# THE WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

## – FROM THE EDITOR –

The May/June issue of *WLN* brings this volume to a close until we start up again next September. If your subscription is about to expire, please renew it by early August at the latest.  Doing so ensures you'll  miss no issues, and you'll want to read  the excellent articles waiting to appear in the first issues of the next academic year.

"Change" has become a tired word—overused and under-utilized. But the authors of two articles in this issue write about real change in their centers. Matthew Schultz calls what they've done "recalibration" as he moved the center away from being viewed as remedial into a program integrated into the college curriculum. Doug Enders, noting how non-native speakers of English were using his center primarily for help with correcting errors, structured a new program that brings non-native speakers into the center for a series of tutorials. They begin by focusing on drafts, not sentence-level work, which is delayed until later.

To learn about writing assistance offered in high schools in the Rocky Mountain Writing Center Association region, Lisa Bell compiled an extensive directory and reports on the many insights and possible implications of her findings. Finally, Chris Striker contrasts the differing roles of writing tutors and teaching assistants in classrooms.

I wish us all a pleasant, relaxing July and August, with summer sun and warm breezes for most of us, and for our readers on the other side of the globe that means winter is "icumen in."

◆ *Muriel Harris, editor*

## INSIDE

## RECALIBRATING AN ESTABLISHED WRITING CENTER:  FROM SUPPLEMENTARY SERVICE TO ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

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I was recently approached by an overwhelmed faculty member who asked if he could require his students to use the Writing Center's proofreading services so that he could spend less time correcting elementary grammatical mistakes. After a year in my position as director, most of which had been spent offering various "litanies of negation" (Harris 56), I realized at that moment the Center had been working to dispel the very myths I had established by inadvertently presenting the Center as a supplemental service center. Building on ideas presented in articles and responding to questions posed by authors in *The Writing Center Journal* 30.2, I offer our Writing Center's institutional recalibration as a model for fundamentally redefining and repositioning our place in the intellectual hierarchy of the college.

Turning to some of the articles in *WCJ* 30.2 for ideas about how best to redesign Vassar's Writing Center, our staff first read Muriel Harris's "Making Our Institutional Discourse Sticky: Suggestions for Effective Rhetoric" in which she offers suggestions for more effective self-identifying rhetoric by drawing on the "you approach," a communicative concept generally employed in professional and

business writing (61). We then turned to Peter Carino's review of Neal Lerner's *The Idea of a Writing Laboratory* (2009) in which Carino corroborates Lerner's observation that the writing center stigma of which we are all well aware—that it is a place of remediation—might begin to be refuted via a name change: one that suggests writers at the center "must perform the tasks of a discipline rather than just master the material of its subject matter" (124). Finally, we read and circulated to a number of professors and deans the study by Bradley Hughes, Paula Gillespie, and Harvey Kail's of the educational benefits of working as a writing center tutor. Each of these articles from *WCJ* 30.2 makes clear the need to readjust the idea of our writing centers. To be sure, the conclusion of Hughes, Gillespie, and Kail's study ("Resituating the Writing Center: A Second Claim for Centrality") asks, "How many other undergraduate courses and experiences could, fifteen or twenty years later, offer such detailed evidence of learning and such detailed evidence of staying power and transferability?" (38). The authors' expected answer is surely "Few, if any." These articles served as the starting point for our discussions about recalibrating our Cnter.

Over the course of the past year, the Vassar College Writing Center staff has set out to redefine and re-present the Center as an academic department that houses a reflective and innovative discipline whose mission is central—not supplementary—to the task of discovering, creating, and sharing knowledge. By presenting the Writing Center in a new light, one that better communicates the way we view ourselves—not as a collection of remedial services, but as a unified academic discipline with a staff that teaches both within the credit-bearing curriculum (including freshman writing and a tutor-training course offered through the English Department) and outside of it (one-to-one consultations, workshops, conference organization, and publishing)—we have begun to increase the impact of our instructional efforts at the college.

Like many writing centers, Vassar's has focused mainly on offering one-to-one consultations as well as group workshops for both students and faculty. Yet (also like many writing centers) we often find ourselves presenting material to groups of uninterested students required to attend the workshop or to a core group of faculty. In an effort to reach a wider audience, the Writing Center has taken a different approach to teaching writing and writing pedagogy that has, thus far, yielded inspiring results.

In order to integrate our educational philosophy into the wider Vassar curriculum, the Writing Center has had to resituate itself within that curriculum. Therefore, we have begun working directly with faculty in hopes that more faculty development offerings will result in highly effective writing teachers, and therefore better student writers. A high level of writing center intervention is particularly necessary at a place like Vassar where Freshman Writing Seminars (FWS) are offered by each department. To augment the FWS program, Vassar's Writing Center established a fellows program in which faculty teaching writing courses may request a designated consultant for their writing courses. These writing consultants have been valuable sounding boards for professors who may be unaccustomed to assessing student writing or who seek insight from students on their syllabi, lesson plans, and writing assignments. Writing consultants also work with their FWS students outside of class in one-to-one consultations and small group workshops, helping writers interrogate the conventions of the course's discipline by making those conventions, and the reasons behind them, explicit and comprehensible. On average, consultants have spent 1-2 hours per week working with their designated courses, and while this does reduce the number of one-to-one consultation hours, the direct exposure to faculty and their classes of 17 freshmen writers has clearly elevated our status on campus. This increase in awareness of our Writing Center is evidenced by greater attendance at writing center events, higher numbers of one-to-one consultations, and more open communication between the faculty and our staff. For instance, we now have faculty submitting their course documents to an internal Writing Center website so that we have on hand syllabi, writing assignments, and grading criteria, which can be referenced when a student comes into the Center without these guiding documents. In short, designated consultants serve as a bridge between teachers and students. At Vassar, writing consultants also bridge the gap between freshmen and more experienced writers—such as senior thesis writers.

*Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in one-to-one teaching of writing.*

Many accomplished senior writers now come to the Writing Center for feedback on their theses. At Vassar, we've begun pairing consultants and writers for the duration of a thesis project. Consultants are therefore able to act as non-specialized readers with the benefit of a long-term writing relationship. In contrast to the Designated Consultant program, where consultants help professors make disciplinary conventions explicit and comprehensible for novice writers, the thesis partner relationship is an opportunity for senior writers to take a firm hold on their own expertise and to deepen their understanding of a topic through the act of teaching a consultant about the project. Typically, a consultant will work with the thesis writer near the beginning of the semester to plan how often the two will meet throughout the term and to set up an acceptable revision schedule that aligns with the department's due dates.

