THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E T T E R

...FROM THE EDITOR...

This issue of *WLN* offers solutions to problems many of us encounter. When tutors work with instructors in writing intensive courses, there can be major communication gaps. So Mary Salibrici and Aimee Levesque examine and explain how they incorporated journals as a structure for tutors and instructors to communicate effectively. And Steve Accardi reflects on how to acknowledge ESL students' own culture while learning to write American academic prose. In her Tutors' Column article, Breaha Montague-Bauer describes their solution to an overcrowded writing center at the end of the semester when students pour in hoping for help with revising portfolios.

In her response to the question of how tutors benefit from their experience as tutors, Teagan Decker reports on one aspect of what tutors gain from socializing with each other. And Mary Murray explores the problem of students who have appeared in their writing center exhibiting symptoms of mental disorders.

As winter vacation rapidly approaches with the new year on the horizon, let's wish for some quality time to recharge our energy sources and for a new year filled with peace, joy, and budgets that are inexplicably doubled.

• Muriel Harris, editor

...INSIDE...

Journal partnerships: Benefits for peer tutors and professors

At Hobart and William Smith Colleges, our peer tutoring program is called the Writing Colleagues Program, and it exists as a writing center without walls. In other words, rather than locating one central space where students confer with other students about writing assignments, individual faculty members request the support of a Writing Colleague for a particular course.[1] The Writing Colleague then attends the class, keeps up with the assigned reading, participates in class discussions when appropriate, and holds individual weekly meetings with each member of the class to work on writing. Such meetings can take place in the library, in a dorm lounge, or in the school café. The Writing Colleague also has regular contact with the professor outside of class in two ways. First, the faculty member and the Writing Colleague meet regularly to discuss how the course is going, specifically in terms of how writing assignments are being received. Second, the Writing Colleague keeps a weekly journal about the individual meetings with students, and this journal is shared with the faculty member.

The value of this written journal for both the Writing Colleague and the faculty partner is the focus of our essay. During one semester while Aimee served as Mary's Writing Colleague in a writing course, Mary responded in writing to Aimee's written journal entries. Through the triggering mechanism of Aimee's journal, in addition to any informal conversations held throughout the semester about the course, we created a dialogic learning depository where Aimee described her work, Mary wrote back to answer questions or provide additional insight about assignments or students, leading in turn to further discussion about specific student concerns and requirements for the course.

Such written interaction, while not a requirement in our program for the Writing Colleague/Faculty partnership to work, became a vehicle for deeply enriching our insights about writing progress in the course and for more clearly understanding the dynamic of student learning all semester. In short, after such an experience, we feel that keeping a one-sided written journal, with only the Writing Colleague making contributions, limits professional development for both sides of such a partnership. Is such a journal partnership more time-consuming? Certainly, it is; and it should not replace the often critical need for face-to-face meetings between colleague and faculty. However, the professional interaction we experienced through such a journal partnership served as an important supplement to self-critical teaching and learning experiences and sometimes led to a more immediate critical experience and was, thus, well worth the time for us and for our students. In the remainder of this article, we will take turns explaining the value of the experience and include within our discussion some excerpts from the actual journal we shared.

From an instructor's perspective

As the professor in charge of the course, I (Mary) found that reading Aimee's journal entries helped me understand where students might need clarification about assignments—quite often the most pressing problem for students as they try to figure out what a professor is asking for. Through responding to Aimee, I could give assistance for her individual meetings when students were bound to ask questions by clarifying my expectations and then allowing the words that surfaced in our journal exchange to give Aimee more explanatory language for her work with students. This kind of layered dialogue between me and students, between Aimee and students, and between Aimee and me ultimately served the beneficial purpose of clarifying expectations and/or perhaps even altering expectations when necessary. In other words, such dialogue helps me see where the goals I articulate might be vague or unrealistic for students.

In one of the course assignments, for instance, I had asked students to read Joyce Carol Oates's short story "Theft" and then write an essay that used a narrative structure with plenty of detail to convey a college experience of their own. We had agreed in class discussion that "Theft" was realistic in its depiction of college life—in the dorm and classroom settings and in the interactions students had with each other—so the essay assignment asked that students portray their own experiences in such a realistic fashion. They could try an actual short story if they preferred, or they could use story-like elements to convey an idea through creative non-fiction. I knew that some students would find the assignment a stretch because they were most familiar with more academic writing, but my ultimate goal here was to purposely stretch students and thus force various issues of process, notably the power that feedback and revision could play for any piece.

As Aimee worked with Sandra, it became clear that dealing with such an assignment was difficult for some students. Aimee wrote in the weekly journal:

Sandra is bravely attempting to write creative non-fiction—though it does not come naturally. I commend her on

her bravery to raise her writing bar, yet I think she is missing the assignment. What do you think? Her piece is not so much creative non-fiction as it is a summary of her feelings. She doesn't really tell a story, but the writing itself is good and she has a good idea. I wasn't sure what to do? Do I suggest she keep going or try to really push her to write actual creative non-fiction? Or maybe my understanding of creative non-fiction is too narrow? I got out the Oates text and we looked at passages to see examples of fiction [and] how Sandra could apply that style to her own life to tell a story.

I had already read two versions of Sandra's draft of this assignment, so I knew what Aimee was talking about when I read this particular journal entry. Sandra was struggling to write creative non-fiction, with her early attempt sounding more like an academic summary than narrative. Aimee's description of their meeting, which detailed Sandra's problems and her response, helped me understand what actually happened between the two of them and how I might encourage Aimee's work, thereby supporting Sandra as well. In this way, having a glimpse of peers working together, I could extend my own understanding of what else I might need to do in class as students worked through this assignment.

Additionally, my written responses to Aimee provided her with an informal guide, something to refer to as she prepared to help Sandra and other students as well since students often experienced similar struggles with an assignment. I wrote back to Aimee in the following way:

No, I don't think [your idea of non-fiction] is too narrow. Sandra can use a lot of fictional techniques as she tries to tell a true story—use descriptive details, story line, and dialogue. I think she is trying that in this second draft. It has more of a story feel to it, I think. I am giving her credit for trying something different, and I think

she'll do fine. Connecting to passages from Oates was the exact right thing to do because the whole point of "Theft" is that it is so realistic that it's almost like creative non-fiction.

