

## Online Tutoring: A Symbiotic Relationship with Writing Across the Curriculum Initiatives

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**Abstract:** This article emphasizes the need for writing centers to give continued attention to online tutoring to achieve writing across curriculum (WAC) goals. The article offers a literature review covering the history and state of online tutoring and its relation to the WAC movement and writing fellows programs. We at Saint Joseph College have found that by expanding our online tutorial services, we have significantly increased our abilities to support the teaching of writing across the disciplines. The Saint Joseph College writing associates program, our writing fellows program, is described in the article, with an emphasis on the inclusion of online tutoring. Overall, we believe the technology holds great promise for bolstering WAC initiatives and helping writing centers achieve increased prominence on their campuses. Data from surveys administered to students who used online tutoring, writing associates, and faculty who collaborated with the associates support this belief. Providing online tutoring to supplement our in-person tutorials, especially within the writing associates program, has myriad benefits, including extending the writing center's reach in the campus community, contributing to students' understanding of discipline-specific writing conventions, and promoting the belief that writing is essential to academic success.

Over the last several decades, trends have converged regarding the teaching of writing in higher education in relation to writing across the curriculum (WAC), writing in the disciplines (WID), writing centers, and writing fellows programs. These trends reveal that often fellows programs are run through writing centers and that fellows attend classes, read course texts, and collaborate on assignment design. Invariably, fellows, like writing tutors, help students with papers in progress. Although WAC, WID, writing centers, and writing fellows form a natural nexus, the value of technology in this mix is not firmly established. In addition, as was noted in a review of the 2006 WAC Conference at Clemson University, the WAC movement is at a stage of midlife crisis characterized by a stasis (Thew & Gustafsson, 2007). On the other hand, technology on college campuses is rapidly changing. The role that online tutoring and other technology tools will play in supporting WAC, WID, writing centers, and fellows work, is thus still evolving.

We at Saint Joseph College have found technology, particularly in the form of online tutoring, has raised the status of the writing center, contributed to WAC initiatives, and helped build a successful, well-respected writing associates (fellows) program. We began the writing associates program in

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2007 after firmly establishing our online tutoring program, and thus online tutoring was integrated as part of the program. The writing associates program provided us with a way to mix face-to-face and online tutoring, creating a hybrid tutoring format that combines the benefits of both traditional face-to-face models and emerging online tutoring technologies.

Based on our experiences with developing a hybrid online and in-person tutorial model, we offer this article as a contribution to the literature that highlights the potential of technology to contribute to the future of WAC, WID, and writing fellows movements. Our message is that expanding online tutoring services beyond the writing center to these other areas has the potential to reinvigorate writing initiatives on campuses.

## Background

Although a movement was afoot as early as 1990 to integrate technology into WAC and writing center work, many college campuses lacked the expertise or the resources to implement what leaders in the field were promising. Some program administrators even expressed skepticism despite claims enthusiasts were beginning to proffer about the role of technology to shape student writers and writing instruction (Carino, 2001; Harris & Pemberton, 2001; Mohr, 1998). For instance, optimistic scholars like William Wresch (1984), in *The Computer in Composition Instruction, A Writer's Tool*, projected that computer-assisted instruction, "still in its infancy and subject to rapid change," held the potential to alter the teaching of composition by giving writers "a sense of the fluidity of ideas" and creating a new "freedom to produce ideas" (p. 4). James Collins and Elizabeth Sommers (1985), in *Writing On-Line: Using Computers in the Teaching of Writing*, forecasted that computers would revolutionize writing instruction by facilitating revision and editing. Moreover, by the 1990s, an onslaught of texts (e.g., Handa, 1990; Hawisher & Selfe, 1999; Howard & Benson, 1999; Reiss, Selfe, & Young, 1998) documented that computers were already being used creatively for innovative teaching of composition, including online peer exchanges. These works envisioned electronic networks, web authoring tools, and intranet and internet connections engendering collaborative learning environments.