Recognizing the Writing Center's integral role in the college curriculum (after much self-promotion at faculty meetings, online, and in various campus publications), administration has made the Writing Center Director the standing chair of Vassar's Freshman Writing Seminar Steering Committee (FWSSC), which in addition to developing, supporting, and overseeing first-year writing, also acts as the point of origin for discussions about writing-intensive opportunities across campus. For example, over the next four years the FWSSC, the Writing Center, and the Committee on College Assessment will lead a longitudinal writing study that asks when, why, and how Vassar students begin developing the habits of experienced writers and also when and why they begin self-identifying as scholarly writers. As we've worked to prepare assessment criteria, this study has already begun a highly visible faculty/student conversation about what "good" writing means to us, and how we achieve it. Teaming up with the FWSSC and the Assessment Committee has therefore placed the Writing Center staff at the forefront of discussions about teaching writing on campus. This partnership has just recently resulted in increased consideration among the faculty about instituting a writing-across-the-curriculum requirement during the sophomore and junior years in order to bridge the gap between skill and knowledge acquisition during writers' freshman year and the implementation of these competencies in the senior thesis.

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To sustain these conversations about "good" writing, we have redesigned our writing-workshop programming model. Our first major shift was to advocate for in-class workshops as opposed to required extracurricular events held, typically, during the evening hours. This in-class approach has been successful for two reasons: first, students are not asked to reconvene as a group after class, but can use their free time to write, organize a peer-review group, or consult in the Writing Center; and secondly, the in-class model also ensures the presence of the course instructor, which not only reinforces the material's importance, but also guarantees that the assignment creator and evaluator is on hand to answer any specific questions that may arise during the workshopping session. The instructor's presence has been invaluable for assuring student participation in, and therefore the success of, the workshop.

A theme running throughout the Vassar Writing Center's recalibration is faculty investment in writing center theory and practice. We have asked Vassar's faculty to take a more active role in our programming. For instance, in the past, when a faculty member has approached the Writing Center about offering a workshop, such as using and citing sources, my staff would research, design, promote, and lead the workshop. We've moved away from this service model by asking faculty to take ownership of their development ideas: now, when a professor has an idea for a workshop, we help them realize their vision without taking it on ourselves. For example, a professor recently asked the Writing Center to design a workshop on issues of plagiarism. We, in turn, offered him the opportunity to construct and lead the workshop himself with support from the Writing Center staff.

## SECONDARY SCHOOL WRITING CENTER CONFERENCE

Call for Proposals
Friday, October 11, 2013
7:30 a.m. —2 p.m.
Fairfax, VA
George Mason University
*"Transformation from the Center"*

We invite new and experienced tutors and teams of tutors to lead 20-minute or 40-minute presentations. As this year's conference theme is "transformation from the center," think of ways that you can offer ideas, insights, or strategies that relate to the transformations that occur within your writing center.

Possible formats for proposals include, but are not limited to, panel presentations, individual presentations, roundtable discussions, and workshops. Also, alternative formats will be considered, so feel free to be creative in your proposal. Please make sure your presentation will be completed during the allotted time-frame.

To submit a proposal: Go to <http://nvwp.org/youngwriters/writing-centers-and-tutors/>, where you will be asked to submit a description of your presentation (300 words maximum), along with a title, presentation format, and any technology you might need for your presentation. Make sure to submit your proposal by June 8.

Please e-mail <JGGoransson@fcps.edu> with any questions about the tutor presentations, and for further information about the conference, e-mail Amber Jensen: <anjensen@fcps.edu>.

He co-designed the workshop with a senior writing consultant and they team-taught it to the professor's class. I was invited to attend the presentation as a discussion facilitator and participant rather than the authority. This plagiarism workshop centered on the Doris Kearns Goodwin case and included an intelligent conversation among students, faculty, and staff about the accusations against Goodwin and the language used to define plagiarism. In this way, students were able to investigate the nuance of engaging with and citing intellectual work. In the end, we created an active learning environment instead of simply delivering another anti-plagiarism lecture. This is one example of how the Writing Center has become known as a site of intellectual investigation in addition to its former identity as a site of skill acquisition.

The above example serves to illustrate two improvements: greater interaction between the Writing Center and teaching faculty as well as a model for offering workshops with a pre-determined audience. Because faculty handle the planning and promotion of each workshop, while the Writing Center aids in design and delivery, this new programming model cuts workshop preparation time in half. In the past, the Writing Center was responsible for the entirety of each workshop from inception to delivery. Such division of labor affords the Center the ability to dramatically decrease its own workshop offerings (typically between 8-10 per semester), and instead focus on two campus-wide events. This year, those events included a week-long faculty seminar culminating in a campus-wide roundtable discussion about why and how we learn to write, why and how we teach writing, and strategies for negotiating these two agendas; and a national conference on teaching with technology that included both faculty and student participation. Streamlining our programming has both consolidated resources and increased the number of student and faculty writers with whom we interact at these events, proving to be a more productive way of instigating discussions between teachers and students. Rather than working to design, promote, and deliver a number of under-attended workshops each semester, we now spend that cumulative effort supporting a few highly regarded (and anticipated) events.

While undergraduate writing consultants continue to assist professors in the design and presentation of various student-based, in-class workshops, the Learning, Teaching, and Research Center (LTRC) staff has been working to distill and synthesize content from our one-time faculty-based workshops into an in-depth annual faculty seminar: "Pedagogy in Action." This model both frees up our staff to work with a larger population of student writers and affords the LTRC Director, the Writing Center Director, and the Quantitative Reasoning Center Director the opportunity to engage Vassar's faculty in discussions about best teaching practices, the curriculum, and assessment. In the summer of 2011, the "Pedagogy in Action" seminar was led by the Directors of the LTRC and Academic Computing Services, and was open to the entire faculty interested in developing or redesigning a course. All of the available seats filled; therefore, in the summer of 2012 we offered two sections of "Pedagogy in Action," in which each participant agreed to meet for three six-hour meetings to interrogate writing's place in the academy, discuss writing process from inception to revision, and share our own writing and writing practices. An intensive workshop, discussion group, and strategy session, the seminar is an occasion for writing teachers to reconsider and experiment with current best practices in writing pedagogy. The seminar focuses on techniques for helping students establish the habits of experienced writers that approach writing as a social process. Participants are asked to offer sustained critical attention to issues of where knowledge resides and how it is shared, to interrogate the sources of students' and teachers' authority, to explore their own education as writers, to consider the possibilities of collaborative learning, and to give and receive constructive criticism. With no financial incentive, these individuals engage with one another in the hopes of designing effective writing courses that require less planning throughout the term, clearer expectations, and more manageable workloads (for both student and teacher).