I did not want to dominate Aimee's session with the student, so I tried to keep my comments specific without being overly directive. I wanted Aimee and Sandra to clarify ideas for revision on their own terms. However, certainly in Sandra's case, she was trying something for the first time, and, in Aimee's case, she simply needed reinforcement that she was tackling the problem in the right way. I also had the opportunity to provide detailed written responses on Sandra's draft, which became fuller and more directive since I could understand what the problem was from the Writing Colleague's perspective as well as my own. Aimee could read my written comments on Sandra's paper during their meeting as well. Still, the journal dialogue between Aimee and me left less room for misinterpretation of my comments to Sandra and more room for expanding them and working with them.

From a Writing Colleague's perspective

As the Writing Colleague working with students in a specific course like Mary's, I (Aimee) am also privy to information inaccessible to peer tutors working more traditionally within the walls of a writing center. My knowledge expands beyond the universal rules of writing that I might apply in a single meeting with a student I might not see again to a new realm of understanding paper topics, course readings, lectures, and details of the professor's expectations. While this knowledge is beneficial, it can also open the door to potential mistakes on my part that will negatively impact the student's paper. Do I correctly understand the assignment? Is what I am talking to the students about in keeping with the professor's expectations? Do I understand the material correctly?

Using the weekly journal entries as a communication tool to create dialogue between myself and the professor helps combat any uncertainty I might have. Such dialogue serves two purposes. First, I am able to clarify the assignment, ask questions about content areas I may not understand, as well as seek specific advice on a particularly challenging meeting with a student or a particularly challenging paper. Second, Mary's responses often validate my peer tutoring instincts and build confidence as I work with students. These benefits were evident in the journal exchange cited by Mary about Sandra's work. They illustrate my fear that I would give Sandra misinformation or misrepresent the assignment according to the professor's expectations. In this nightmare I am sitting in class and a student receives her paper with a large F on top. Glaring at me from across the room, she mouths "this is all your fault."

When I read Sandra's story, my initial reaction was that she had misunderstood the assignment and should be advised to change topics or drastically revise. However, as I thought more about her paper, I wondered if perhaps it was me who had misunderstood the assignment. leaving me somewhat unsure of how best to work with Sandra. Mary's response to my questions provided insight as to her thinking process on this assignment. I realized I was focused too much on creating a good piece of fiction. I became too caught up in Oates's piece and expected the students I worked with to write their stories as a seasoned fiction writer such as Oates might. Mary's comments allowed me to understand the assignment more as a process for students to discover a new way to write.

As a result of Mary's comments, I changed the way I worked with Sandra on her second draft. We focused more on using fictional story techniques Sandra might use to tell her own story and ways to show the reader rather than tell. By the final draft Sandra had

come up with a good piece of creative non-fiction. Had I not communicated my concerns with Mary, I might not have encouraged Sandra to stay with her topic, nor would I have focused as much on using writing techniques often seen in fiction and applying them to non-fiction. When Mary responded, "Connecting to passages from Oates was the exact right thing to do because the whole point of 'Theft' is that it is so realistic it is like creative non fiction," she validated the strategies that could help me work more effectively with students.

Working with another student on the same paper, for example, I encountered similar feelings of uncertainty. Nancy was trying to do an argumentative essay in response to the assignment because she did not feel that Oates depicted the 1950's accurately. In describing my meeting with Nancy, I wrote in the weekly journal:

> Nancy's argument was weak—as you mentioned—she was trying to say that the college life Oates depicted was unrealistic, yet Nancy has no experience as to what college was like in the 50's and this was the problem . . . to say college life in the 50's was unrealistic with any credibility she would need to do research. She does not want to do research. So we came up with a twist on the assignment. She could modify her statement/thesis to say something like college life in the 50's as depicted by Oates is markedly different from the college Nancy attends in 2003 and make this a compare and contrast paper. This would require some alterations to the assignment. She said she was going to meet with you before moving forward. I went out on a limb b/c I didn't see how she could effectively argue that Oates was unrealistic without doing any research???

Here again I was conflicted. Nancy was clearly frustrated by the assign-ment, and I was unsure how to proceed. I wanted Nancy to write the paper she wanted to write, but she did not want to do research, so we struggled to find a direction to address her interests without doing research. I simultaneously felt that she was moving in a direction that would not answer the assignment. I needed clarity and validation about how best to proceed.

When Mary responded to my journal entry, she provided both:

> Nancy came [to my office] and we talked things through. She's going to try and do another draft over the weekend. In a case like this one, I usually just go back to the drawing board, so to speak. In other words: what hit you about the story, what do you care about? But her answer was she didn't really like it. . . . Her reason didn't have to do with [the story] being unrealistic though, so we went back to the question she was looking at and determined that if she wanted to talk about college life in terms of academic experience and social experience, she could write a paper that compared her experience to the story . . . without even getting at the historical period, but instead just at the story as a college story and how it was similar or different from her own experience.

Mary's written response validated my instinct to discuss with Nancy the option of a compare and contrast paper. It also provided me with a step-by-step outline of a seasoned writing professor working with a student who was struggling with an assignment. Mary's technique to take Nancy back to the beginning, back to the story that triggered the assignment, and ask her "What hit you about the story, what do you care about?" was interesting for me as a peer tutor. To this day I still ask, "What struck you about the story?" or "What do you care about?" when I help a student struggling to find a thesis.

Conclusion

The journal partnership we have described supplemented oral communication between professor and Writing Colleague by serving as a reliable record and reference tool as individual students received support on their writing assignments during the course of the semester. As a dialogic repository, it allowed us to consider more critically and over time our respective roles as teacher and peer tutor, which ultimately became a benefit to students whose work and concerns were considered in more multi-dimensional ways by both of us. The journal partnership by its nature as a written format allowed for more introspection and critique. As a peer tutor, Aimee's supportive role was strengthened and her knowledge of possible approaches to problems was broadened. In her role as the classroom teacher, Mary became more attuned to individual student needs by receiving thoughtful questions and reflective feedback from Aimee. Also, the fact that we completed our journal partnership online often served us more quickly and in a more timely fashion during especially busy weeks when meeting in person was not easy. While completing journal entries took some extra time each week, the obvious benefits to our approach far surpassed any time issues.

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[1] For their work, Writing Colleagues gain academic credit. After two placements as a Writing Colleague and the completion of a set of related courses, students can declare a Writing Colleagues minor. Also, after finishing their Writing Colleague placements, they are eligible to work in the colleges' Center for Teaching and Learning as paid peer tutors where they help students with writing on a drop-in basis.