In *Electronic Communication Across the Curriculum* (Reiss et al., 1998), numerous authors described various collaborative online learning communities, implying possibilities for online tutoring. For instance, Teresa Redd (1998) touted a project in which her Howard University composition students sent drafts of their work to Montana State University art students for critical response. This project led to a joint publication of student work, coupling the Howard students' writing with the Montana students' artwork. Moreover, it revealed that online tutorial assistance by peers could contribute to helping students revise their writing for publication. Linda Shamoon (1998), in the same text, recapped an international email debate in which students from different countries exchanged ideas about international affairs. Herein, the viable possibilities for online exchanges to foster writing and critical thinking were demonstrated. In terms of WAC, Gail Hawisher and Michael Pemberton (1998), in their essay, "Writing Across the Curriculum Encounters Asynchronous Learning Networks," foretold of online communications' promise to strengthen WAC initiatives. As for the writing center venue, Muriel Harris (1998), in "Using Computers to Expand the Role of Writing Centers," hypothesized that computers held the power to redefine the ways centers operate. Harris observed: "Because the educational mission of writing centers involves reaching out to students in a variety of ways to meet a variety of needs, distance learning beyond the walls of the center is a natural extension of writing center services" (p. 5). Yet, she qualified that in the 1990s, online tutoring was met with minimum success and suggested it might be "cold," "too demanding for those students who [knew] they [could] walk over to their writing centers," and "constrain[ed] by...lack of real-time interaction" (Harris, 1998, p. 6). At this point, the success of online tutoring to meet the needs of

students was yet to be fully realized, as technology for online tutoring was still evolving and student access to such technology was much more limited.

Amid uncertainty regarding the future of technology and limited writing center and student access to technology, it was not surprising that writing fellows programs emerging in the 1980s and 1990s had not yet fully considered the value of online tutoring in extending their mission and outreach. Even today, some fellows models continue to adhere safely to the 1982 Brown University prototype. In describing this model, Tori Haring-Smith (1992/2000) enumerated fellows' responsibilities to read and respond to students' drafts, attend classes to collect papers, review faculty assignment sheets, and offer faculty suggestions for responding to student writing. Margot Soven's *What the Writing Tutor Needs to Know* (2006) paid tribute to Haring-Smith's work and offered a treatise on blending the Brown model with tutor training. Soven attributed the strength of her fellows program at La Salle University to training her tutors to collaborate with faculty across the disciplines to help students with course-specific writing projects. Additionally, Soven concluded the book by proffering suggestions for using online tutoring to augment fellows programs and recognized that as students became increasingly adept at using technology tools, a natural extension of writing center work would include online tutoring.

One collection of work on writing center pedagogy that included several articles on the potential of technology to shape writing centers was Barnett and Blumner's (2001) *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice*. In this text, Muriel Harris and Michael Pemberton (2001) described the state of the art of online writing labs (OWLs), suggesting future growth in web-based online handouts and resources. Peter Carino (2001), however, noted that despite the optimism surrounding the evolution of a variety of online technology tools that assisted student writers, writing center administrators should be "vigilant against the intoxication of our enthusiasm" (p. 517) and proceed with caution. Still, Dave Healy (2001) predicted that online writing centers held the potential to decentralize the writing center, reaching more students. He added that although this mode of tutoring could enhance writing centers, administrators needed to carefully train tutors for the transformation. Furthermore, he observed that even those advocating for online tutoring did not suggest conventional writing centers be dismantled, but rather reconfigured to accommodate new possibilities. In essence, he claimed that online tutoring was "as an alternative that may supplement, but will not supplant...[what] writing centers have traditionally offered" (Healy, 2001, p. 545), and he beseeched writing center administrators to ready themselves for the change.

Eric Hobson's (1998) earlier *Wiring the Writing Center* remains a hallmark in the field. As an innovative contribution, the authors in this collection provided blueprints for writing center administrators to consider for establishing online delivery of tutorials and online writing labs (OWLs). For instance, Clint Gardner (1998) claimed that to meet the needs of non-traditional students, writing labs needed to be "wall-less" (p. 75). In particular, he advocated on behalf of community college students who worked full-time and could not easily visit an on-campus writing center. He envisioned the writing center as a "place without walls" (p. 75), setting the stage for extending services beyond the physical space of its place on campus. To this day, the collection of essays that Hobson presented in his precedent-setting anthology remains an optimistic guidepost for incorporating online tutorials into the daily work of the writing center. Now, ten years later, we are reminded that leaders in the field of writing center theory enthusiastically theorized about the possibilities of online writing centers, including delivery of online tutoring, thereby enhancing the outreach of the writing center.