Our hope is that this sustained attention to writing pedagogy will ripple throughout the disciplines across Vassar's curriculum and inspire faculty to become more involved in the planning, development, and delivery of writing center programming. One immediate benefit of our wider exposure has been an increase in

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the number of both students and faculty using the Writing Center. Whereas we consulted with only one assistant professor during the spring 2011 semester, we had fourteen one-to-one consultation sessions with faculty during the fall 2011 semester, and collaborated with 25% of the FWS professors to design in-class workshops for their fall 2011 courses on topics ranging from "effective peer review" to "using and citing sources" to "writing footnotes." Vassar's Writing Center is not abandoning individualized consultations in favor of a mass education model; one-to-one work with writers of all levels is still our primary function.

With the aid of greater faculty buy-in over the past year, we have increased our engagement with the wider campus community. This past semester, for instance, after updating and circulating new promotions materials, we worked with approximately 30% of the Vassar student body in more than 800 one-to-one consultations—a record semester for our Center. We hope our institutional and disciplinary research will not only continue to bolster our reputation on campus as a site of knowledge production and communication, but also open the lines of interdisciplinary communication both across campus and among our peer institutions.

To this end, we organized THATCamp Pedagogy (http://pedagogy2011.thatcamp.org/), which brought together Digital Humanities theorists and practitioners, technorhetoric scholars and instructors, and electronic pedagogy experts and advocates to discuss the rewards and challenges of teaching and learning with technology. Seventy-five scholars representing research universities and small liberal arts colleges, community colleges, and high schools converged in the Vassar Writing Center to discuss strategies and techniques for teaching with technology. Many of our discussions revolved around writing pedagogy and included training sessions on topics ranging from reducing cognitive load and promoting active learning with simple networked technologies to integrating digital projects/visual rhetoric into undergraduate courses. As conference organizers and contributors, the Writing Center staff was able to display its role in pioneering innovative techniques for teaching writing both on campus and in the wider academic community.

The key to our transformation has been to engage in the work of an academic department rather than an administrative office—regardless of our designation at the College. Any writing center can become truly central to the academic community by imbuing students with a sense of self as not only writers, but also as readers and teachers; by empowering faculty to see their own development ideas to fruition; by instigating discussions about writing in the curriculum, and by supporting writing center research by undergraduate, graduate, and professional consultants. Our initial success of transitioning from a simple peer-to-peer consultation service to a department that works with all members of the campus writing community (both one-to-one and in larger groups) suggests one way writing centers might take on the status of scholarly collaborators rather than remedial service providers. Vassar's Writing Center has actively employed a laboratory methodology where writers (students and faculty alike) at the center "must perform the tasks of a discipline" (Carino 124), which serves as a manageable model for other writing centers seeking to increase their institutional status and pedagogical effectiveness. ✦

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# THE IDEA CHECK: CHANGING ESL STUDENTS' USE OF THE WRITING CENTER

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## THE PROBLEM

Here's a problem familiar to any writing center tutor or administrator: Many students visit us late in the writing process, and as a result, their last-minute tutorials become "paper-centered" rather than "writer-centered." In their haste to finish, students focus more on immediate correction than on improving writing ability or communication of ideas. The situation is particularly problematic for ESL students, who often feel enormous pressure to produce "correct" work. This pressure may come from several areas: an ESL program's emphasis on sentence-level communication; ESL students themselves who may need directive language instruction or whose own cultural literacy demands correctness; or native English speaking faculty members who routinely fail papers that don't measure up to their grammatical standards.

While scholars generally agree that expectations of correctness placed on second-language writers are often unrealistic and unproductive, they differ in their views of how best to address ESL students' writing needs in the writing center. Some favor non-directive exploration of ideas over error correction in tutoring (Purcell 3). Others see tutors as cultural informants who help second-language writers negotiate unfamiliar academic expectations for form, writer, and audience (Powers, Thonus). Still others hold that "Tutors need to relinquish the attitude that giving second-language students the language they need is 'unethical' or 'immoral'" (Myers 66) since those students frequently need more help with language acquisition than with rhetoric or ideas (Myers 52). However, as research on ESL writers by Truscott and Hsu shows, "successful error reduction during revision is not a predictor, even a very weak predictor, of learning." It would seem, therefore, that ESL students would be better served by visiting writing centers earlier in the writing process so that they can focus more on writing tasks that demand critical thinking than editing.

## THE IDEA CHECK

Based on this hypothesis, the Shenandoah University ESL program and Writing Center jointly developed a course of action, the Idea Check procedure, which requires all ESL students in the program to make writing center visits an integral part of their process for each writing assignment in their ESL courses. The Idea Check procedure works this way: Students visit the Writing Center for the first of two required meetings to review their ideas with tutors, who help the ESL students organize and clarify their content and make sure they are meeting the requirements of the assignment. For this Idea Check visit, students bring outlines instead of completed drafts, so the session focuses on idea development and organization, rather than the correction of writing. The second required visit, the First Draft Check, occurs after students write a completed rough draft of the paper. In this session the students and their tutors place a priority on addressing global issues before attending to surface-level issues and documentation. After fine-tuning their essays outside the Writing Center and receiving graded feedback from their instructors, students may choose to visit the Writing Center a third time, for a Revision Draft Check, before resubmitting a final draft for a better grade. After a few years of implementing this procedure, the ESL coordinator and I, the Writing Center director, felt that, at least anecdotally, the Idea Check had succeeded in increasing student focus on developing ideas while decreasing correction-mindedness in tutorials; and the ESL coordinator believed her students' writing had improved as a result. To be sure this was the case, however, we decided to conduct a formal study.

## THE STUDY

We developed a longitudinal study of 1,043 writing tutorials conducted over twelve semesters with 111 students enrolled in ESL program courses. We compared baseline data collected from 270 tutorials conducted with twenty-nine students during two semesters from the 2006-2007 academic year, which preceded

the Idea Check procedure, against data from 773 tutorials involving eighty-two students during ten consecutive terms spanning from summer 2008 to fall 2010 when the Idea Check was in place. We then compared this data with data from 2,390 tutorials with non-ESL students over that same ten-semester period. First, to determine if the Idea Check procedure affected the frequency with which ESL students worked on global versus surface-level issues during tutorial visits, we compared the reported frequency of writing tasks performed in all ESL writing tutorials prior to and following the initiation of the Idea Check procedure.