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Discursive disclosure: Changing tutoring sessions to curb cultural assimilation

It was midway through the fall term when I met Femi. He sat down next to me at a small table in the writing center and confessed that he struggled making English sentences "sound right." Before moving to the United States, he grew up speaking Yoruba in Nigeria, and like so many others, Femi said he came to the writing center with hopes of writing "better." The tutoring session began with Femi reading his essay out loud, identifying the words and phrases he thought sounded wrong. He spotted and changed a "could" for a "should" and a "have been" for a "had been," yet soon thereafter, he read right over the phrase "my parents went for vacation" without pausing or correcting. I asked Femi to reread the sentence and listen closely for errors. Again, he heard nothing, so I explained that "for vacation" needed to be changed to "on vacation" or "for a vacation." When he wanted to know why, it seemed as though I had reached, as Mary Louise Pratt would say, a contact point. I suppose I could have said that the noun needed an article or that British English was different from American English, but in that moment, I did not know what to say; I was just as confused as Femi as to why I felt more comfortable using "on" and not "for." As a result, I remarked, "That's just what Americans say." After the tutoring session, while filling out the evaluation report, I thought about my response and reflected that perhaps it was an honest verbalization of what truly happens in writing centers, that we as tutors, whether we know it or not, are Americanizing our tutees, linguistically and perhaps culturally.

To succeed is to conform

All university writing center tutors want their tutees to succeed. Success for a tutee can be defined in many ways—understanding and implementing a grammatical concept, brainstorming a concise thesis statement, receiving a desired grade, etc.—but ultimately, the writing center is structured so that tutors help their tutees to write more "academically," or more precisely, to write within the academic discourse. By discourse, I mean—borrowing from James Paul Gee—an "identity kit" (Gee 3) that is inherently ideological, resistant to internal criticism, defined in relation to other discourses, and is closely related to the society's distribution of hierarchical power (Gee 4). Academic discourse is a highly ideological network of white, middle-class American values, yet it is a "secondary" discourse, which means, according to Gee, that it can be learned. On the contrary, everyone is born into a primary discourse, an original socialization group, a family (Gee 7). Thus, the tutee whose primary discourse shares similar codes with the academic discourse usually has an easier time negotiating his/her primary discourse. What often determines success in the writing center is how well a student can learn, replicate, and translate the codes, languages, and values of the academic discourse. However, for someone like Femi, a non-white, non-native English speaking Nigerian, who had only been living in the U.S. for a few years, conforming to the academic discourse, succeeding, is much more difficult.

Indirect or direct tutoring

For decades, writing center and composition theorists have proposed strategies for tutees to conform to. Stephen North argues that tutors should use an indirect approach, to structure their tutoring sessions so that tutees have agency. This set-up will not only inform tutors as to what kind of assistance a tutee will need but also will more accurately enable tutors to steer their tutees into academic discourse. North values the writing process over the written product, claiming that in student-centered sessions, tutors will help "produce better writers, not better writing" (North 438). On the other hand, Lisa Delpit argues that tutees, especially those whose primary discourse is distinct from the academic discourse, should be taught the "codes of language" (Delpit 25). North's technique assumes the tutee has these codes and the tutoring session operates successfully under this assumption. Delpit contends that if tutors blindly implement indirect tutoring techniques, they only strengthen and reinforce the dominant discourse, whereby making it more difficult for students outside the discourse, someone like Femi, to break in. Therefore, Delpit recommends direct tutoring especially for marginalized students. Susan Blau and John Hall agree with Delpit, urging tutors to work differently with different students. "There's nothing wrong with being directive and to the point when explaining local errors related to idioms, mechanics, or grammar. This approach allows the tutor to provide necessary information, rather than wasting time attempting to create a false sense of collaboration" (Blau and Hall 34). However, I argue—indirect or direct—the writing center tutoring approach assimilates tutees, which has cultural consequences that must be addressed.

The consequences of conforming

When working with Femi, I switched from indirect tutoring to direct. Early on in the session, I followed North, had Femi read the paper aloud, find, and correct his own errors. Later, when it was clear that Femi was missing part of the American English language code, or at least my understanding of idiomatic prepositional phrases as a na-

tive English speaker, I switched to Delpit's more direct style, informing Femi that Americans say "on vacation" or "for a vacation" rather than "for vacation." Was this a successful tutoring session? On a superficial level, yes, he did learn how to write within the academic discourse, but this should not be all that determines a successful session. Students are unconsciously forced to give up, lose, exchange their primary discourse for the academic discourse in a "successful session." In order for a session to be truly successful, tutors must address this issue with their tutees. A tutor should disclose the discursive operation because there are consequences to conforming, to exchanging one's culture. Take Richard Rodriguez, for example. He grew up in similar conditions to Femi: working class, part of a marginalized culture with parents who received little formal education. Rodriguez saw education as a means for success. In school, Rodriguez literally mimicked and copied his teachers' manners and behavior. "I began imitating their accents, using their diction, trusting their every direction" (Rodriguez 242). He successfully earned his Ph.D., but in exchange, lost his Spanish accent and his once close relationship with his parents, specifically his father. In sum, the more he conformed, the more he succeeded, the more he lost his culture, his parents, his primary discourse. Tutors must address multicultural assimilation in order to raise the consciousness of their tutees so that they can both maintain their cultural identity and succeed in the university.

American universities enact what Peter McLaren calls "conservative multiculturalism," the act of assimilating diverse students in order to preserve the status, the power, and discursive ideology of the university. Marginalized students, those with a greater distance between their primary discourse and the academic discourse, must, in a way, surrender their former culture in order to be "adopted" into the dominant culture, place themselves in a position for success. McLaren con-

tends, "Before you can be 'added on' to the dominant United States culture you must first adopt a consensual view of culture and learn to accept the essentially Euro-American patriarchal norms of the 'host' country" (McLaren 37). Writing center tutors then, as surrogates of the university, reinforce this need for adaptation in their tutee under the pretext of success and slowly erase their tutees' former culture. Again, McLaren: "Conservative multiculturalism wants to assimilate students to an unjust social order . . . but a prerequisite to 'joining the club' is to become denuded, deracinated, and culturally stripped" (McLaren 37). Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski agree with McLaren, asserting that teachers and tutors are acculturating or "mainstreaming" students into the dominant academic discourse, which has the potential consequence of diluting the students' culture. They specifically critique North for encouraging tutors to "colonize" marginalized students, contending that tutors implementing North's indirect, student-centered techniques still "dominate" or steer their tutees in the direction of the "correct" way of writing: "[T]he 'exchange' is hegemonically constructed when dominance is called a service; in accepting the service (in this case, instruction in 'good writing'), the oppressed consent to their own domination" (Bawarshi and Pelkowski 50). The consequence of unconscious conformity is culturally damaging. Simply put, different cultures write differently (Pennycook 202), and the act of writing is linked to the act of thinking (Giroux 291). Therefore, altering one's writing alters one's thinking and one's culture.