More recently, a study of *Writing Lab Newsletter* reveals a burgeoning interest and fascination with the topic of online tutoring. For instance, in 2004, when Muriel Harris announced a call for reviews of Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch's (2004) just released *Virtual Peer Review: Teaching and Learning about*

*Writing in Online Environments*, Harris was inundated with replies. Ann Raines, Judy Arzt and Susan Mueller (2005) answered the call, reviewing for the Newsletter this forward-looking text, finding that Breuch (2004) focused on a theoretical framework for in- and out-of-class online peer reviews based on Kenneth Bruffee's collaborative learning theories. In her final chapter, Breuch (2004) turned attention specifically to online tutoring, insisting that writing center administrators needed to include in their mission statements recognition of the value of this form of tutoring. She offered the example of the Online Writing Center at the University of Minnesota as a successful model, noting "tutoring happens...asynchronously" by way of "detailed intertextual and summary comments" (Breuch, 2004, p. 137). This model of asynchronous online tutoring has since gained ground in the writing center community.

Still, tutoring through an online format has been met with some skepticism by prominent practitioners and leaders in the field. This skepticism is understandable, in that the traditional writing center model is built on a foundation of face-to-face interaction. However, as the value of online tutoring becomes increasingly evident, attitudes regarding the inherent benefits of this medium have shifted. A recent survey (K. Barnett, 2007) of U.S. writing center professionals found that 72% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that online tutoring should replace face-to-face contact but that more and more writing programs were enhancing their online capabilities. In fact, 30% of participants of the above-mentioned survey stipulated that they would be adding or improving online services in the next five years, a sign of changing times.

Though many writing centers now have well-developed OWLs and increasingly are exploring the possibilities of online tutoring, the value of online tutoring specifically to support WAC, WID, and writing fellows programs is not always clearly defined, perhaps especially for institutions where writing centers and WAC programs exist as separate entities. Also, although fellows programs are largely invested in WAC work, programs often remain fairly conventional in their design, still paying homage to the Brown University prototype. The WAC Clearinghouse's Writing Fellows page ("Writing Fellows Programs," 2007), for instance, lists numerous schools with exemplary programs. An examination of these programs via their websites and the Clearinghouse's descriptions reveals that although WAC and WID are at the crux of many fellows programs, the role of online tutoring in supporting these efforts is not readily apparent.

In *What the Writing Tutor Needs to Know*, Margot Soven (2006) surmised that one reason why writing center directors as well as writing fellows administrators have not universally adopted online technology might be their limited training in the area. In 2001, Eric Hobson, in "Straddling the Virtual Fence," cautioned: "One common issue that limits the use of online writing center services is that most people currently directing writing centers and training the tutors...have neither the time nor the expertise to explore...available options and to create online tutorial services" (p. 477). Since 2001, though, advances have occurred. For instance, Soven (2006) acknowledged that writing center directors have turned to a cadre of computer-savvy technophiles to gain expertise, and she observed that online tutoring befitted students' eagerness to work online, attracted shy students who hesitated to visit in person, and catered to non-traditional students' hectic lifestyles. She noted that research indicated that the quality of student writing was the same regardless of online or in-person instruction, a claim that might encourage writing center directors who express fear of changing their conventional format to include online services. The strength of such a hybrid method is worth exploring, for the purposes of deconstructing the dichotomy that some perceive as existing between online only and face-to-face writing centers.

Although most fellow programs and writing centers are philosophically enmeshed in the face-to-face approach, change is on the horizon as more and more students enter college computer savvy and ready to work online. Moreover, literature in the field of writing center work has begun to dissect the

value of asynchronous versus synchronous tutoring, an indication that those in the field are recognizing the value of online work. Amid the discussions, it is quite possible that we will find that synchronous tutoring suits the early stages of the writing process when writers benefit from conversation, whereas asynchronous tutoring complements the later stages when writers' ideas are more formulated. In some ways, this pattern may mirror the conventional face-to-face tutorial where conversation characterizes an early tutorial and text reading dominates later stages.

