THE //WRITING LAB

N E W S L E T T E R

...FROM THE EDITOR...

This month's issue of *WLN* has two articles focusing on the public nature of our writing center work. Andrea Zachary reviews important considerations for writing effective yearly reports, and Diana Calhoun Bell examines the philosophical, pedagogical, and administrative implications of a deprivatizing approach in the writing center.

In the Tutors' Columns, Liberty Sproat reminds us of how uncomfortable students can be when first entering a writing center and how important it is to understand a student's reticence to get involved in a tutoring session. Laura Hirneisen describes her strategy for improving small group tutorials through the use of e-mail.

And you'll notice a typical November phenomenon—the many conference announcements and job openings that are being posted. While the specific positions may be of interest only to job seekers, they can also help us see what the various expectations are for writing center directors.We frequently ask ourselves what our job descriptions should include, and the range of responsibilities is apparent in these announcements seeking writing center administrators.

• Muriel Harris, editor

...INSIDE...

Writing better annual reports

Although members of writing centers specialize in crafts such as polishing prose or whetting metaphors for academic audiences, we sometimes are at a loss on how to write for our professional audiences. One reason is that we are more familiar, and thus more comfortable, writing about academic subjects. However, when we have to write a business-oriented document, such as an annual report, we often struggle because we're writing to a less familiar type of audience, and to fulfill a different purpose.

Applying basic strategies of technical writing can be beneficial for writing center administrators who write professional and technical documents. One primary goal of technical writing is to facilitate understanding between the writer and the reader through techniques such as audience analysis, genre studies, and document design. In this article, I outline three problematic areas from the results of a genre analysis of writing center annual reports. Then, I demonstrate how applying basic principles of technical writing can help to improve these problems.

Methodology
Last fall, I requested samples of past annual reports from the WCenter

listserv members. I received nine samples from generous writing center directors from centers varying in size, scope, and mission from across the country. I also looked at several writing center Web sites that posted their annual reports for public view.

To establish a framework for analyzing the annual reports, I looked at three areas: audience analysis, genre, and document design. In my consideration of audience analysis, I found Joyce Kinkead and Jeanne Simpson's article, "The Administrative Audience: A Rhetorical Problem," to be invaluable for providing a perspective on the administration. I also consulted other articles by Jeanne Simpson, as she has written extensively on the relationship between writing center administrators and central administration. For genre analysis, I looked at what information each report included, and in what order this information was presented. Finally, for document design, I focused on how the authors did or did not use formatting elements to emphasize information.

Solving the most common problems

In general, the annual reports contained a wide variety of information including student usage statistics, books purchased, student and faculty testimonials, mission statements, research contributions, and seminar topics. Although the reports contained important information, they seemed to lack a sense of purpose and focus. Many of these problems can be mitigated by performing better audience analyses, recognizing the purpose of the genre, and implementing basic principles of document design.

• Performing better audience analyses

After looking at the samples, I found that writing center annual reports usually promote information that the writing center directors want the audience to know, often at the expense of information that the audience wants to know. As Kinkead and Simpson outlined in "The Administrative Audience: A Rhetorical Problem," the administrative audience is primarily concerned with answering the following questions:

1. How productive is the writing center?
2. How does the writing center help to fulfill the university's mission?
3. What are the writing center's objectives and goals?
4. How can we determine if the writing center is meeting its objectives and goals?
5. How can we assess the writing center?
6. How can we ensure accountability? (69-72)

Not directly and clearly answering these questions fails to meet the needs of our audience.

How can we remedy this problem? First, we need to better analyze our audience's expectations and needs. What does the reader want to do with this information? What does our reader know about the writing center? What is the administration concerned with? After answering these questions, we should be able to better recognize how to create an identification with the reader. One way is through word choice and language. For example, Kinkead and Simpson suggest creating a common ground between the writing center and central administration by using their terms such as "FTE" for faculty full-time equivalents, or "SCH" for student credit hours to measure productivity (69).

Although quantifying writing seems counterintuitive, resist the urge to dismiss quantitative data. Obviously, using FTE and SCH do not fully encompass what writing centers do, but we still have to budget time and money in a way that the administration understands. Even if central administration does not make your funding decisions, they are still interested in how effi-

ciently resources are used. For example, in addition to providing student usage statistics, you may want to include what percentage of the SCH are devoted to tutorials, as well as other activities.

In addition to demonstrating that the writing center is productive and efficient as an independent entity, the annual report should also demonstrate how the writing center helped to fulfill the institution's goals. For example, if the university emphasizes undergraduate research in its current strategic plan, then the writing center director would be wise to emphasize how the writing center is contributing to this research. The writing center director may emphasize research contributions by presenting the number of students presenting papers at conferences or publishing papers, the percentage of tutorials devoted to helping students writing theses and dissertations, or the special seminars offered on scientific or other specialized writing. In each of these cases, however, it is useful to connect the writing center's initiatives to those of the university.

• Recognizing the purpose of the genre

An additional common flaw of annual reports was the failure to accept the limits of the genre. The annual report should not function as a proposal, nor as mere regurgitation of usage statistics. You should demonstrate knowledge of what components to include in the report and when to use them. Although the annual report is a rather standardized genre in technical writing, your audience analysis should determine what order you place the components. The most important elements (from your audience's perspective) should come first. You must ask yourself, then, what your readers need to know if they only have the time or interest to read the first section / page / or paragraph.

Possible components for writing center annual reports include—but are not

limited to—: an executive summary, usage statistics, current initiatives, research developments, and goals. You should develop each of these components and list enough supporting details to meet your audience's needs. You should also provide a connection to demonstrate the relevance of this information to the reader. For example, if part of your university's mission is to increase its international population and support services, you may want to highlight how many tutorials are dedicated to ESL students and tie that information to the university mission statement or current initiatives.

• Implementing basic principles of document design

Document design means using layout and formatting to help your reader locate information and to make your document look more professional. Document design is more than just "prettying up" your papers. It makes your documents look more visually appealing, more accessible, and more professional. As a result, your reader is more likely to read your document and to be impressed by your professionalism.

Applying basic principles of document design allows readers to quickly locate information throughout the report, thus increasing its usability from the reader's perspective. For example, headings help readers to quickly scan a document for the information they are searching for. You can use bulleted and numbered lists

- To emphasize information
- To guide readers through a sequence of events (numbered lists only)
- To show variable options
- To allow readers to quickly scan, as opposed to burying information in a paragraph.