Modifying goals, disclosing operations, maintaining cultures

I am not arguing for tutors to accept whatever writing they receive from their tutees, to encourage students to abandon Standard American English. What I am arguing is for tutors to awaken, raise the consciousness of their tutees, especially but not limited to, multicultural and marginalized stu-

dents, that the tutoring session requires conformity that could have some damaging cultural effects. I propose that tutors modify their goals to include revealing the discursive operations and ideology at work in the tutoring session. Let tutees know that they will change, that conformity will equal academic success, that the academic discourse is an identity kit in favor of white, middle-class Americans. Tutees, understanding the process, will gain an awareness that will not only help curb cultural assimilation, but also solidify the much needed diverse voices that the writing center, at times, indirectly silences. Too often as tutors, we are so concerned with changing and correcting student writing that we forget that we are erasing difference, washing out diversity with whiteness. A tutor can bring about an awareness that could potentially empower a tutee to retain his/her cultural identity, curb cultural assimilation, and bring about success for his/her academic career. I acknowledge the difficulty in changing the tutoring session, recognizing, as Nancy Grimm has, that we as tutors, "those of us who have achieved academic success in schools by easily accommodating expectations, are least likely to question literacy practices because to do so would be to question our own positions" (Grimm 13). And it is this exact reason, this willingness to defer to authority, that the director of my writing center, Peter Vandenberg, argues was our reason for employment in the first place: "We typically expect student tutors to replicate dominant institutional and literate values and to reproduce them in others as a condition of employment" (Vandenberg 60). However, we must stretch, if not only for our tutees, then for ourselves, so we may be privy to a more diverse campus of ideas and experiences. Tutors tend to not recognize—or like to admit—the consequences of their actions: multicultural assimilation. They believe that their actions help integrate, not assimilate students in the university. Joan Mullin argues that tutors justify to themselves that their tutees *wanted* to change: "[M]ost writing cen-

ters practitioners assume they promote integration instead of adaptation . . . they recognize the adaptation, but . . . justify [the] adaptation by claiming it was the student's choice" (Mullin 167). It is clear that if we continue to uncritically practice, we will continue to promote multicultural assimilation, erase marginalized cultures for the dominant culture.

Making the theory travel

A few weeks after my experience with Femi, I put my theory of discursive disclosure into practice with one of my tutees, Lyssa, a B.A. student in dramaturgy, whom I met with weekly. She was a white, middle-class Minnesotan, who used English as her first language and had already earned a B.A. in communication and an M.A. in American Sign Language. Clearly, her primary discourse was much closer to the academic discourse than Femi's; however, she still faced great difficultly writing within the academic discourse of the theater department. She had been previously shaped to be a linguist of sorts and struggled to write as a dramaturge. For one assignment, Lyssa needed to write a one-page summary that would be published in the playbill for the theater school's upcoming performance. The assignment had many constraints: the summary had to provide the theme without giving away the ending, had to describe the main characters without revealing the plot, had to use metaphors without being confusing, and so on. The reason? Her audience would be broad: children, parents, and grandparents. So Lyssa started from scratch, brainstorming, outlining, and drafting as she imagined a dramaturge would.

The next week, Lyssa came into the writing center with a summary littered in red with her professor's comments, indicating Lyssa's lack of knowledge of the discourse. That was when Lyssa explained to me that she had never composed a playbill summary and was unsure of the genre. Unfortunately, she did not have any other playbills on

hand to use as an example, so we reread the prompt and her professor's comments in red and pieced together what we thought to be the "correct" genre. At this point, I disclosed to Lyssa the discursive demands pressed upon her. I explained the ideology at work, the need to conform, the axiology of the assignment, and the consequence of assimilating. She caught on rather quickly, understanding that if she conformed, not only would she succeed, but also there was a chance that she might loose some of her identity as a linguist. Consequently, she decided to keep some parts of her summary and to change others as a "compromise," fully conscious of her decision and her professor's expectations. A week later, she came back with a new draft with less red than before. This time, Lyssa remarked how *she* could see the discourse at work, see how her professor's comments were steering her into the academic discourse of dramaturgy. Then, we worked together to mold the remaining portions of the piece into the playbill genre. It was here that I could not help but think of Grimm: "When we teach literacy, we want students to think independently and critically, but we also want them to present their thinking in culturally accepted forms of academic discourse" (Grimm 6).

Like all tutors, I wanted Lyssa to succeed, to get her summary published, which meant conforming and potentially altering her primary discourse (which ironically was very close to the academic discourse, and yet she still struggled because of her unfamiliarity with the discourse of dramaturgy and the genre of the assignment). And so I was honest, open about the process, disclosing the discursive operations, because withholding the truth, having a tutee assimilate unconsciously, would cause damage to her own identity and diversity as a whole. I wanted her to retain her identity and skills as a linguist and bring that to the theater school, but I also wanted her to be ac-

cepted. Grimm argues similarly for metadiscursive conversations and the benefits they could instill in the tutee and the academy: "Conforming to regulatory power is not necessarily a bad practice, but when we pretend that this regulatory power is liberating or culture-neutral, we miss the opportunities for honest and critical engagement that might eventually change practices and create a more equitable distribution of power" (Grimm 8).

The following week, the summary was published. Lyssa confessed that by being consciously aware of the discursive process, she felt empowered to make a conscious decision, instead of unknowingly conforming for success. Informed, she now knows how to separate her cultural identity as a linguist from the cultural demands of the academy, having agency over her conformity. If more students—marginalized, multicultural, L2 writers, and even students like Lyssa—are able to understand the discursive operations and ideology of the university from their tutors, they will leave the writing center empowered. They will make conscious decisions of when and how to conform, retain their cultural identity, and feel that their primary discourse is validated. Maintaining these primary discourses will strengthen diversity and open cross-cultural communications within the university. Culturally diverse students will be able to succeed by the university's standards, upheld by the writing center, but also understand the academic discourse (and the discourses within), how it works and be better equipped to change it instead of having their identity kits altered by it. The role of writing center tutors is to disclose to their tutees the discursive operations and ideology of the university in order to broaden and strengthen diversity in the academy.