## Description of Our Program

Prior to 1988, the Saint Joseph College writing center was housed in the English Department. Then, like many other institutions, we instituted a WAC writing center to accommodate a growing interest to support WID and faculty recognition that the teaching of writing was a shared responsibility, not limited solely to the English Department. Based on faculty support across the curriculum, in 1988, the Academic Resources Center (ARC) was established for the purposes of providing WAC tutorials. In the approximate 20 years since, the ARC assumed leadership for providing numerous WAC faculty development workshops and assisting faculty with assignment design and evaluative criteria. The ARC also spearheaded the college's across-the-curriculum writing outcomes assessment, a longitudinal portfolio to be completed by all undergraduates as a graduation requirement. This initiative cemented the role the ARC played as pivotal to WAC, with the ARC staff training faculty as portfolio readers. In 2007, the ARC re-established itself with a new name, the Center for Academic Excellence (CAE). The renaming reflected the writing center's staff's and faculty's commitment to fostering student achievement of the highest caliber, and helped to promote new initiatives supporting collaborations between faculty and writing center personnel, such as the writing associates program, which began in the spring of 2006.

Today, the CAE annually provides 5,000 hours of tutorial assistance. Given the college enjoys a 12:1 student-to-faculty ratio and boasts a writing-intensive curriculum, it is not surprising that we furnish a heavy volume of tutorials despite the school's small size, with enrollment just under 2,000 students. Many faculty members have long been acquainted with WID and WAC principles, and those who come to the institution without this background quickly acquire it from peers. An indication of the sophistication of faculty efforts is reflected in the fact that specific departments, such as Nursing, Social Work, and Psychology, have sequenced their curriculum to move students with ease through increasingly complex assignments. The Nursing Department has even published a writing manual for its students, created in collaboration with the staff of the CAE. Moreover, departments in the natural sciences such as Mathematics, Computer Science, and Chemistry, integrate writing-to-learn and research papers into their courses. Overall, given the strong emphasis on writing skills, the college curriculum fosters faculty and writing center exchanges. In this culture, support for the writing center has a long history, demand for writing tutorials has been heavy, and the writing center has kept abreast of recent trends to meet the needs of a changing and diverse student population.

## Online Tutoring Trends

A significant portion of our annual tutoring hours are now delivered online, which complements the writing center's mission to work with a diverse student population. We reach residents, commuters, non-traditional students, as well as graduate students. Online tutoring began in 2001 as a means to increase outreach and supplement our vibrant face-to-face tutoring program. As a small liberal arts college that is not perceived as technology rich, we did not anticipate being forerunners in writing center technology innovation. Yet, we soon discovered that students gravitated to online tutoring, and we were doing far more sessions online than we had initially envisioned. For students, online

tutoring was a natural outgrowth of the tools they were already using, and in the last two years, we found online tutoring outpaced in-person sessions by a 3:2 ratio, and we project the ratio will widen to 4:1 this year. At the outset, we believed cultivating the camaraderie characteristic of face-to-face tutoring would be difficult to achieve online, a fear that has been eased by the inception of the writing associates program and increased faculty recognition of the value of online tutoring. In fact, the writing associates program enabled us to form alliances with faculty and set a tone receptive to furnishing their students with online tutorials.

## The Inception of the Writing Associates Program

In creating the writing associates program, we approached faculty well attuned to WAC, WID, writing-as-process, social constructivist, and collaborative theory. In the early stages of the program, we began by placing writing associates in psychology, special education, and English classes. Associates included the writing center staff, such as the director, the writing center coordinator, the writing portfolio coordinator, part-time professional tutors, and graduate assistants. All associates attended classes, read course texts, shared center resources and handouts, and met with students out of class and online. Some organized study tables and review sessions, helped faculty with syllabus and assignment design, and taught mini-lessons.