Secondly, to establish if the frequency of writing tasks changed over the course of the Idea Check procedure itself, we compared the reported frequency of writing tasks performed during sequential visits in the Idea Check procedure for the "Why I Came to SU" essay, an assignment given in nine semesters of the study. To determine which ESL students used the Writing Center, when they used it, and what writing tasks they performed in their tutorials, we drew upon tutor report information collected in our WCOnline database. Like many other centers, the Shenandoah University Writing Center collects tutor reports that contain a checklist of writing tasks students and tutors work on during tutorials. For purposes of our study, we identified higher-order writing tasks as the following: "Understanding the assignment/format," "Establishing a purpose," "Developing or clarifying a thesis," "Establishing proper focus," "Developing ideas/examples," "Organizing ideas," and "Documenting/Researching." Lower-order writing tasks were identified as "Editing ideas/language" and "Editing mechanics."

## FINDINGS

The results of the study support what the ESL coordinator and I suspected: the Idea Check procedure appeared to change ESL students' use of the Writing Center and to improve the grades on their papers. When we compare the frequency of writing tasks reported in all ESL writing tutorials prior to and following the initiation of the Idea Check procedure (Table 1), we find that the procedure significantly increased the frequency with which ESL students reportedly focused on global writing tasks in tutorials while it only modestly decreased the frequency with which they are reported to have executed sentence-level tasks.

| Writing Task | Pre-Idea Check ESL (270) | Post-Idea Check ESL (773) | $H_0 : p_1 = p_2$ $H_1 : p_1 \neq p_2$ Significantly Different |
|---|---|---|---|
| Understanding assignment/format | 11% | 26% | P<.001 |
| Establishing a purpose | 6% | 15% | P<.001 |
| Developing or clarifying a thesis | 9% | 24% | P<.001 |
| Establishing proper focus | 6% | 20% | P<.001 |
| Developing ideas/examples | 15% | 49% | P<.001 |
| Organizing ideas | 9% | 27% | P<.001 |
| Documenting/researching | 6% | 12% | P<.01 |
| Editing ideas/language | 54% | 48% | Not significantly different |
| Editing mechanics | 39% | 38% | Not significantly different |

Table 1: Frequency of Writing Tasks Reported in Writing Center Tutorials

Table 1 shows that the tutors report the frequency of performance of global tasks increased in every category. The increases ranged from 6% to 34%, doubling for "Documenting/researching" and more than tripling for "Developing ideas/examples." Similarly, the chart shows that in both sentence-level categories, the frequency decreased, from 1% to 6%, with the largest decrease in the case of "Editing ideas/language."

Interestingly, not only did post-Idea Check results compare favorably to pre-Idea Check results, they also compared favorably to those found in all non-ESL writing tutorials. As Table 2 shows below, the Idea Check procedure produced greater frequency of all global writing tasks than occurred in all non-ESL writing tutorials, with the exception of "Documenting/researching," a task that isn't a mainstay in the ESL curriculum. Conversely, the frequency of addressing sentence-level concerns is 9% to 15% lower for post-Idea Check ESL students than non-ESL students.

| Writing Task | Post-Idea Check ESL (773) | All Non-ESL Writing Tutorials (2390) | $H_o : p_1 = p_2$ $H_1 : p_1 \neq p_2$ Significantly Different |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Understanding the assignment/format | 26% | 18% | P<.001 |
| Establishing a purpose | 15% | 8% | P<.001 |
| Developing or clarifying a thesis | 24% | 13% | P<.001 |
| Establishing proper focus | 20% | 15% | P<.001 |
| Developing ideas/examples | 49% | 28% | P<.001 |
| Organizing ideas | 27% | 25% | Not significantly different |
| Documenting/researching | 12% | 23% | P<.001 |
| Editing ideas/language | 48% | 57% | P<.001 |
| Editing mechanics | 38% | 53% | P<.001 |

Table 2: Frequency of Writing Tasks Reported in Writing Center Tutorials Idea Check ESL Students Versus Non-ESL students

Given that the SU Idea Check procedure seems to have greatly affected ESL students' tasks and focus in tutorials, we found it important to examine what step(s) in the procedure might have influenced such changes in behavior. To accomplish this, we looked at the frequency of writing tasks that occurred for each of three sequential visits that students made for the "Why I Came to SU" paper. The results of the comparison indicate two clear trends. First, the frequency of global writing tasks decreased dramatically over the course of the writing process. For example, the reported frequency of the task "Understanding assignment/format" decreased from 48% in the Idea Check visit to 16% in the First Draft Check visit to 0% in the Revision Draft Check visit. Similarly, the frequency of "Establishing a purpose" decreased from 26% to 17% to 0% over the three visits. "Developing or clarifying a thesis" likewise dropped from 52% to 40% to 7%, respectively. Finally, "Developing ideas/examples" also dropped from 95% to 69% to 48% in frequency. A second trend, by contrast, showed that the frequency of sentence-level writing tasks dramatically increased over the course of the same writing center visits. "Editing ideas/language" increased from 19% to 72% to 85%, while "Editing mechanics" increased from 5% to 60% to 81%, respectively.

As discussed earlier (and shown in Table 1), ESL students who participated in the Idea Check procedure reportedly performed global tasks more frequently than those who did not complete an Idea Check tutorial. That the study shows a consistent pattern of results throughout sequential writing center visits indicates that the increase in global task frequency can be attributed to the initial Idea Check visit. The results suggest that the earlier ESL students focus on global issues, the better chance they have in giving attention to them at all and then in a timely way. This process ensures then that students won't be trying to invent and correct at the same time, as often can occur in last-minute tutorials.

While not a central focus of the study, the question of whether this change in student use of the Writing Center produced better writing naturally arose. A limited study involving 60 students whose "Why I Came to SU" essays were graded by their instructor showed that those who participated in the three-step Idea Check procedure earned higher final grades

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than those who didn't participate—a 91.4 average score compared to 81.0, roughly a full grade difference that did not reflect any grading penalty for missed writing center visits. It was also found that on average students who made the most visits to the Writing Center received the highest grades. Interestingly, those students who completed Idea Check tutorials also earned higher grades on average than those who didn't make those early visits. Assuming these grade differentials reflect the quality found in writing rather than instructor bias produced from knowledge of how many Writing Center visits students made, these findings support the ESL coordinator's perception that her students' papers had improved as a result of initiating the Idea Check procedure.