You can also use callouts—those boxes of texts that you often see in newspapers or magazines that have the main idea or interesting points in them—to draw the reader's attention as

well as make the document look more visually appealing.

In addition, you should use basic formatting to help your readers quickly scan your document to locate information. Don't be afraid to **bold**, *italicize*, or underline important information. Alternatively, you can use a different type of font to make information stand out. However, **don't** go **OVER-BOARD** with formatting *elements*, or your **document** *will* look too *busy*, *and*, as a result, **uninviting** *and* **unprofessional**—not to mention difficult to read.

Suggested components

Although each annual report responds to the specific rhetorical demands of its context, some components are generally included in each report. This listing is not meant to be comprehensive nor prescriptive, but should provide you with preliminary guidance.

• Executive summary

In general, executive summaries should be approximately five to ten percent of the length of the report. For example, if your annual report is three pages of single-spaced text (about 1,500 words), then your executive summary should be approximately two or three paragraphs long (about 75-150 words). Place the executive summary in front of the body of the report. This portion of the report is specifically written for decision makers, and should contain skeletal information that provides the reader with information to make decisions. It contains the main ideas from each section and the important conclusions or findings of the report. You should present these main points in the order in which they appear in the report and in parallel form. When your reader wants to see a section in further detail, the parallel structure allows her to quickly locate information in the body of the report. The executive summary should be self-contained, meaning that your reader

should be able to pull out the summary and read it as a stand-alone document. Thus, it should not refer to any figures or tables in the body of the report; if these figures are crucial, reprint them in the summary.

• Writing center's mission statement

Including the writing center's mission statement shows how the writing center's mission complements and helps to fulfill the university's goals. Because your mission is not likely to change often, the mission statement should be free of buzzwords that might quickly become outdated (Dicks 6). Also, the mission statement should be relatively short. It should also be results-oriented, which is something that will assist you in demonstrating that the writing center (a) has its own goals, (b) has goals in line with the university's goals, and (c) is moving toward both sets of goals. In addition, developing a mission statement also allows writing center administrators to define the mission themselves, rather than passively allowing others to define the center's mission (Dicks 6).

• Quantitative data

Administrators love numbers. Student usage statistics are always useful to demonstrate that a variety of students from all across campus frequents the writing center. However, instead of burdening your reader with an endless list of student usage data, graphs can transfer large quantities of data into an easily readable format. First, determine what you would like to emphasize with your graphs. Line graphs show trends over time (useful for representing increasing center usage, for example), bar graphs compare (useful for comparing usage-by-month between two academic years), and pie graphs show the relation of parts to a whole (making them effective for representing user demographics). In addition to providing a relative view, pie charts also reinforce the interrelatedness

of the university colleges and subtly emphasize the notion that the writing center provides services to the entire university community. For example, each piece of your pie graph can represent the number of visits from each college—15% of tutorials were given to students from the Engineering college, 25% were from Arts and Sciences, etc.

You can present much of your quantitative information in graphs to allow your readers to easily and readily interpret it. However, it is crucial that you choose the graph that best matches the information you want to impart and that you add information before and/or after your pictorial representation to ensure your reader understands the significance. For example, if you want to

demonstrate that every year the number of students who use the writing center is steadily increasing even though patronage in the spring semesters in substantially lower than fall semesters, you can use a line graph to show this information.

Your graphs should also depict information clearly and ethically. For example, compare the following two graphs. In the first graph (Graph 1 below), you can see several problems. First, the title of the graph is not descriptive. Secondly, there is no zero base on the Y axis. As a result, the reader lacks a base upon which to compare the overall trend, and, as a result, the decline is over emphasized. In addition, the X and Y axes are not labeled.

Graph 1: Ineffective Graph
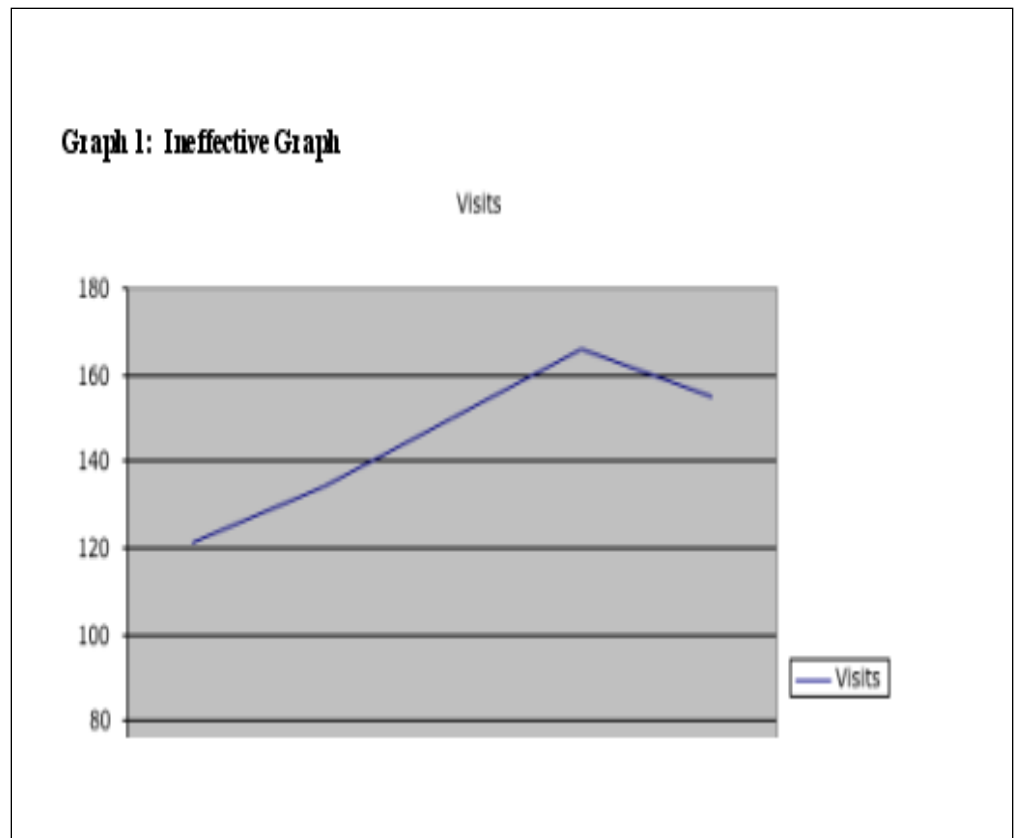
Graph 2: More Effective Graph