By fall 2007, as knowledge of the program spread, requests for associates escalated, and at least 22 courses were accommodated. We met the demand by beginning an internship program, which allowed senior English majors to serve as writing associates while earning six English credits at the 400-level, and recruiting new professional tutors. The interns served as associates for first-year composition courses, first-year seminars, and literature courses. We also added associates to meet an increased demand for assistance with other psychology courses and added writing associates to other departments.

We also catered to departments with numerous writing-intensive assignments, such as the Nursing Department, which supports what Michael Pemberton notes in the January 2007 Editor's Column for *Across the Disciplines*. Pemberton (2007) indicates that an influx in WAC initiatives in "the health service professions such as clinical nursing... and the health sciences" (para. 1) has occurred. Following suit, our nursing professors are proponents of writing-intensive courses. Their students write care plans for patients, quantitative and qualitative research critiques, patient intervention case studies, legislative health care proposals, and community health plans. The availability of writing associates schooled in these assignments accelerated student completion of assignments according to specifications. Outreach to this specific department also included graduate courses.

## A Hybrid Format: Online Tutoring in the Writing Associates Program

Many writing associates found themselves providing a fusion of in-person and online tutoring. One associate explained that the typical progression of her student-associate relationship was to meet in the classroom, schedule in-person appointments for brainstorming, assignment outline, and thesis development, and then move online for paragraph development, citation and style work, and final polishing edits. Other associates would hold in-person group content review sessions or writing workshops called study tables, and then connect with students online.

Whether a session took place online or in person was dictated by a number of factors, such as time or the student's writing abilities. For example, almost all tutoring for the nursing department was delivered online. With nursing students spending considerable time in clinical settings, science labs, and regular classes, online tutoring surmounted obstacles to scheduling in-person sessions and

enabled writing associates to reach a broad spectrum of students. On the other hand, if a student was struggling with the assignment, the writing associate could set up an in-person session or discuss issues with the student in class and recommend a course of action. The role of the writing associate allowed for an enduring relationship that a general online tutor might not be able to cultivate. Additionally, the embedded nature of the writing associate within a class made it easy to follow up with students in person to be sure they understood an online session.

## Data from Satisfaction Surveys

Our interest in the popularity of online tutoring and the writing associates program led us to conduct an end-of-the-semester study to document participants' responses. Seeking data to enrich our knowledge of student perspectives about the effectiveness of technology combined with other writing center services, we turned to student and professor satisfaction surveys for data. Data were gleaned from five different surveys, including questionnaires administered to students who used online tutoring services, students who had taken a course that was attended by a writing associate, associates themselves, and professors who collaborated with a writing associate. Because of the small student body at Saint Joseph College, overlap of participants was noted as a threat to validity; however, all perspectives were deemed valuable in analyzing information.

The study was guided by the research questions: How has online tutoring impacted the student learning experience? Has online tutoring influenced courses and/or writing center/WAC initiatives, or vice versa? How do students and faculty perceive the value of online tutoring in the context of the writing associates program? The following section reports on survey results, preceded by a section summarizing our conclusions regarding commingling a writing associates program with online tutoring to support WID and WAC efforts. Surveys were comprised of both multiple-choice and open-ended questions. ([See appendices.](#)) The results are reported for each constituent group.

## Student Data for Online Tutoring

In total, 101 students out of 298 students emailed responded to a survey about online tutoring. This survey was sent to users of the service through our e-mail tutorial account. The majority of the feedback about online tutoring was highly positive: 79% of participants reported they were very satisfied; 18% were somewhat satisfied; and 3% percent reported being somewhat dissatisfied with online tutoring. An overwhelming 97% of participants maintained that they would continue to email their papers to the online tutoring account. Of the remaining 3%, one student disclosed she would not use the online tutoring account again and two students were undecided.