## INFLUENCES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Various factors influenced the outcomes of this study, not the least of which was that the Idea Check procedure was a mandatory part of the ESL curriculum. Moreover, because each mandated visit had an agenda according to the Idea Check sequence, the frequency and timing of when students and tutors reported performing higher-order and lower-order tasks was, no doubt, affected. Given the debate over the efficacy of making writing center visits mandatory, the Shenandoah University Idea Check procedure might not be right for all programs and students; however, it was well received among students in our ESL program. Anecdotally speaking, the vast majority of the ESL students reported an appreciation for the process. Nonetheless, some of the students who participated in this study viewed the Writing Center, at least initially, as a place to fix papers, which might have affected the kinds of writing tasks they would request help with, thereby shaping our results.

Various factors involving tutors also influenced the outcomes of this study. Tutor training, in which all tutors participated, and which prioritized addressing global over non-global issues in tutorials, likely influenced the types of writing tasks students and tutors addressed and reported in tutorials. Despite their shared training, tutors brought different personalities, biases, and levels of writing experience to their work that no doubt swayed their conversations with students about writing and their task reporting. Another factor that likely influenced the accuracy of tutor reporting had to do with tutor interpretation in matching the kinds of tasks addressed in their tutorials with those listed on the tutor report forms.

Along with its influences, the study also has some significant limitations. While it attempts to measure how frequently writing tasks were addressed in tutorials, the study does not quantify time spent on those tasks. As a result, we cannot determine which tasks dominated the time and focus of tutorials at any particular stage of the writing process. Without this information, our view of what tutorials look like and our understanding of how exactly they affect students remain incomplete. A second limitation lies in the scope and means of measuring student improvement in writing. The study currently looks at only a single assignment graded by one instructor. A more complete study would increase the sample size to include multiple assignments and use outside readers to grade those assignments to lessen the chance of grading bias.

## CONCLUSION

It has been rewarding to find that the Idea Check procedure appears to have changed ESL students' use of the Writing Center in positive ways and, in turn, improved their grades, which we can assume reflects the quality of their writing. Students interviewed have been pleased with the way the Writing Center has helped them as writers; they have appreciated having the opportunity to think about and express their ideas without having to be overly correction-minded. Tutors have found that the procedure allows them to do what they are trained to do: help shape and develop the ideas of others rather than serve as editors. The ESL coordinator observed that "when students follow the whole procedure, their papers are better organized, thesis statements are clearer, discussions include more meaningful examples and details, and the assignment needs are more consistently met" (White). Research by Truscott and Hsu has shown that "Corrective feedback on an assignment helps learners reduce their errors on that assignment during the revision process," but "improvements made during revision are not evidence of the effectiveness of correction for improving learners' writing ability." Linville notes that partly for this reason, writing centers have traditionally guarded against allowing tutors to serve as proofreaders (86). Based on the findings of Truscott and Hsu, Linville, and others, it makes sense to say that students who visit writing centers late in the writing process chiefly for editing purposes receive limited benefits from doing so. If writing centers are to fulfill their promise of making better writers and not just better papers, we who work in them have to find a way to change how and when students use our services. We hope Shenandoah University's Idea Check offers a model for other ESL and writing center collaborations. ✦

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

# INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS FROM A REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DIRECTORY

◆ *Lisa Bell*
*Spanish Fork, UT*

My first task as Outreach Coordinator for the Rocky Mountain Writing Centers Association (RMWCA) was to compile a directory of community and secondary education writing centers as a companion to the region's existing directory of college and university writing and tutoring programs. Hundreds of hours, eight states (AZ, ID, CO, MO, NV, MN, UT, WY), and 1,313 entries later, the RMWCA High School Directory emerged.[1] Initially, the directory's purpose was to help us learn a bit more about the physical scope of the region and to jump-start communication among secondary education programs and higher education programs at the sub-regional level. However, the directory has become less about quick connections and more about understanding what writing programs and services are available to students in the region. While there are still holes in the directory that could not be filled through simple Internet searches, the implications for research, reflection, and rethinking the current models for writing assistance work (collective and individual) are intriguing and ample. The directory provides a look into regional classrooms and reveals that while teacher-led tutoring is the most common writing assistance available to regional high school students, online writing assistance, peer and club tutoring, learning labs and writing centers, and community and government intervention programs broaden the picture, shaping student experiences and, hopefully, informing the decisions made about writing assistance at all levels of education.

The first draft of the regional directory was compiled by searching each state government's website for school listings and then searching each school or school district's website for information relevant to the directory project. While the directory was first envisioned as a compilation of all secondary and community writing centers, given the sheer size of the region, its scope was quickly narrowed to include only high schools, and its focus on writing centers quickly broadened to encompass all writing assistance offered to high school students.

When searching individual school or school district websites, I looked for information about tutoring, peer tutoring, writing centers, writing tutors, and learning labs and used a myriad of search terms in doing so. In addition to plugging in a variety of search terms, I scoured various pages—counseling pages, English or language arts department and faculty sites, library and media center pages, and pages for academic assistance, online course catalogs and school handbooks, as well as lists of useful links or resources provided on each website. Certainly, this simple approach calls for follow-up—for phone calls and e-mails—to help fill in information gaps. That is why contact information is a crucial part of the directory and is provided for as many entries as possible. The work of updating the directory could be split among the region to allow states, sub-regionals, and mini-regionals to complete the larger picture through personal contact and a better understanding of the sub-regional dynamics and patterns found in this large directory. While the research and writing associated with the directory will continue, it is useful to consider initial findings, to lend increased purpose and direction for ensuing drafts, and to see connections between the information in the directory and the work of RMWCA and its members.