Visits to the Writing Center in Spring 2004
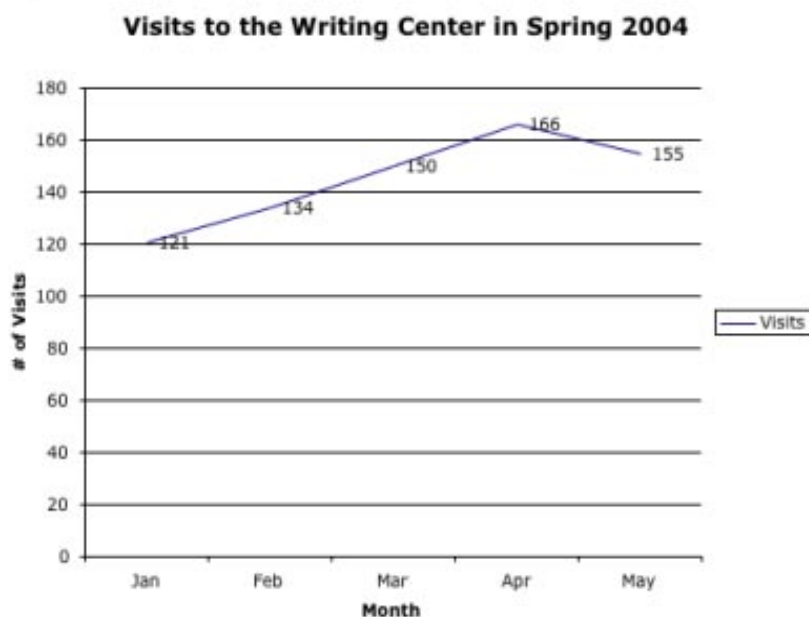
In the second graph (Graph 2 above), you can see that in addition to correcting the problems of the previous graph, I have also added numbers to indicate how many visits were made per month. Thus, at a glance, the reader can identify visits per month, as well as see a general trend. Because the first graph omitted the zero baseline, the decline in the number of visits in May was overemphasized. In the second graph, the reader can see that the number of visits is still high. You should also provide some sort of context for your graph in the body of the report. In this particular case, you might explain to your reader that in May some of your writing center tutors presented at a conference, thus decreasing the available number of tutoring sessions.

Although using the chart wizard to create a chart in Excel is relatively simple, beware of muddling your chart with extraneous junk. Adding all the features to your chart will hide what you want your reader to focus on.

• *Qualitative Data*

Because administrators usually prefer quantitative data, you probably should not overemphasize qualitative data in the form of extensive pages of student comments stating their satisfaction the writing center. However, it is possible that you can "translate" qualitative data into quantitative. For example, one annual report sample included a survey of faculty satisfaction with the writing center. It displayed all of the survey questions and then listed the mean of the responses to these questions in a basic table. As a result, the writing center director effectively portrayed qualitative data (faculty satisfaction) in quantitative terms (mean responses) that showed a very high percentage of faculty was pleased with the writing center. An example of qualitative data that might be more familiar to writing center administrators are the client satisfaction surveys that many centers incorporate into their assessment activities. Such data can give your reader broad empirical data con-

cerning the highly individualized activity of tutoring. If you are determined to include several pages of student commentary or testimonials in the annual report, however, you can place a few in the body of the report and place the remaining ones in an appendix. This method still allows you to insert a few quotes (perhaps in callouts), and if your reader is interested, she can turn to the appendix to read the rest. You might consider, however, the likelihood that your administrators will take the time to read such anecdotal information and how compelling such narratives are in your institutional culture.

Conclusion

Annual reports should not be the sole communication between writing center administrators and the central administration. Because the annual report is often a solicited report, the primary goal should be to fulfill the central administration's needs. Even if you are not required to submit an annual report, it may be a good idea to remind your administrators of your annual progress.

If you would like to broach a topic outside the scope of an annual report, you should address it in a separate document. For example, if an administrator has scheduled a meeting to discuss allocating funds for next year and you would like to propose that the writing center receive more of that money, you should address this topic in a separate proposal, not tack it on to the annual report. The annual report must be focused, concise, and carry a clear message to your intended audience.

Recognizing the purposes as well as the limits of the annual report should enable more writing center directors to argue effectively and appropriately for their needs at the right time and with the right tools.

For more information

The following sources provide excellent information about basic principles of technical writing that you can apply to your professional documents, including annual reports:

• Basic principles of technical writing and genres

The following two books provide helpful guidance on technical and professional writing. Although the handbook does not explicitly address annual reports, it is an invaluable source of information for all writers. It gives guidance on what to include in specific components such as executive summaries, on how to effectively use graphs, on how to organize information, and much more useful information:

Alred, Gerald, Charles T. Brusaw, and Walter E. Oliu. *The Handbook of Technical Writing*, 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. 2003.

Woolever, Kristin R. *Writing for the Technical Professions,* 3rd ed. New York: Pearson Longman. 2005.

• Document design

For a more in-depth look on how document design can increase the usability of your documents and how it can positively influence your readers, please refer to the following articles:

Redish, Janice C. "Understanding Readers." *Techniques for Technical Communicators.* Ed. Carol M. Barnum and Saul Carliner. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993. 14-41.

Kramer, Robert, and Stephen A. Berhardt. "Teaching Text Design." *Technical Communication Quarterly* 5.1 (1996) 35-59.

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Kinkead, Joyce and Jeanne Simpson. "The Administrative Audience: A Rhetorical Problem." *The Allyn & Bacon Sourcebook for Writing Program Administrators.* Ed. Irene Ward and William J. Carpenter. New York: Addison Wesley, 2002. 68-77.

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Anon. University of South Carolina. "Annual Report 2000-2001." <http://www.writingroom/ annualreport2001.html >. 11 Sept 2003.

Anon. University of Texas. "Annual Report, 2002-2003." <http:// uwc.fac.utexas.edu/Pages/About/ annual_report/annualreport.html >. 11 Sept 2003.

Doyle, Dennis, et al. "Glendale Community College Learning Center: Annual Report 2000-2002." 11 Sept 2003.

Harris, Muriel. "Purdue University Writing Lab Report: 2000-2001."

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Mattingly, Carol. "University Writing Center Report, 2002-2003." University of Louisville.

Pemberton, Michael A. "University Writing Center: Annual Report: August 2002 to May 2003." Georgia Southern University.

Schroeder, Shannin. "2000-2001 Academic Year Statistics for the Southern Arkansas University Writing Center." 9 August 2001.