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"Journeying Through Text and Talk"
Keynote speaker: James Inman

The Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association is pleased to announce its 17th annual conference April 8, 2006, at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Proposals will be accepted until December 20, 2005. Conference Chairs: Chip Crane (cecrane@usna.edu), Leigh Ryan (lr@umd.edu), and Lisa Zimmerellli (lzimmerelli@umuc.edu). Please see our Web site for online submission details and registration information: <http://www2.mcdaniel.edu/mawca/conf_2006.htm>.

𝒯UTORS' COLUMN

Portfolio pandemonium

Frantic students. Flying papers. Overwhelmed tutors. The end of the semester is always a stressful time, and usually a difficult one for college writing centers. Accommodating all of the students who come in for assistance is a tremendous challenge. Last semester the Lansing Community College Writing Center had to turn away approximately sixty students the month before portfolios were due. As the end of the semester deadlines drew near, students flocked to the Writing Center in search of reassurance. Before the doors opened each morning, students stood waiting anxiously. Every appointment hour was booked, and waiting lists were the only hope for many desperate students. Some just wanted one last outside opinion on their essays; others came for help with revision. The stress of impending deadlines fueled by the common fear of failing the end of the semester portfolio causes high tension and high traffic in the Writing Center.

Three years ago, with the goal of dealing with the increased traffic and tension at the end of the semester, and promoting a positive view of the portfolio, the Writing Center at Lansing Community College began what has become known as the Midnight Madness Portfolio Pandemonium. For this one-night workshop, the Peer Writing Assistants and faculty from the Writing Center are joined by other supportive writing faculty with the goal of providing intensive assistance to as many students as possible. The Portfolio Pandemonium allows students who are not able to get regular appointments in the Writing Center to still receive assistance. In addition to supporting the portfolio process and helping alleviate pressure on students, the Portfolio Pandemonium is a good PR opportunity for the Writing Center. Because of the vast number of people who attend, and the positive results they find, word is circulated quickly about both the existence and helpful nature of the Writing Center.

Before the Portfolio Pandemonium could meet these goals, however, the Writing Center staff had to overcome several challenges. Developing the workshop into the smooth-running success it is today took time, trial, and error. The first challenge had to be addressed before the first Portfolio Pandemonium could even be held. Normally in the Writing Center, each student makes an appointment to work directly with one Peer Writing Assistant for approximately fifty minutes. In that time many issues can be discussed and major errors can be addressed. The Writing Center is open six days per week, and on a typical day ten to fifteen students come in for these fifty-minute appointments. At the Portfolio Pandemonium, the timeframe is obviously very different than the one that the Writing Center is accustomed to. Over one hundred students attended first workshop. That is ten times more students than the Writing Center accommodates on a typical day. The staff had to find a way for the workshop to achieve its goal of efficiency and still effectively address all of student's questions.

The solution to this dilemma proved to be a creative and successful one. The Portfolio Pandemonium was set up with several different tables, each representing one of the important aspects of the writing process; organization, style, mechanics, and MLA documentation. At every table a Peer Writing Assistant or a faculty member was pre-pared to address student's questions. Applying this format allowed the Assistants to maximize their strengths, and the students to receive help in each area where they needed assistance. By focusing on only one aspect of the writing process at each table, sessions could fit into fifteen minutes with out compromising effectiveness, and students could still have all of their questions answered by moving from table to table.

With a solution to the challenge of condensing a fifty-minute session into an effective fifteen-minute one, the Writing Center staff felt prepared for, and excited about the début of the Portfolio Pandemonium. The evening revealed a line of students stretching down the hall and disappearing out of sight around a corner. Masses of students were waiting for the workshop to begin. It only took seconds for the feeling of preparation to vanish. The first Portfolio Pandemonium ran from 8:00 p.m. until 2:30 a.m. the night before portfolios were due. It was indeed a pandemonium, and by the time the last student left, the instructors and Peer Writing Assistants were completely spent.

It is obvious that the duration and date of the first workshop caused many difficulties. Holding the workshop literally hours before portfolios were due was definitely not the best way for Assistants to maximize their energy. Also, because of the proximity to the due date, student's stress levels were at their peak. The goal of the Portfolio Pandemonium was to reduce stress, not make it worse. The goal was to help students prepare, not help them procrastinate. It became obvious in the course of the evening that some

student's papers needed a lot of revisions. Assistants realized that giving these students constructive criticism would not be of much help, as students had virtually no time to make the revisions that were suggested.

The Writing Center Staff could see, upon reflection, that in order to encourage preparation, the Portfolio Pandemonium should be held sooner than the night before portfolios were due. It was also clear that the first workshop ran far too late into the night. Adjustments were made, and the following Portfolio Pandemonium was held from 7:00 p.m. until midnight a week before portfolios were due. The earlier time and date made the second workshop run in a much smoother fashion.

After one year and two nights of Portfolio Pandemonium, most of the workshops challenges had been worked out. There was one challenge, however, that continued to present its self. Although the Writing Center staff of about ten was joined by five to ten writing faculty members who volun-

teered to help at the Portfolio Pandemonium, meeting the needs of all of the students at once was still very difficult. Some students felt like they were wasting time waiting or were frustrated about not receiving enough attention. It seemed that the problem stemmed from students coming to the workshop with unrealistic expectations. The advertisement for the Portfolio Pandemonium had to be made detailed and precise. The handout for the workshop was updated in several ways. First, the overall theme for the advertisement, that the Portfolio Pandemonium was very different from a traditional Writing Center appointment, was emphasized. Specifically, students were asked to bring just one essay to work on, and not to expect help with their entire portfolio. It also proved extraordinarily helpful to request that each student bring two to three specific questions to the workshop, such as "I need help with comma use" or "I am not sure about my transitions." When students came with clear questions, the Assistants were able to offer help in more efficient way.

Despite these measures, some students were still waiting after they selected a table for assistance. Having them look over each other's papers combated feelings of frustration very effectively by giving students a way to be productive while waiting. Preparing students for what to expect from the Portfolio Pandemonium ahead of time was a very important aspect of creating a successful experience for every one.