High school classrooms across the Rocky Mountain region vary vastly, which presents an opportunity for educators to reconsider strategies used when working with students learning how to write. The realities of rural living, alternative education, and online teaching options quickly dispel the myth of the ubiquitous high school classroom with a blackboard or whiteboard and seats filled with students in a shared grade. This initial draft of the regional directory reveals that approximately 15% of the high schools in Idaho are classifiable as alternative schools, whether that be Marian Pritchett High School in Boise, where teenage

parents work on earning high school diplomas, or Wisdom Ranch School in Arco, where students work on a ranch and work on behavioral problems while also studying traditional high school subjects. Additionally, in many parts of the rural West, small-town high school instructors teach multiple or all subjects as well as multiple or all grade levels. Gabbs School in Nevada serves approximately 60 students grades K-12. EskDale High School in Utah has one instructor teaching English and various other subjects, including math, biology, and physical education. This instructor also serves Gunnison Junior High in many of these same disciplines. At Floyd High School in New Mexico, English instructors rely in part on the help of Compass Learning Odyssey (a commercial online resource) since they are also teaching art, band, history, and economics.

Yet online instruction or supplementation is not unique to rural classrooms. PLATO, Study Island, Vantage Learning's My Access Online Writing, LearningExpress, Compass Learning Odyssey, and various other commercial online writing programs can be found in or in place of classrooms around the region. At times it is unclear whether the programs are primary or secondary modes of teaching and whether there is a teacher, online facilitator, or computer center coordinator in the physical classroom. Certainly, as the high school directory begins to reveal a broader picture of high school classrooms, teachers, and modes of writing instruction, writing and tutoring educators and advocates have the opportunity to rethink and adapt services. For students whose main classroom instruction has been online, with limited face-to-face dialogue, traditional modes of questioning in a face-to-face writing tutorial may feel foreign. For students who had very few peers in a classroom and who had been used to more personal attention or had developed a relationship with the instructor, a twenty-minute tutoring session may feel wildly inadequate to connect and conquer the task at hand. Understandably, early moments in tutoring sessions when expectations, roles, and responsibilities are defined become even more vital to the interaction. As writing and tutoring educators, administrators, and advocates have a better understanding of the classroom experience of the students being served, they can be better prepared to meet students at their individual points of need.

However, while getting a look into the classrooms has been an important outcome of creating a regional high school directory, the focus really has been gauging the writing assistance available to students. Undoubtedly, the majority of assistance is provided by the instructors themselves before, after, and even during school hours. In most cases, this aid for various academic subjects is optional, but for some schools such as Sheridan High School in Wyoming, the tutoring is mandatory for students who fall beneath a certain grade. Clearly, if students have most commonly been tutored by their instructors, where the tutor will also evaluate and grade the work and where there is a larger gap in experience and education between tutor and tutee, carefully and purposefully defining roles and expectations in subsequent tutoring sessions is vital. Marketing also changes as educators encourage students to embrace tutoring when they may have only seen tutoring as the last line of intervention instead of as a healthy part of the writing process. Marketing writing and tutoring services should go beyond the "where" and "when" and re-educate with "why." Beyond the needs of the students, when high school instructors are adding longer hours to their days providing needed tutoring, there may be connections, services, or resources that writing and tutoring programs within the sub-region could be providing. Aid could include altering online tutoring hours made available for students or providing links, handouts, or other online grammar and usage helps for what local high school instructors see as the issues they most commonly address with students. Perhaps, given finite budgets of time and finances, help may take the form of promoting and developing strong relationships among colleagues, so educators can use each other as sounding boards and resources when aiding student writers. This might be done first by making connections locally among high schools and institutions of higher education, having models and mentors sub-regionally, and having someone at the regional level that can represent and reach out to high schools across the region.

Though instructor assistance is the most common form of writing aid available to high school writers in the region, commercial online tutoring programs and online writing assistance (including OWL links) are

other popular options. These online outfits provide writing assistance for everything from citing sources and figuring out comma rules to receiving and implementing feedback as part of the revision process. Companies and programs such as PLATO, Criterion, Citation Machine, MySkillsTutor, Study Island, Compass Writing Odyssey, Turnitin, and Smarthinking, as well as OWLs and academic sites, have shaped writing programs and services and are being used by many institutions and educators in the region. While studying their influence would be a substantial undertaking for any institution or individual, at the very least, educators and administrators should look at, learn from, connect to, and communicate with these programs and providers to better understand how these online entities complement the work RMWCA-affiliated programs are doing online. It would be helpful to know if feeder high schools and corresponding colleges or universities are using the same programs. Perhaps partnerships could be developed and technologies shared among specific high schools, institutions of higher education, and online academic and corporate partners. If there are local writing center OWLs, they could also be listed on high school online resource lists, introducing students to writing help and programs within their own physical communities. Additionally, educators may consider how to best help students navigate different expectations and methodologies as they switch back and forth between online and face-to-face writing instruction and peer review. Popular online commercial programs and well-known OWLs and academic sites serve a vast number of writers across the region, and understanding and incorporating them may be key to better serving student writers.

Well behind instructor assistance, but tied for a distant second with online writing assistance, is peer tutoring outside of a writing or learning center, provided by various school clubs or societies and covering a variety of academic subjects. The most common peer group to offer assistance is the National Honor Society (NHS), but other service-oriented clubs such as Key Club or LIA (Latinos in Action) also provide after-school or lunch-hour help. The prevalence of peer help is encouraging and opens up opportunities to connect and collaborate. Training would be a simple place to start. It is unclear what kinds of training resources these tutors have access to; however, since many training and writing resources can be shared electronically (training articles or modules, simple links to online handouts or other OWL fare, and even interactive online training or collaborative learning exercises among tutors at various levels and locales), it would be easy to establish casual and concrete connections among sub-regional writing and tutoring programs. Even simply understanding the type of tutoring students receive in their high schools could be useful in developing tutor training at various levels. Additionally, identifying a possible hiring pool for tutors could be useful to writing and tutoring program administrators.

While these implications and ideas may prove useful, most eye-opening from this area of the directory is the use of key phrases by both regional high schools and the RMWCA community, indicating that shared words do not always have shared meaning. The phrase "peer tutoring" is used by many schools in several states throughout the region, but its meaning varies. Of the Utah high schools that provided online information about their writing assistance services, 34% offered peer tutoring courses or clubs. However, delving a bit further into online course catalogs and student handbooks reveals that the majority of these courses or clubs are designed for students to work with peers with physical and intellectual disabilities on academic, social, and life skills. Likewise, across the region, searching for the term "writing center" often leads to information about school computer labs. With these directory findings, it should be no surprise when students show up at the doors of RMWCA programs wanting to print out papers or when students resist being on the receiving end of the peer tutoring process. For students in the region, there may be a need to have writing educators and advocates contextualize messages rife with language understood by a specific discourse community and to highlight the differences and commonalities in club-sponsored peer tutoring, peer tutoring of specific student populations, and writing center or writing-specific peer tutoring.