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Subscribing to WCenter:

To subscribe to WCenter, the writing center listserv, send an e-mail to the following:

wcenter-subscribe@ lyris.ttu.edu

Leave the subject and body of the message blank. You should get an automatically generated request to confirm the subscription.

Midwest Writing Centers Association

Call for Proposals
October 25-29, 2006
St. Louis, MO
"Expand the Frontier: Look Up, Look Out"

The MWCA Call for Proposals can be found on the writingcenters.org site: <www.writingcenters.org>. Formats for proposals include, but are not limited to, the following: individual papers or research, multi-media presentations, panel discussions, roundtable discussions, and special interest group discussions. Deadline for submissions is February 17, 2006. Questions about proposals may be directed to Susan Mueller, Conference Chair, at smueller@stlcop.edu or Dawn Fels, Program Chair, at dfels@earthlink.net. Conference Web site: <http://www.ku.edu/~mwca/>.

NorthEast Writing Centers Association

Call for Proposals
April 7-8, 2006
Amherst, NH
"Making Connections: Conversations among Communities"
Keynote speaker: Cinthia Gannett

Open-Mic Coffeehouse on Friday, April 7, 6 to 9 p.m., Rivier College, Nashua, NH; Saturday, April 8, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Souhegan High School, Amherst, NH. Submit your proposal by December 30, 2005, either electronically or by mail. Electronic submissions should be sent as an MS Word attachment or included in the body of the e-mail to Leslie Van Wagner at lvanwagner@rivier.edu. Mailed submissions should be sent to: Leslie Van Wagner, Director, Writing Center, Rivier College, 420 South Main Street, Nashua, NH, 03060. If you need more information about submitting proposals, please contact Leslie Van Wagner at lvanwagner@rivier.edu or 603-897-8580. Registration is limited to 150 people.

Rocky Mountain Writing Centers Association

Call for Proposals
March 3-4, 2006
Provo, UT
"Down to an Art: Tutoring with Style"
Keynote speaker: Steve Sherwood

Friday, March 3, will be a day dedicated to administrators, and Saturday, March 4, will focus on tutoring topics with presentations by peer tutors. Contact: Penny Bird, e-mail: penny_bird@ byu.edu; phone: 801-422-5471. For registration and proposal submission visit <http://english.byu.edu/writingcenter/peertutoring.htm>.

Northern California Writing Center Association

Call for Proposals
March 4, 2006
Sacramento, CA
"Finding Common Ground: Forging Connections Among Diverse Writing Communities"

Deadline for Proposals: December 15, 2005. Information about submitting proposals as well as details about the conference are available at the NCWCA website: <http://ncwca.stanford.edu>. Contact Information: Susan McCall, Department of English, American River College, 4700 College Oak Drive, Sacramento, CA 95841, phone: 916-484-8312, e-mail: mccalls@arc.losrios.edu.

TUTORS' COLUMN

What are you going to do to me!?

It is time for your next tutorial, and you approach the student who has been waiting patiently for your skills and talents. Paper in hand, she sits down with you at the closest table. Her eyes are wide, and she begins to speak quickly: "I've never really been here before, but I have this paper I've been working on, and my teacher suggested we come here. . . ." Her paper is still safely clutched in her hand. She is obviously nervous, and her demeanor exclaims rather than asks, "What are you going to do to me!?"

As I see students fitting the above scenario, my heart reaches out to them. I am all too familiar with the anxiety of approaching an intimidating professor in his or her office. Or perhaps even more relevant, think about going to a new dentist, wondering what is going to happen. It seems as if your entire life is at stake! Sharing one's writing is a very personal thing, and many students coming to the writing center are terrified at the possibility of what will happen to them—or their papers—during the course of the tutorial. Muriel Harris explains this phenomenon in "Talk to Me: Engaging Reluctant Writers." She states:

> Under such emotional strains, [students] may be very likely to shut up, to wonder what they're supposed to do, and finally, to be as unengaged as any tutor might be in a strange situation. When we have no idea what's expected of us and we feel shaky about whether we are going to be ridiculed or asked to demonstrate what we don't know, we sometimes respond by withdrawing until we can get a better handle on

what's happening or figure out how we can retreat from the situation with minimal embarrassment. (26)

Knowing this, it is important to continually provide morale support and encouragement to relieve students' anxieties.

Positive first impressions are imperative for putting students at ease. Approach them with a smile. Let them choose the best location for the tutorial so they feel like they are in control of the situation despite the unfamiliar surroundings. The majority of students will probably feel comfortable after they see that you do not have horns or a whip, but some will need a little more work.

Once you have sat down with students, and they have vented their initial fears about the paper or assignment, make sure they understand what the writing center is all about. Most students who worry about what is going to take place during a tutorial are simply uninformed and have not been to a writing center before. Explain to them the process: promise to focus first of all on their concerns, explain the procedures for the tutorial, and make sure they are comfortable with the overall method you plan to follow in looking first at global issues rather than proofreading. Nothing is more discouraging than seeing red marks all over your paper. Often, just knowing that you will not be focusing on grammar and spelling lets students know that they can survive having their papers read.

Another aspect of tutorials that puts students on edge is the idea of reading their paper aloud. Many of my students get scared that those studying in the writing center will hear something embarrassing within the paper, so they themselves will read it in a hushed tone. While having students read the paper puts them in a better authoritative position in the tutorial, students who feel uncomfortable reading aloud or are shy about the content of their paper often feel more at ease when the tutor reads. Always give students this option, and you will be amazed how quickly they are able to remove themselves from the paper just enough to analyze it critically.

Within the tutorial, these worried students often see the tutor as an overseer, waiting for a wrong move so he or she can give the paper—and the student—a few lashes. This problem is often solved by admitting your own weaknesses as a tutor. It would be inappropriate and deceitful to give the appearance that you are a feeble and uninformed writer, but it is okay to say, "It can be difficult to create a great 'hook' for your introduction. This is something I've struggled with in the past." This lets tutees know that you are a struggling student just like them, but it also emphasizes the fact that writing is a process.

Students will also be less harsh on themselves if you point out this is a common problem. Other students are in their same position, so they need not feel alone. One of the most frequent troubles I see with students is hesitation or inability to create a specific enough thesis statement. So, if I see

this in a paper, I let the student know that it is a common problem but easily fixed. I notice from this that students are less harsh on themselves but also see writing as a process and opportunity for continual improvement.