Student comments evidenced general student satisfaction with online tutoring services. Many participants praised online tutoring as a helpful resource, expressing gratitude for the quick responses and convenient format. For example, one participant reported: "Very prompt response. Very accurate revisions suggested. Very convenient for me as I am a grad student who works full time and cannot always get to campus to meet one-on-one with someone, although I like that I still have that option if needed." A few participants cited higher grades as support for their positive remarks about online tutoring. Additionally, several participants noted that it was advantageous that the tutors were familiar with paper topics or their professors' expectations, resulting in accurate and efficient tutorials. While most comments affirmed the benefits of online tutoring, some highlighted challenges that the online program must address, including creating consistency between tutors and maintaining an affirmative, yet effective, tone within tutorials. Furthermore, most participants reported that tutors were knowledgeable as well as positive, clear, and comprehensive with their feedback. One student commented about tutors and their tone: "It is obvious that they are well

trained in respecting an author's work because that attitude was tantamount in both my experiences."

Moreover, many of the participants' comments corroborate our assumptions about the role of online tutoring to enhance writing initiatives. Several students noted improvement in their overall writing abilities. One student remarked: "I have always received my papers back with good comments and my writing skills have improved." Another explained: "I have definitely learned and grown from the insightful comments and suggestions provided by my tutors." Additionally, one student observed: "The online tutoring helped me a lot in correcting and improving my papers. As I received helpful and insightful suggestions from the tutoring staff, I was also able to improve my writing skills and avoided mistakes that I made before." Finally, one participant concluded: "It is a great service offered and I probably would have dropped out without the support I received from the [writing center]. I received excellent guidance and knowledge and have been able to apply this knowledge in ALL the writings that I have had to do in all my classes."

## Writing Associate Program Data

### Student Data

Students who took courses with a writing associate completed an in-class survey regarding their experiences with the associate assigned to their class. A total of 144 students in 12 classes responded. Overall, the feedback was largely positive: 74% of survey participants found having a writing associate in their class to be very helpful; 24% found the presence of a associate somewhat helpful; and only 1% reported that a writing associate was not helpful. Additionally, 86% of survey participants would like to see the program expand to other classes, while 14% were undecided. When asked what aspects were helpful about the program, participants reported e-mail tutorials to be the most helpful, followed by in-person tutoring appointments and handouts. This positive response to e-mail tutorials indicates student satisfaction with the online medium and its beneficial impact in the writing associates program.

### Writing Associate Data

The writing associates were asked to complete a survey through the web-based survey tool, SurveyMonkey™. Data were collected from a representative sample of five writing associates. Results revealed that all respondents rated the program highly successful and indicated that they believe their role benefited their tutees. Based on open-answer questions, the writing associates reported that the program bolsters other WAC initiatives, such as the Saint Joseph College writing portfolio program. For instance, associates can help ensure that papers produced in writing associate classes meet the criteria for the writing portfolio. If the paper does not, the students have a contact at the writing center who knows their work and who can continue to assist them in developing their writing in person and online. One writing associate maintained: "Overall, the program helps tutors improve their skills with tutoring writing across the curriculum."

Writing associate survey participants reported using a combination of online tutoring and in-person tutoring when collaborating with students in their classes. Survey responses evidenced that writing associates found the online tutoring to be a strength of the program. One associate wrote:

I believe most services offered were helpful, but for the students whom I worked with, online tutoring proved to be the most successful strategy. They could quickly reach me at their convenience and send drafts on weekends and evenings and have a quick response.



Students seemed to like this strategy and liked the idea that they could send the next draft for review.

Writing associates also reported that online tutoring for their tutees was more personalized due to the relationship built in the classroom. Associates could more easily anticipate student reaction to feedback, which is a difficulty posed by the medium of online tutoring. Additionally, associates learned how to adapt their styles to create more efficient, effective, and individualized tutorials. One associate explained:

There was a stronger, more fluid relationship with tutees. Because I knew them from class and was familiar with the assignment and content, I was more confident with my feedback and could focus more directly. I knew if humor was appropriate, if the student needed explicit explanation, or if just broader comments would work and they could take it from there. The dialogue was much more relaxed. If necessary, I could call them in for an in-person appointment or supplement with in-class discussions.

Because the associates were familiar with the course content, online tutorials could be more specific and specialized. Additionally, associates readily consulted with professors via e-mail when questions arose. However, despite the reported advantages of online tutoring within the writing associates program, several survey participants acknowledged that multiple sessions are usually needed to produce a polished paper, and a mix of online and in-person appointments is often most effective.