While there is some confusion about what peer tutoring programs look like in some high schools, the directory reveals that there are several learning centers, writing centers, and specific peer tutoring groups that share both the language and the field with the majority of their RMWCA counterparts in higher education. Montana's Bozeman High School has a substantial Writing Center with two directors. Central New Mexico Community College's partnership with Mazano High School in Albuquerque provides both face-to-face and online tutoring for students ages 15 years and above. Chaparral High School in Parker, Colorado, offers both online and face-to-face tutoring. Liberty High School in Colorado Springs, Colorado, has a writing center set up online as a social network, with online groups and tutoring as well as links to vari-

*Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in one-to-one teaching of writing.*

ous online writing helps. Tucson Magnet High School in Arizona has its Peer Writing Center that offers tutoring hours before and after school and boasts clever and informative online advertising on YouTube. Montbello High School, in Denver, Colorado, has The Warrior Writing Center with certified student tutors, appointments and walk-in options, and coffee and snacks for busy writers. These programs put a new face on the RMWCA region. They could be better understood and serve as leaders when members seek to strengthen connections with the secondary education presence in the region.

Completing the list of major sources of writing assistance are community services and other third-party providers. Across the Rocky Mountain region, public libraries provide tutoring space, and schools offer online lists of local tutoring franchises and private citizens willing to help high school students in a myriad of academic areas, including writing. Many schools offer several tutoring options. Arizona's Dobson High School offers NHS tutoring, tutoring through the Mesa Library System, tutoring through DeVry University, and tutoring for Native Americans through the Native American Educational Program. In Flagstaff, Arizona, students from Coconino High School are directed to The Family Resources Center for tutoring to offset Supplemental Education Services (SES) tutoring and one English teacher's tutoring hours. With so many options, it seems important to consider how location affects perceived legitimacy. Does meeting at someone else's kitchen table or around a large library carrel capture the tone RMWCA educators and administrators hope to establish in their own centers? With so many writing assistance programs available on and off campus, questions arise about how resources are or can be shared among these services. For school programs that lack space, a public library might function as an important satellite location and community connection. Where existing school programs have space in their locales, third-party tutors or writing folks from the community (a local writers' club or an ESL night class) may find room to reside. Local schools and local tutoring franchises might develop relationships where tutors can pick up more tutoring hours in the summer or offseason or where tutoring services share lists of candidates for hire when staffing is complete or when it needs a boost.

In some cases, third-party writing assistance is specifically funded by the Federal Government. Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Gaining Early Awareness and Preparedness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), and SES all seek to bridge the gap between those struggling in high school and opportunities for success in higher education. Although these programs cover many academic subjects, for writing centers looking for soft-funding options, providing tutoring for these programs may be a possibility and already a reality for some. With various programs and providers on and off campus, perhaps there are ways to consolidate efforts to improve and inspire student writers and to help writers transition smoothly among all the assistance options.

While there are many insights and questions that come with this initial draft of the RMWCA High School Directory, its sheer size and evolving nature make possibilities for application and awareness almost endless. The resources, research, personnel, and structure of writing assistance options available to high school students in RMWCA's eight states is so vast and varied, it inevitably leads to reflection and reconsideration of how students are learning to write at all levels of education. While there are countless ways to ask "why" and "what if," perhaps it is now time to go back to the original intent of the directory, to connect and converse and embrace a whole new series of questions, conversations, and collaborations. ✦

Note

1. To view the full RMWCA High School Directory, please visit http://www.rmwca.org/connect/rmwca-high-school-directory.

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## NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PEER TUTORING IN WRITING (NCPTW)

**November 1-3, 2013**
**Tampa Bay, FL**
**Berkeley Preparatory School**
**"*The Year of the Writer*"**
**Keynote: Marty Baron**

Recent conferences have identified the different roles that the tutor must play—turnabout is fair play. Our theme is *The Year of the Writer,* and our keynote speaker is Marty Baron, Editor in Chief of the Washington Post. And what could be nicer than to be in Tampa, Florida, in November?

Online registration will begin on June 1, on the conference website: <www.ncptw2013.org/>. For further information, contact Tom Brandt: <brandtom@berkeleyprep.org>.

## NEBRASKA WRITING CENTER CONSORTIUM

**September 6, 2013**
**8:30 a.m.—3:30 p.m.**
**Lincoln, NE**
**Southeast Community College**
**Keynote: Andrea Lunsford**

Save the date. More information and registration forms forthcoming. Please e-mail Barbara Tracy: <btracy@southeast.edu> to be added to the mailing list for this conference.

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# TUTOR'S COLUMN

## THE "MODEL TUTOR" IN THE CLASSROOM: BUT WHICH MODEL WORKS?

✦ *Chris Striker*
*Dickinson College*
*Carlisle, Pennsylvania*

In recent years, Dickinson College's Writing Program transitioned from a more traditional Teaching Assistant (TA) model to a Writing Associate (WA) model to integrate tutors into classrooms as facilitators.[1] I experienced both sides of this transition. As a first-year student, I participated in a writing instruction seminar (FYS) where my professor was aided by a senior TA, an undergraduate peer. As a sophomore, I worked in the same seminar as a WA. My experiences with these models demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of both. In terms of helping student writers, I will argue that the WA model seems to be the right choice for Dickinson or any wholly undergraduate institute that privileges active, student-centered learning. As Harvey Kail and John Trimbur note, the TA position intrinsically places TAs "a step away from the student culture, a step closer to the faculty," a potential problem that I suggest the WA model remedies. Dickinson's example reminds fellow tutors of the power of peerness that the WA model emphasizes.

TAs, who are usually graduate students, have a degree of mastery over the course content, and exercise professional and disciplinary authority in order to instruct. In contrast, an undergraduate peer who is a WA has knowledge of various rhetorical principles and discourse conventions, and converses in general language with students about argument development. This change in methodology refines Kail and Trimbur's point, demonstrating that student facilitators can be successful when they are careful not to imitate faculty or overstep the boundaries of being a peer.