The Writing Center just completed the seventh Midnight Madness Portfolio Pandemonium, and the effectiveness of the workshop was once again made evident. Papers still fly, and traffic is still high, but the end of the semester rush no longer overwhelms the Writing Center. Offering the Portfolio Pandemonium has helped relieve student's stress, while promoting a positive attitude towards writing and a positive attitude towards the Writing Center.

Breaha Montague-Bauer
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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.ualr.edu/cxgarrett/about_lr.htm>.

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>.

March 9-11, 2006: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Alliance, OH
Contact: Bill Macauley, e-mail: WMacauley@wooster.edu; phone: 330-263-2372; Rodney Dick, e-mail: dickrf@muc.edu; phone: 330- 823-4792. Conference Web site: <www.ecwca.org>.

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

April 8, 2006: Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, in Annapolis, MD
Contact: Chip Crane, e-mail: cecrane@usna.edu; Leigh Ryan, e-mail: lr@umd.edu: and Lisa Zimmerellli, e-mail: lzimmerelli@umuc.edu. Conference Web site: <http://www2.mcdaniel.edu/mawca/conf_2006.htm>.

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/>.

Academic (un)seriousness: How tutor talk plays with academic discourse

One question that comes up again and again in the ongoing conversations between writing center practitioners is: "What, besides a good resume line, does writing center work do for the tutors?" By way of adding to our collective understanding of the answer to this question, I spent one academic quarter studying the conversations tutors were having amongst themselves during their non tutoring time. I found that a large proportion of their conversations could be classified as academic: they were talking about classes, books, and papers. Suspecting that these academic conversations during casual co-worker chat times were significant, I also interviewed the tutors, asking them questions which would locate these conversations in relation to their classroom experience and their experience with friends outside the writing center.

A narrative of academic socialization began to emerge. The beginning of this narrative describes the tutors as English majors taking classes but not developing friendships with other majors: before working in the University of Washington's English Department Writing Center, none of the tutors had friendships with other majors or counted English majors in their larger group of acquaintances:

- I'm not friends with other English majors.
- My friends aren't English majors. I'm the only one in my group of friends. I only see English majors in the classroom.
- My contacts in the English department tend to be professors rather than students.
- I haven't hung out with English majors until working here (at the writing center).
- My friends are not English majors. It's difficult to create friendships from class. I've tried to develop friendships in class but it never works out.
- In class, people are using people to learn, not build a friendship.

The opening scene in this narrative, then, describes the lonely English major, attending class and learning, going home and hanging out with the friends she made during her first year of college: people who are perhaps important social connections, but who don't share the same academic interests. School and friends are separate.

Once these lonely English majors begin working in the writing center, they engage in surface level conversations with other tutors. These conversations concern their shared experience of learning to be a tutor and their shared experience of being English majors. As time wears on and they become more comfortable with each other, this shared small talk deepens into personal connections:

- I was shy when I was first working in the writing center; I only talked about tutoring or about the tutoring class. I talk about more personal topics now.
- When I first started working I talked about class or school. Now I talk about more personal things: what's going on at home. My level of comfort has increased.
- The more I am there, the more personal topics get.
- At first conversation topics were more academic, related to tutor training class or tutoring. Now I have formed some special bonds with people. Now I talk about more personal topics.

As conversational topics become more personal, friendships begin to develop:

- I feel close with a few people here. I like everyone here. I've hung out outside of work with some people.
- I'm pretty close with a few tutors.
- I have hung out with tutors outside of work.

Over time, what was once a superficial academic connection grows, with the fertilization of the personal connection, into a vigorous academic connection, making way for an academic discourse community in the writing center:

- I talk about books more with writing center friends than with regular friends. I workshop creative writing papers with them; we talk about story writing. I make special sessions with other tutors to workshop stories. I usually don't even let my friends [outside of the writing center] read my stuff.
- Compared to other jobs, the writing center is not any more social—the difference is that all of the tutors are close in age, similar in perspective, and can talk about academic topics for their own sake more than in other jobs. I can talk through ideas with tutors, also brings in papers explicitly for tutoring. When I share a class with a tutor, we talk about what we are learning.
- Tutors are coworkers who are also interested in learning and teaching. So not only do you have someone with the same educational interests, but also the same work atmosphere and work banter.
- In the writing center the academic and social are intertwined, they aren't really separable, as opposed to class, which is just academic, or with friends, which

is just social.
-One thing I've realized about the writing center is that it gives me a connection to people who are focused on school, where all of my other friends are . . . not.
-I usually don't talk about academic stuff outside of school because no one is interested. If I started talking about Foucault, they would blow me off.

Of the nine tutors I interviewed, eight of them agreed that they shared their academic interests more with other tutors than with friends outside the writing center. One tutor, however, disagreed:
-Sometimes I talk about papers I am writing for classes [in the writing center], but not too much. Really only if I am writing it right then in the writing center. I will ask for help sometimes. I talk about academic topics with friends outside the writing center more than in the writing center.

This particular tutor is fortunate in that her friends outside the writing center can share in her academic identity. For most, however, the writing center is their only venue for sharing these forming academic identities. Since the classroom isn't social, and the off-campus circle of friends isn't academic, the writing center is the one space tutors are able to combine these two important parts of themselves. Since the writing center has no locus of academic authority, such as an instructor, tutors are comfortable joking around about what they learn in class, incorporating ideas and vocabulary into their conversations, and even criticizing what they are learning. Tutors say things like: "Actually, I hate Shakespeare," or "I don't like reading poetry." Other tutors will laugh and respond, asking "Why?" This opens up a lively, irreverent conversation that couldn't happen in the classroom, where such blatant animosity towards the main subject of study would be

considered inappropriate. Neither would it occur with off-campus friends, where non-English majors wouldn't have much interest in such a discussion.

In this interplay between the classroom and the writing center, tutors are engaging in transculturation. In her essay "Arts of the Contact Zone" Mary Louise Pratt describes transculturation as a process "whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (9). Pratt further defines transculturation as a term which gives the marginalized group more agency, as opposed to terms that indicate passivity such as assimilation and acculturation: "While subordinate peoples do not usually control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what gets absorbed into their own and what it gets used for" (9). In the case of the writing center, tutors are able to transculturate the academic discourse they are exposed to in the classroom, selecting material and inventing a playful mix of the academic and the personal. This transculturation is able to occur because the writing center provides an intersection between two isolated discourse communities. Patricia Bizzell diagrams discourse communities in intersecting circles, some of which are permeable, some of which are not (219). The classroom is one circle, and the off-campus friend circle is another; they don't intersect, but rather just barely touch, allowing students to pass from one to the other. The writing center, however, overlaps with both circles, creating a liminal space. This liminality provides a space for "academic (un)seriousness", a playful, irreverent, inbetweenness which isn't restricted by the conventions of the classroom or the peer group.