Perhaps the most important way to let students know that you are not going to rip apart their papers is in your own demeanor. Body language goes hand in hand with verbal language, and if you are comfortable with the paper and the student, the tutee is more likely to feel calm. Humor can also be a great addition, as long as the student recognizes it for what it is. When I introduce the Writing Center by telling students, "Oh, we're really mean here," they typically see the sarcasm of the statement and feel they have nothing to worry about.

My "favorite" way of putting students at ease is by actually enjoying the reading of papers. It is amazing how much random and interesting information you discover while reading papers! Relax and find reasons to like reading each essay. Gasp or laugh if you feel like it; this will let students know that their writing has a real impact and is important. You will be surprised at how much better you understand and can work with a paper when you make it a point to take pleasure in reading it.

As your next student approaches you with a tear welling in his or her eye, think back to a similar situation from your own experience. Fear of a new situation is common but easily cured if the tutor takes the short amount of time necessary to put the student at ease. The best tutors are ones who do not suffer from a "superiority complex" and truly see their tutees as peers. It is these peers who make the best partners in creating better papers and better writers.

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Making the "extra" effort

It was September of fall semester. I recall walking into my first experience as a classroom-based writing tutor, slightly nervous about my new role but eager to begin. As a Writing Fellow at Penn State Berks-Lehigh Valley, I was charged with guiding a group of three basic writers, Sean, Juanita, and Roberto, in a peer response group each Wednesday during their regularly scheduled English class. As the semester progressed and the leaves turned orange, my original eagerness turned to frustration.

My problem was simple: my group members did not all seem to want to participate in our group discussions. Juanita, in particular, hesitated to offer any responses to the papers of her fellow group members. She remained quiet, reading her own papers aloud in a barely audible voice. I prompted her to join in our conversations by asking her questions, but her responses were almost invariably "I don't know." The rest of the group wasn't faring as well

as I had expected, either. Roberto and Sean freely participated, but they almost always waited for me to prompt them with questions. Our early group discussions were stilted and filled with awkward silences, as I waited for them to become more involved.

Despite their lack of verbal participation, I knew that my group members did truly want to improve their writing. Juanita repeatedly brought drafts of previous papers to our group sessions when it was not required of her. Our group saw at least three drafts of her first paper when the professor only asked that we go over her initial draft. Roberto too brought in subsequent drafts of his papers. Obviously, they wanted to improve their writing, but they weren't really involving themselves in the much-needed conversations of our group sessions.

My instincts told me that something was wrong with the dynamics of my group. Searching for an answer, I

turned back to the writing of Kenneth Bruffee's theories on collaborative learning. Bruffee says, that "peer tutoring provides a social context in which students can experience and practice the kinds of conversation academics most value" (131). I had a social context, the classroom writing group, but my group didn't really seem comfortable with that context. For Bruffee, the knowledge students need to gain comes from "human beings in a state of continual negotiation or conversation" (135). Juanita, Sean, and Roberto meanwhile refused to converse. Bruffee argues that students in peer groups feel more free to engage in necessary "conversation," learning from one another, but my group members didn't seem at ease in their roles. What was I doing wrong?

I decided to attempt to reach my students on a different level, a more personal one. In "Writing as Collaboration" James Reither and Douglas Vipond define workshopping as a pro-

cess in which "trusted assessors generally try to anticipate what sanctioned reviewers might say" (859). Since our weekly class time was divided into fifteen minute segments per student, I knew that we never had sufficient time to cover all the issues in any paper. While the papers often suffered from numerous higher order concerns, like lack of focus, development, organization, and support, our group could only cover one or two major issues. I reasoned that the students might be feeling as though our sessions were not productive enough and that by providing them with additional feedback, they may become more participative in group sessions. I shared my personal e-mail address with each of my group members and encouraged them to e-mail me their revisions for further workshopping. Via e-mail, I could become the trusted assessor, taking on a more comprehensive role than my normal role within the classroom and our writing group.

The students immediately took advantage of my offer. I corresponded with Roberto and Juanita periodically throughout the semester. I included suggestions for development, focus, and organization. For one of Juanita's papers, I offered comments that gave her an outline for organizing her paper better. I also reminded her to read her paper aloud to herself and provided her with help using the university library system. Juanita thanked me for my e-mailed comments, explaining that she printed them out and used them as a checklist before turning in her papers. For one of his papers, I provided Roberto with examples of how he could develop his topic. I also suggested sections he should focus more on and sections he should rethink. Roberto even approached me outside of class at the computer lab to thank me for my e-mail. He used my additional suggestions during revision, he said, and his professor was impressed by his improvements.

I discovered that, beyond their gratitude for my additional efforts, the students also began actively participating in our group sessions. Juanita, who initially refused to talk at all, began freely offering suggestions to her fellow writers. Roberto and Sean joined in as well, offering valuable advice that consistently impressed me. The group dynamics had been altered, leading to open discussions and genuine improvement in the writing of all the group members.

In inviting the students to contact me outside class, I had created an alternative community in which they could informally seek additional assistance. The students clarified advice from class that didn't make sense and raised questions about their writing. Occasionally, they just wanted to talk. Reither and Vipond define the community I had created as a "student community-within-a-community," viewing it as an opportunity for student communities "collectively to develop, through reading and writing, its own knowledge claims, and cooperatively to find ways to fit its knowledge claims into the knowledge of the larger community" (862). While our peer group was already a form of community, providing my students with the additional avenue of e-mail expanded our community on a more personal level. The students came to see me as a friend who truly wanted to help them with their writing skills. By working together in class and in e-mail, we created, as Reither and Vipond suggest, a way for the students to fit their writing into the discourse of their classroom.

In "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" Kenneth Bruffee contends that conversation is an essential element of all learning for students. "The way they talk with each other determines the way they will think and the way they will write" (642), Bruffee says. The initial prob-

lem I faced in my group—the lack of conversation—limited our discussion to mere surface issues. After engaging in e-mail conversations however, the students revealed their greater willingness to discuss global issues. After we discussed essay development in our e-mails, Juanita surprised me by telling Roberto that he needed to develop his paper. Our e-mailed dialogue opened up a new vein of conversation for the group that allowed more comprehensive issues to be discussed and clarified.

As a result of our e-mail exchanges, I noticed significant changes in my group's attitude toward peer review. By making the extra effort and reaching out to the students, I bonded with them, opening them up to group discussion. Taking our group to a more personal level helped the writers to learn to attack higher order issues first. Also, taking the time outside class to discuss essays in greater depth allowed my group members to experience greater productivity. The students were able to revise their papers in greater depth and, as a result, felt comfortable offering suggestions to fellow group members. Thus, I found that my "extra effort" was contagious and that the students ultimately warmed to both the workshopping process and to one another.