When I was student in the FYS, my TA performed two tasks that made her an extension of the faculty: she used disciplinary authority in class discussion and she instructed a class. First, the TA modeled advanced disciplinary knowledge in class discussion. The use of that content knowledge often caused the professor, TA, and a few more knowledgeable students to isolate themselves in conversation. In one instance, as the class examined Plato's *Republic*, the TA compared Plato's theory of forms to Derrida's theory that words cannot represent objects. Our professor then commented on Derrida, but directed the conversation back to Plato. In this example the TA modeled how theory could amplify a primary text—but the conversation lost most students. She demonstrated how to put one text in conversation with another, but most of her audience did not understand how to apply that knowledge.

A WA, who is trained to focus on students' writing rather than on the subject matter, might change the focus of this conversation from sharing disciplinary information to demonstrating rhetorical technique. A WA could use what Joan Mullin describes as " . . . authority and experience as [a] rhetorical expert, as [an] authorit[y] on writing . . . but not [a] disciplinar[y] authorit[y]" (2). WAs emulate Casey You's peer tutor definition; a tutor is "a model of positive group behavior . . . to help [the] group of . . . writing students learn how to respond to their peers' essays" (72). A WA's knowledge stems from a broader awareness of how discourses construct arguments and how those constructions differ, rather than advanced knowledge in specific disciplines or theories. When a WA shares rhetorical knowledge, to use Mullin's phrase, the emphasis shifts from the TA's content-area knowledge to the WA's knowledge of argument structure. In this example, a WA might focus on academic discourse skills to explain the theory of forms while showing students how to draw on textual evidence to construct and argument. The WA model relies on writing center theory, and as a result the WA not only models, but also tutors. A WA helps the audience to understand how to build an argument and follow the steps he demonstrates.

Both TAs and WAs use their position to aid students and faculty. TA's are often chosen because of their experience. They impart knowledge, a very important function. Dickinson WAs are always tutors, and many other WAs are trained in writing center methods. As Muriel Harris argues, tutors "interpret teacher language by translating it into [the students'] language" (36). My TA was placed in a difficult authoritative position when she as an undergraduate was required to instruct fellow undergraduates. She tried to prepare the class to write about Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* by analyzing key moments in the text as an example and asking the class to copy her model. However, the class resisted her authority through off-topic conversation, cell-phone use, and a nonresponsive, disengaged atmosphere. When I spoke with the professor about the TA's instruction, after the FYS finished, the professor told me the TA " . . . [was] an expert on the class and could speak [to the class about

writing] in a way [another] professor or I couldn't." The professor's hope echoes Terry Zawacki's definition of the peer tutor, who both "help[s] . . . students improve their writing while also assisting faculty in teaching effectively with writing" (1). TAs, ideally, assist professors by presenting information in a differently accessible manner, aiding the class with disciplinary clarity. For the undergraduate TA in the class I took, this method proved ineffective. My class would not accept the TA's awkward authoritative position, difficult for an undergraduate to fill. In our case, that position can be more easily navigable by a graduate student.

WAs change the focus from teaching to learning. WAs are not trained to present new information to students, who then discover for themselves how best to use that knowledge, but instead assist students' development of processes to use the information gained from teachers. This focus can clarify classroom material by associating students' ideas with their applications to an argument, demonstrating how that knowledge functions in an essay. The former assists the professor by clarifying material discussed without reiterating the professor's knowledge. The latter assists the student by demonstrating how knowledge can be used. That demonstration helps the student clarify what that knowledge means and how it works.

When I became a WA for the same course, my knowledge of rhetoric and discourse conventions allowed me to share my own writing experiences as well as the knowledge I gained from working as a peer tutor from the valuable position of a fellow student who had "already been there." During a peer review session, one student repeated to another the definition of a thesis I had provided the week before to help him revise his thesis, improving his vague language. During office hours, a student who had shown little interest in writing came for help with his final paper. He asked about his thesis and structural development, and I provided feedback about the organization and presentation of his ideas, as a peer tutor would, instead of content-knowledge. At the end of the session he told me he knew exactly what to write next. These types of interactions showcase the WA's use of rhetorical knowledge. While TAs assume authority to explain concepts and to instruct, WAs effectively aid a class without working as the professor's double. As some of the students in my class shared with me, this framework seemed to unite rather than divide us.

TAs and WAs both have virtues, but those virtues are very different. Some students need focused content assistance, and other times rhetorical guidance. When the only support available is undergraduate, WAs can do more with the authority they already possess, because they are not placed in awkward positions of enhanced authority. My TA in that seminar was well-known to be an excellent tutor in the Writing Center. However, that semester I watched her struggle with an authority she did not always comfortably inhabit. WAs do not have to combat being positioned into a context in which they do not fit, as my TA encountered. WAs can use their unique blend of knowledge to recognize the difficulties in learning to construct firm arguments while possessing an eye for methods to improve students' writing. They follow Trimbur's argument that "the terms 'peer' and 'tutor' [must be put] together in practical and meaningful ways" (24). WAs possess knowledge of argument development gained from the writing center. In this way the WA balances between the culture of the students, the disciplinary knowledge of the professor, and the writing knowledge particular to the WA to best assist the class. WAs can support the students' learning in the classroom by exploiting the power of peerness, not by assuming the authority of instructors, and can carry those skills from their position as a WA into the writing Center and back again. ✦❋

### Note

1. Dickinson's WA program resembles the Writing Fellows Programs at many other schools.

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# THE WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

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# CALENDAR FOR WRITING CENTER ASSOCIATIONS

**May 31, 2013:** Canadian Writing Centres Association, in Victoria, BC, Canada
**Contact:** <proposals@uvic.ca>. Conference website: <casdwacr. wordpress.com/2012/11/05/cwca-call-for-papers/>.

**September 6, 2013:** Nebraska Writing Center Consortium, in Lincoln, NE
**Contact:** Barbara Tracy: <btracy@ southeast.edu>.

**October 11, 2013**: Secondary School Writing Center Conference, in Fairfax, VA

**Contact:** Amber Jensen: <anjensen@ fcps.edu> and <JGGoransson@ fcps.edu>; Conference website: <nvwp.org/youngwriters/writing-centers-and-tutors/>.

**October 17-19, 2013**: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in Skokie, IL
**Contact**: Carol Martin: <chair@mid-westwritingcenters.org> and Rachel Holtz: <treasurer@mid-westwritingcenters.org>; MWCA website: <http://www.midwestwrit-ingcenters.org/>.

**November 1-3, 2013**: National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, in Tampa, FL
**Contact:** Conference chair: Tom Brandt: <brandtom@berkeleyprep.org>. Conference website: <http://www. ncptw2013.org/#>.