In addition, the writing center provides a connection to the larger academic community: that of the English

department itself. Benedict Anderson, as quoted by Pratt, describes the nation as an imagined community, a place where people "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion" (qtd. in Pratt 12). At the University of Washington, the English department is large enough that it can be thought of as an imagined community. Most students, however, never feel that they are a part of it. When I asked tutors whether they felt any differently about the department now that they were working in the writing center, they all said that they felt more comfortable and at home in the department than they had before:
-I have more of a connection with the English major since working at the writing center. I feel more at home in the English department. I feel like Padelford is home base.
-I know more about the English department now, because in the writing center I talk with people who are taking different classes.
-Since working at the writing center, I feel less intimidated, the department is more accessible. I feel more a part of the department.
-I feel more comfortable in the department being in the writing center. I have a base of operations. I have a place to go where I know people, sometimes I just drop in to say hi.
-I definitely feel more part of the department, because I'm doing more than just going to class to get my grade.

In this narrative of transculturation, not only do the tutors make the language of the academy their own, in the end they become members of a community which before seemed impenetrable and monolithic. They have allowed themselves access to the dominant culture, and they engage with it on their own terms. If, as I have proposed, tutors are able to make what

they are learning in class more meaningful by engaging with other English majors in the liminal discourse community of academic (un)seriousness, it seems that more opportunities for this type of interaction should be initiated. The discipline of English, though, values the individual over the group. The value placed on single-authored texts and the persistent image of the solitary writer filters down to the undergraduate classrooms, where students are expected to create and read individually authored texts and are rarely asked to participate in group projects. Many other disciplines rely on labs, studios, and common spaces for students to gather together in a social/academic environment. English, however, has no commonly recognized need for such undergraduate gathering spaces. The experience of the tutors I studied indicates that social/academic spaces should factor into any department's consideration of undergraduate curriculum development or reform.

Molly Wingate cites similar evidence in her essay "Writing Centers as Sites of Academic Culture." In her study she mainly focuses on students who visit the writing center, but in one section directs her attention to tutor culture: "In interviews with tutors, I have learned that the writing center provides the tutors with a community, a safe place on campus that is more diverse than most. It is a locus where tutors . . . can be with peers who are serious writers" (10). Although Wingate frames her discussion in terms of academic seriousness rather than (un)seriousness, her findings suggest that least one other writing center (Colorado College Writing Center) serves as an important site for tutors' academic development. This indicates to me that other academic/social spaces on campus could provide the same function. In other words, this phenomenon is not a result of a unique quality of the University of Washington's English Department Writing Center, but could be enacted in other spaces as well.

The writing center's location at the intersection of a social discourse and an academic discourse provides a space where multiple discourses can combine and interact, enlivening the educational experience of the participants. Tutors are able, through the creation of a liminal discourse community, to make academic discourse their own, personal discourse. In this sense, their entire college experience becomes more meaningful. Or, as one tutor put it, "Now that I work in the writing center, I have someone to sit with at graduation."

<div align="right">Teagan Decker
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Ordering the *Writing Across Borders* DVD

In the November issue of *WLN*, there was an announcement about a new DVD, *Writing Across Borders*, by Wayne Robertson. He has explained that while there was some funding to distribute copies for free at the IWCA Conference, they cannot afford to send out copies now. The price is $12.50, plus shipping. If you are interested in purchasing this DVD on rhetorical differences in the writing of students from other cultures, please order from the Web site of the Oregon State University Book Store:

<http://www.osubookstore.com/GeneralBooksAdvancedSearch.asp?SearchBy=SKU&SearchHow=Exact&SearchString=17924221>

The SKU number is 17924221; the OSU bookstore phone is 1-541-737-4323 or 1-800-595-0357.

New URL for SCWCA Conference

There is a new link to the previously listed SCWCA conference call for papers: <http://www.ualr.edu/cxgarrett/about_lr.htm>. We lost the former site over ten days ago; unfortunately, it appears we will not be able to retrieve it due to some complications in New Orleans, post Katrina.

Because the site went off-line five days before the November 15 deadline, we're extending the deadline until December 15 for those who tried unsuccessfully to send the proposals earlier. We apologize for the inconvenience but hope those of you who were unable to access our previous Web site will visit us again and consider visiting with us in February in Arkansas.

If you have additional questions or need further information, please contact me directly at adholland@ualr.edu. I'd personally like to thank Chad Garrett, the technology expert at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock who came to our aid in the midst of our Web crisis and has provided space on his own Web site to repost our call for papers.

<div align="right">Thanks, Allison Denman Holland</div>

Assessing and responding to clients with severe mental disorders

Over the past three to four years, there has been a significant increase in the number of very challenging students seeking help in the Writing Center of our urban, open-admissions university. The students we have encountered ranged from one who talked into his shirt as if it were a microphone, to one who hired a gunman to injure her family (she stated in a newspaper article that she did not want them killed, since she loved them), to another who later went on a shooting rampage at a local university, killing a young MBA student and wounding several others. None of these students were violent in our Writing Center; however, in each of the cases I will briefly discuss, each client was identified as having a severe mental disorder by which I mean a disorder that puts the client out of touch with reality, such as schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders. I spent much time talking with our counselor about these clients and decided to develop strategies using his advice, readings on these disorders, and our own observations. Even though I will suggest that tutors refer such clients to work with the director of the writing center, I hope with this article to make that first tutorial less taxing and more productive for both client and tutor.

Recognizing signs of a client with a severe mental disorder
1. Taking note of appearance
A stain on the clothes from lunch is nothing unusual, and a bad hair day is known to most of us, but one of the first clues that a student may have some severe mental difficulties that impact his or her ability to have a productive writing tutorial session is hygiene and overall appearance. While fashion and style vary vastly on our campus, cleanliness, appropriateness, and good grooming are fundamental clues to how well a client is doing generally. The clothing of the difficult clients we saw had long-embedded stains and tended to be inappropriate for the season. During an incredibly cold winter one student wore white pants and another wore a light raincoat. One student had an overflowing purse that spewed Kleenex onto the floor every time she attempted to find anything in it. Most had their hair askew beyond any bad hair day. We usually dismiss these small details, but they are important first clues that a client may be experiencing difficulties that will impact on an initial session with him or her.

