Review of applicant qualifications will begin immediately and will continue until the position is filled. Preference will be given to applications received by June 1, 2004.

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