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Deprivatizing the center

Part 1: A brief introduction to deprivatized pedagogy

My goal here is to share the pedagogical model that shapes my professional practices. Over the past ten years, my collaborator and I have worked with an approach to teaching and learning that we call deprivatized pedagogy (Bell and Nugent). This approach may be briefly defined as a "way to interrogate educational practices that are traditionally and inexplicably privatized" (Nugent and Bell). We explain deprivatized pedagogy as a conscious effort to work against traditional, often invisible, educational practices that shape knowledge and understanding. In the classroom, practices that mark that space as a private sphere, which could be such things as responding to student writing, negotiating attendance policies, or preparing course requirements, are examples of teaching practices that a deprivatized pedagogy might interrogate.

We came to this perspective by working through and against our own educational histories—the ways we were taught, the ways we were trained to teach, and the ways we have struggled in our educational spaces. We draw on postmodern critical theory and our experiences to develop this pedagogical model, and we feel that it is an important tool that will continue to shape what we know about teaching and learning, about knowledge and understanding.

My purpose is neither to fan the smoldering embers of theory wars, nor to offer step-by-step instructions for teaching or tutoring. Rather it is to demonstrate some of the times, places, and situations in which theory and practice can and will intersect. I hope that my brief effort to define and demonstrate deprivatization will give you a sense of this model. And, later, as I deprivatize parts of my writing center pedagogy, I hope to provide a space to raise questions and evoke critique.

Many private educational practices support the fiction that teaching and learning are personal undertakings, while in fact university policy, state law, and even federal mandates have a hand in constructing that space. By identifying and interrogating educational practices that result from the culture of privatization, this pedagogy provides the impetus for rethinking those constructs and making them part of the overall reflective practice of a postmodern pedagogy. Thus a deprivatized pedagogy provides a means for students, teachers, and other educators to critique ongoing practice at the local level while also understanding the greater context of which they are a part.

Let me give an example: how about grading. When focused on the issue of grading, the lens of deprivatization might focus on things such as teacher insecurity, student bewilderment, and institutional waffling. Much of this discomfort may be located in the belief that grading is considered a private activity. As Pat Belanoff reminds us, grading is often the "dirty little practice" we teachers do while isolated in our offices. In fact, this situation has become increasingly complex since 1989 when Chris M. Anson wrote, "there is no domain more private . . . among teachers than response to writing, perhaps because we are concerned about intruding on the academic privacies and freedoms of our colleagues" (309). Such considerations, in fact, are with the teacher when she sits in her office alone with her student papers and her grade book.

That sense of isolation, however, is a non-useful fiction. Savvy students institute proceedings to protest grades that don't meet their expectations. At that juncture, university administrators, even while upholding the notion of academic privacy and freedom, poke their noses into the grade book, questioning criteria for evaluation to make a decision about the complaint. Even though the policies at most universities allow only the professor of a course to change a grade, the truth is that institutional pressure will frequently result in the required change, making academic freedom, in this area at least, another useful fiction.

Thus deprivatizing the grading process and the complex issues that surround grading decisions might enrich the educational experience. While making public what we do when we evaluate will not eliminate student concern, grade protests, or our current consumer model of education, it will open the classroom for possibility and critique.

But, the notion of deprivatization extends beyond the classroom. A deprivatized pedagogy demands that educators make explicit and public their educational and professional practices wherever possible. This requires that we articulate our theoretical positions, our performances of those positions, and investigate the ways that the two continually interact. To demonstrate such action, I will next discuss my position as director of a writing center and the ways in which deprivatized pedagogy shapes my administrative decisions.

Part 2: Writing center pedagogy and the project of deprivatization

The lens of deprivatization, when taken to the writing center, provides the means to seriously consider the notion of privacy. Although the context of a particular learning institution and

its policies may circumscribe the scope of the writing center, the fact remains that the existence of a writing center is, in and of itself, a deprivatizing gesture. A writing center seeking to help students become better writers by assisting those students with class assignments breaks into the teacher/student dynamic, deprivatizing a series of interactions that have historically been considered private.

In this section, I will explain how writing center work can and does enact a deprivatized pedagogy by creating alternative spaces that both disrupt traditional methods of education and make visible institutional, departmental, and classroom politics. At times this deprivatization is unintentional. For example, when a student gives a consultant an all but unintelligible writing assignment or brings in marginalia for interpretation, the practices of that particular teacher are made visible.

But, often ignoring these tensions, many writing centers articulate their policy as "student-centered." Most generally this translates to the belief that the work of the writing center is private, even though student/teacher interactions are not. Often writing center professionals feel that protecting the privacy of the consultation creates safe harbor in which student can feel nurtured and protected. However, a deprivatized pedagogy would take quite the opposite stance, arguing that this traditional view of the writing center is fraught with problems.

First, it reinforces the view that writing is a private activity best conducted in private, as if the teacher, the assignment, and even the entire institution do not already occupy that space as well. Second, it perpetuates the myth that seeking input on one's writing is a shameful thing. Third, it limits the scope of the writing center itself, since it may easily be assumed that only "poor" writers seek this kind of help.

But most importantly, making writing center work private lays the

groundwork for misunderstandings throughout the institution. Almost half a century after the introduction of writing centers, many teachers, administrators, and even students view the space with suspicion because what we do remains a mystery. And, this effort to create a "safe zone" masks underlying tensions that impact the writing center environment, exacerbating feelings of mistrust among those on the outside. As Frank Griffin judges:

> It is disingenuous to assert that the writing center is capable of . . . a chameleon-like transformation [and] is no longer associated with the dominant discourse. For while we can de-emphasize the writing center's institutional authority, it nevertheless is sanctioned and housed by the institution, just as the classroom teacher is. (72)

And a writing center that attempts to function outside of the workings of that very institution not only limits its ability to create dialogue and effect institutional change, but, in many cases, threatens its own existence by casting suspicion upon itself. Privatizing the workings of the writing center limits its ability to maintain or increase support, because it fails to locate and inculcate a base of supporters.

Based on the location of support, writing centers can be found in various locations throughout the institution: some are an arm of the English department; some are connected with Student Affairs; and some exist separately, under the purview of the Provost's office. In each of these sites, the writing center faces various challenges. In the English department, for example, the writing center may be seen as the practical trench work of the department; supervisors in Student Affairs may need to be educated in the consulting process and the overall value of the work in composition studies; and connection with the Provost's office may require both of the above in addition to working against isolation.