2. The need to frequently refocus the student
If the tutor encounters the situation where the student frequently shifts from one topic to the next and seems unable to focus on a single task that he or she would like to work on, this fragmentation may be symptomatic of a difficult session. The tutor may begin to feel some futility or exasperation with the student and about what can be accomplished in this first session. In my experience, attention will shift from one assignment to another, from major to minor issues within a given assignment, and to criticizing the instructor and the assignment. The tutor has to expend a great deal of effort to get the client back on task and experiences limited success with this effort. While this description and others that are given may reflect a student with academic weaknesses, it is the extent and pervasiveness of this and other symptoms that distinguish the client with severe mental disorders.

3. Emotional reactivity
Most of the students who seek help through the writing center express a wide range of emotions when they talk about and work on their assignments. By comparison, clients with a severe mental disorder often present with flat affect (are unexpressive) or present with excessive emotionality that seems not to fit the situations they are addressing. Sometimes the voice tone will vary from very high or low back to normal. Of all the signs I will describe, the flat affect is the most disturbing to me; when a student displays it, I can't get an accurate sense of how the student feels about the assignment or the writing itself. The times I've questioned clients in an attempt to connect feeling with the assignment, the client has responded by looking away or by avoiding a response that reflects how he or she feels.

4. The need to be right
Usually a professor has referred the student to our Writing Center because the content of the paper is either terribly wrong or very inappropriate. When the tutor suggests some revisions, however, the client launches into long defenses of why the text looks like it does. One student even insulted staff members, asking them to quit giving suggestions. She accepted only one kind of improvement: moving sentences in the text. She could still be right that way.

Our responses
1. Have a code word
If your staff creates a code word or sentence, it can be used to signal others to stay nearby when a tutor perceives a client as frightening or challenging. There are no Chinese food restaurants near our campus, so our code sentence is "Are you going for Chinese food?" When tutors hear that, they will stay nearby or even become involved in the tutorial.

2. Adopt a soft tone of voice

Once I see the initial cues of dress and voice tone, I quickly adopt a soft tone of voice because I suspect that the client will begin to defend his or her work. I limit my suggestions for revisions to three; if after three times the client resists or defends, I switch to the suggestions below. I have seen tutors become so exasperated with these clients that they raise their voices and the client quickly raises his or her voice too.

3. Make your feelings your allies

If the client refuses suggestions, defends the text, and does not connect at all with the assignment, it's normal for the tutor to feel frustrated, angry, or offended. I imagine myself pulling my emotions to my side as a buddy who carries a sign about my values. When a client defended his text and would not listen to any tutor's suggestions, I pulled my emotions to my side and labeled my own values. My emotion was marvel: who wouldn't want to learn new strategies, I wondered. I must have a high value on learning new things. Once I identify my value(s), I won't disregard it and I won't repress it. Expressing even mild irritation with the client can cut short any learning on the client's part; repressing it will take its toll in exhaustion after the tutorial is over. I can then concentrate on respecting the client's wishes for that tutorial.

Most readers know that we can respond to blaming and excuses with statements like the following that in no way reveal our feelings or involve us in the professor bashing or excuse making: "That sounds so frustrating," or "I think most people would feel that way."

The most challenging part of working with clients with severe mental disorders is responding to their need to be right by identifying what is right and building on it. I know most tutors do this in most tutorials, but the usual skills for tutorials don't work here.

We must *constantly* work on the basis of what is right. This adaptation takes considerable effort because we are so used to tutorials where a student wants to learn and grows in responsibility. This client will not acknowledge what is wrong and needs to be fixed. In this first tutorial, it would be best for the tutor to keep showing the client what is right (at both the syntactic level and the overall response to the assignment) and in a very low-key manner to ask questions of the client regarding what the professor wants. The client may be frustrated at the end of the tutorial that not enough has been done—even though we don't know what that is and most of these clients do not want the tutor to write the paper for them. In other words, after half an hour, the client won't move a word on that text and the tutor has ideally still been a welcoming, respectful, and emotionally intelligent guide to writing.

4. Refer the client to the director

The tutor should refer the client to work exclusively with the director, and the director needs to make a clear plan to rotate this client among tutors when the director is not available. The director can contact the professor (if there is one) and work very closely with him or her to be sure that the student is making the progress the professor stipulates. The director can request models of student writing and magazine or journal articles from the professor that display good writing for this course. The professors I've dealt with have been very clear and direct about what they want as well as about grades and drop dates. This clarity makes tutoring much easier. When working with such clients, I offer them an hour of tutoring because they do not work well under the half hour system we have in place.

The director can also work closely with a member of the counseling staff, recounting various snags in tutorials for suggestions. The director can also read materials about these illnesses to assure him- or herself that these clients

are not violent or dangerous in this setting and simply to understand as much as possible about various mental states. Understanding the limitations some clients face with memory, distractions, and concentration helps us grow in patience. Some readings are suggested at the end of this article. Taking courses in counseling can be an effective way to learn more about mental disorders in general and about specific language strategies to use while tutoring.

It's important to provide excellent service to difficult clients while protecting the writing center staff from undue strain. While our hospitality to all students has been, like that of most Writing Centers, perhaps the most important part of our service, being hospitable to these types of clients requires special skills.

Mary Murray
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Cleveland, OH

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Further Reading

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University of Illinois— Chicago Writing Center and Dept. of English	Call for Proposals Sept. 29-30, 2006 Chicago, IL *"Negotiated Alliances: When Writing is Public, Urban, and Academic"*

  Submissions for 15-minute individual presentations or 45-minute panel discussions should consist of a 250-word proposal including the title of the presentation. Include contact information: home and office numbers, mailing address, and an e-mail address. Submission deadline: January 25, 2006. Send submissions or inquiries to Vainis Aleksa, e-mail: uicwritingcenter@hotmail.com. Conference Web site: <http://www.uic.edu/depts/engl/writing/>.

Writing Program Administrators	Call for Proposals July 13-16, 2005 Chattanooga, TN *"Keeping on Track: Looking Back, Looking Forward, and Looking Out for New Opportunities"*

  Proposals may be submitted at <http://wpacouncil.org/node/216> from November 21, 2005, until February 1, 2006. Proposals submitted after this date will be reviewed only if space remains on the program. For detailed up-to-date information about the conference, visit the conference Web site at: <http://wpacouncil.org>.

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