A deprivatized approach to writing center work, however, views these contingencies through a perspective which does not deny the realities of university politics. Rather, holding the view that all intellectual work should be public work, the writing center instead seeks to fully inform all parties with a stake in its work. So, it doesn't matter where the work takes place, the obligation for deprivatization remains constant.

Using deprivatization as the underlying framework for our pedagogy, my writing center's ethos is one that considers the entire writing occasion as a public act, one which holds implications for everyone involved. Over the past eight years, we have developed a deprivatized approach to what we do. A lot of what we do isn't radical; in fact, a lot of what we do is part of the practice of many writing centers. But understanding these actions through deprivatization helps us theoretically situate what we do and self-assess our pedagogical practices.

Part 3: Deprivatization is hard work

The use of deprivatized pedagogy in creating and sustaining a working writing center is not always easy. Ongoing self-assessment and reflection always identify spaces and occasions for change. Thus, current practices and formal policies remain in flux through the project of deprivatization. In this third section, I will very briefly discuss three general areas of change (and some specific examples of work within those areas) that have resulted from our deprivatized approach to writing center work.

First, we have learned that deprivatization means defining and redefining what we do. Through a variety of reports (from weekly reports that quantify and identify who comes to the writing center and what they do when they get there to annual reports that formally summarize the work of the writing center during the academic

year) the lens of deprivatization helps us look for what we might not otherwise see. Such reports help us define and redefine for others and for ourselves what we do and why we do it.

But, we also look for information that tells us *how* we do what we do. And for that information we look to our record of session forms. These are perhaps the most public aspect of our writing center. Consultants use the record-of-session form for all written communication about a student's work. They do not write on student papers, jot notes in student notebooks, or write consultant journals about their interactions. Instead, the record-of-session form serves a variety of utilitarian purposes: it identifies lots of information about the student, the teacher, and the consultant as well as records the work that takes place during the session. The forms deprivatize the work of the writing center by creating a fascinating epic storyline that continues to reveal to us who we are, what we do, and how we do it, as well as who and what we might be. These artifacts help the student, staff, and faculty continually define the role of the writing center in the context of this academic community.

Deprivatized pedagogy provides the basis for strategies that shape writing center practice and helps us create tactics for the enactment of those strategies. It provides the means for a more integrated, self-reflexive pedagogy which takes into account the dynamics of social interactions, like those constructed through the record-of-session form.

Second, we have learned that deprivatization means getting out of the center. The walls of the writing center limit the scope of what we can do. Deprivatization means putting ourselves out there, and sometimes that means politically. In addition to developing a Web site, visiting classes and student groups, or developing/facilitating student and faculty workshops, deprivatization, for us, asserts that we

get involved in the overall service mission of our institution, with writing center personnel serving as student and faculty leaders who have developed a voice in our academic community.

For example, when our faculty senate was considering purchasing plagiarism detection software, the writing center employees actively campaigned against it. After weeks of protest, the consultants were able to get the senate to grant a special session to discuss the software. The student presentation was amazing and directly impacted school policy on the ethics of plagiarism detection software. Later, when the judicial board wanted to institute a "defensive plagiarism" class for first time offenders, the faculty senate asked the judicial office to collaborate with the writing center when developing the curriculum.

Enacting deprivatized pedagogy often means getting out of our comfort zones and moving beyond the boundaries of what we think we are supposed to do. It presents a pedagogical approach that utilizes the writing center as a "contact zone," as a place to construct a voice on student-centered issues within a larger, political framework.

Third, we have learned that deprivatization means, as my title suggests, opening the center. In addition to opening up the center through evaluations, observations, and open houses, our deprivatized writing center fosters intellectual inquiry through encouraging and supporting research. It is important to remember that the integral relationship between teaching and research positions a deprivatized pedagogy as reflective practice and ongoing inquiry. Since we have begun to use deprivatization as a methodology, this has indeed been the case.

Over the past 4 years 12 research projects have come out of our writing center. To date, four have been published, two are in press, two are in re-

vision, and two have been developed and presented as teacher in-service programs as part of the Alabama Reading Initiative. Through this research we learned things, such as how our writing center community forms through the online space of the listserv; how the rhetorical use of praise in response to student writing can create cross-cultural problems with ESL students; and how students take what they learn about peer response in the writing center into their classroom environments. The deprivatizing practice of research in the writing center helps us learn more about what we do by working with others to question current practices and identify areas for analysis.

Enacting a deprivatized pedagogy means interrogating educational practices which are unnecessarily privatized as well as consciously investigating traditional and often invisible educational constructs that shape knowledge and understanding. Thus, practicing a deprivatized pedagogy means engaging in and supporting research. Research can serve as a theoretical and heuristic outline, a site for representing and evoking the production of knowledge. As such, practice, theory, research, and pedagogy are so deeply embedded in one another that each aspect of the work becomes an extension of the other and strengthens the whole.

In conclusion, during the years in which we have developed and implemented deprivatized pedagogy as an approach to the composition classroom, its implications beyond the classroom continue to reveal themselves to us. In fact, we find few areas of our academic lives where deprivatized pedagogy is not a critical factor. As we continue to locate zones for our work in specific sites, situate the theoretical impetus for that work, and attempt to determine the value of that work, we believe that we are responding to Andrea Lunsford's call "to reimagine our classrooms as open and public, as not bound by walls of any

kind, as often virtual places where people meet to make meanings together, not as places where information is dispensed and people credentialized. ("Ownership").

We are acutely aware, however, that our understanding of deprivatized pedagogy is fractured and incomplete. This awareness reassures us that there are vast expanses of space within this perspective for analysis, interrogation, and dialogue.

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Composition and Writing Center Administration St. John's University

The English Dept. at St. John's University invites applications for a tenure-track position at the rank of Assistant Professor for a specialist in Composition to design and direct the first writing center to exist on our Staten Island campus. Budgetary approval for this position has been confirmed. The successful candidate will teach undergraduate courses in composition, writing, and pedagogy on the Staten Island campus, as well as have the opportunity to teach graduate courses on the Staten Island, Queens, and Manhattan campuses. Expertise in literacy, new media, or computers and composition is desirable. Doctorate with evidence of scholarly productivity as well as writing center experience required. Send letter, c.v., writing sample, statement of teaching philosophy, and letters of recommendation to Dr. Stephen Sicari, Chair, English Department, St. John's University, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Queens, NY 11439. 718-990-6387; sicaris@stjohns.edu. Deadline: November 21, 2005

Writing Center Asst. Director Francis Marion University

Assistant Professor of English. Tenure-Track. Position No. 06-21. Experience and interest in teaching composition required. In addition to teaching within the English program, this new faculty hire will receive reassigned time to work as the Assistant Director of the Writing Center to provide tutor training and outreach services. Ph.D. and writing center experience required.

Materials Needed: Letter of interest (referencing position #06-21), curriculum vitae, one-page teaching philosophy, and FMU Faculty Application. (Official transcripts will be required of the successful candidate.)

Send Application Packet to: Dr. Christopher Johnson, Chair, Department of English, Modern Languages, and Philosophy, Francis Marion University, PO Box 100547, Florence, SC 29501-0547. Minorities and women are strongly encouraged to apply. Position to begin August 2006. Screening of applicants will begin November 1, 2005, and will continue until position is filled. Interviews at MLA.

Please visit the Human Resources Web page at <www.fmarion.edu/about/hr>. Faculty applications can be obtained from this site.

Writing Center Director
Adelphi University

Adelphi University seeks to appoint a Director for its growing Writing Center, to begin September 1, 2006. This administrative staff position offers support for research and writing projects, as well as the possibility of teaching courses within the appropriate academic department. The WC Director will have the opportunity to develop the Center's overall pedagogical mission, policies and philosophy; oversee the daily operations and budget; and hire, mentor, and supervise a staff of writing tutors. The WC Director will also collaborate closely with the Writing Program Administrator and with faculty on university-wide writing initiatives. Reporting directly to the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, the Writing Center is an autonomous unit serving undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. Ph.D. in Composition and Rhetoric or English (or a terminal degree in a related field) and prior experience in a writing center required.

Additional preferred qualifications include administrative or directorial experience, prior college-level teaching experience, and promise of continuing scholarly or creative activity. Applicants should direct a letter (including a discussion of philosophy regarding writing center pedagogy), C.V., and at least three reference letters to Lester Baltimore, Associate Provost, Adelphi University, One South Avenue, PO Box 701, Garden City, NY 11530-0701. Screening of applications will begin November 21, and continue until position is filled. Initial interviews at MLA in Washington, D.C., or in the New York metropolitan area.

Writing and Research Center Director
University of Denver

The University of Denver seeks a Writing and Research Center Director to collaborate with incoming director of writing, Doug Hesse, to create a new, well-funded and staffed writing center, to be housed in the library. The Center is part of an ambitious and innovative writing program that features first-year writing courses and writing intensive courses across the curriculum in sections of no more than 15 students. The position, which is a twelve-month contract to begin in summer or fall 2006, includes tutor mentoring and supervision, workshops, consulting with faculty across campus, program research and assessment, and occasional teaching. Terminal degree in Rhetoric/Composition, English, or related field strongly preferred; ABD considered. Writing center experience is required, as is administrative or supervisory experience (which may include serving as a program assistant). This is an administrative appointment with support for professional development and travel, comprehensive benefits, and a competitive salary befitting a top university writing center. Terminal degree in Rhetoric/Composition, English, or related field strongly preferred. ABD considered.

All applicants must complete the on-line application form and upload their letters of application and C.V. at <http://www.dujobs.org>. Also, please send unofficial transcript, list of courses taught, writing sample (15 pages max), and the names and phone numbers of three references to: Search Committee-Writing and Research Center Director, English Dept., Sturm Hall, University of Denver, 2000 Asbury Avenue, Denver, CO 80208. Application letters should carefully explain the candidate's coursework, teaching experiences, writing center theory/practices, and interests in undergraduate writing. Review of applications will begin December 1, 2005, and continue until position is filled. Interviews at MLA and, if needed, CCCC.

Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

February 16-18, 2006: Southeastern Writing Centers Association, in Chapel Hill, NC
Contact: Kim Abels, e-mail: kabels@email.unc.edu and Vicki Russell vgr@duke.edu. Conference Web site: <http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio/swca/>.

February 23-25, 2006: South Central Writing Centers Association, in Little Rock, AR
Contact: Allison Denman Holland, e-mail: adholland@ualr.edu; phone: 501-569-8311. Conference Web site: < http://www.scwca.net/>.

March 3-4, 2006: Rocky Mountain Writing Centers Association, in Provo, UT
Contact: Penny Bird, e-mail: penny_bird@byu.edu; phone: 801-422-5471. Conference Web site: <http://english.byu.edu/writingcenter/peertutoring.htm>.

March 4, 2006: Northern California Writing Centers Association, in Sacramento, CA
Contact: Susan McCall, e-mail: mccalls@arc.losrios.edu. Conference Web site: <http://ncwca.stanford.edu>.

April 7-8, 2006: NorthEast Writing Centers Association, in Nashua and Amherst, NH
Contact: Leslie Van Wagner, e-mail: lvanwagner@rivier.edu

October 25-29, 2006: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in St. Louis, MO
Contact: Susan Mueller at smueller@stlcop.edu or Dawn Fels at dfels@earthlink.net. Conference Web site: <http://www.ku.edu/~mwca/>.

OSU Film on International Students' Writing

"*Writing Across Borders* is a film for anyone who works with international students in a writing environment. Its purpose is not to provide easy answers but rather to consider day-to-day practices in new ways. Through interviews with students and professionals in the field, the film encourages us to ask the following questions: How does culture play out in writing, and how are our expectations shaped by cultural preferences? How do we assess international student writing when we have to grade it alongside the writing of native speakers? And how an we think about surface errors in a fair and constructive manner? What kinds of teaching and testing practices disadvantage international students and which help them improve as writers?" (blurb describing this film on the back cover of the package)

Contents:
- Part 1: Examining Cultural Differences in Writing
- Part 2: Assessing International Students' Writing
- Part 3: Developing Strategies That Work for International Students

Writing Across Borders was written and directed by Wayne Robertson and produced by the Oregon State University Writing Intensive Curriculum, Vicki Tolar Burton, Director, and the Oregon State University Center for Writing and Learning, Lisa Ede, Director. The film, in DVD format, is available at no charge by contacting Wayne Robertson, Academic Success Center, Oregon State University, 102 Waldo Hall, Corvallis, OR 97331-6412; phone: 541-737-3712; fax: 541 737 4173; e-mail: wayne.robertson@oregonstate.edu.

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