## Instructor Data

Faculty who had participated in the writing associates program were surveyed to capture their perceptions regarding the benefits and challenges of the program. Ten faculty members formed a representative sample of participants. They responded to an e-mail survey comprised of closed and open-ended questions. These faculty members represented the fields of psychology, philosophy, social work, human development, interdisciplinary studies, and English. All participants indicated that they would want to work with an associate in subsequent semesters and would recommend the collaboration to colleagues.

One of the services noted by nearly all participants was online tutoring. Six out of nine participants were very satisfied with the quality of online tutorials provided to students by the associate. One respondent indicated that she was unable to rate the quality of online tutorials because she lacked familiarity with the sessions, and three, all from the same department, reported being moderately satisfied. However, they qualified: "[Online tutoring] is better than not having it, but needy students benefit more from in-person interface," and "The quality of the writing associate's work was great, but I am not a big fan of the online tutorials for weak students. I believe they need face-to-face time." Another respondent added: "I think the on-line tutoring is great for the stronger writer; however, many students wait until the last minute and the online tutoring is not sufficient. This is not the fault of the [writing center] however...." Thus, overall, faculty members were satisfied with the quality of online tutorials. In fact, several faculty participants in the writing associate program were not familiar with the process or benefits of online tutoring, but recognized the value of the online medium as the semester progressed.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

For us, the possibilities of bridging a new writing associates program with a well-seasoned online tutorial system was fruitful. Students and faculty were pleased with the experience, and the

associates recognized that their time in the classroom and frequent collaborations with faculty enhanced their skills as online tutors. The program also facilitated tutors' online skills. By attending classes, reading texts, and conferring with faculty, associates knew course content and expectations, which enabled them to move through several online sessions with ease. With the same tutor seeing a student through several drafts of the same paper, online tutoring was both efficient and effective. Additionally, the success of online tutoring within the writing associates program has inspired us to continue to build our online resources, extend our services to more courses across the disciplines, and expand our online tutoring program to meet increasing demand.

Some lessons learned from our experiences are worth sharing. We realized it helps to recruit former students as writing associates, either still enrolled or graduated. These students not only acquire firsthand experience, but also have their prior experiences in specific professors' classrooms to draw upon. We also realized that many new recruits to the writing center learned how to tutor online at about the same pace as they did for in-person sessions, dispelling beliefs that online tutoring skills would take more time to acquire. Although a formal training program does take time, we discovered that having new tutors as associates in the classroom accelerated this learning, especially when they worked with faculty well schooled in writing and composition pedagogy. Despite efforts to use cyberspace tools with templates touting sophisticated recordkeeping features, we learned that simple e-mail, which comes at no additional expense, was preferred by students. The coldness that some feared online tutoring would engender did not come to fruition. By knowing students from class meetings, the tutors found it was easy to develop an online rapport. Moreover, after tutors became agile working online, it was simple to transfer the warmth of the face-to-face session to the cyberspace mode, and rarely did students notice the difference. In fact, most thrived in both environments, and were appreciative of the convenience of the online format.

In terms of faculty response to the project, we found that they were overwhelmingly pleased with the program in its early inception. Most acknowledged that prior to the program they were relatively unfamiliar with how writing centers function online. The alliance helped them to see how online tutoring works and better understand its benefits. Although some perceived that online tutoring better suits the stronger writers, the merits of online tutoring were seen as an asset to student learning overall. Most faculty members expressed a healthy curiosity about learning more about online tutoring. In addition, faculty were pleased with the array of services we offered, and interestingly, as one faculty member noted, some writing associates know more about teaching writing than many faculty. From that perspective, pairing less experienced faculty with associates skilled in composition theory and partnering new associates with faculty who are practitioners of writing process theory are advisable. Altogether, a rich learning environment ensues, strengthening both classroom teaching and the writing associates program. With the ultimate goal of both programs to be improving student writing, the access to a service that allowed students to easily have multiple drafts reviewed before due dates meant that students were working on papers earlier and receiving the benefits of multiple tutorials. Faculty testified that this kind of work led to improved student writing; growth from earlier papers to later papers as well as comparisons to former students' work served as benchmarks.

In the end, commingling our online tutorial program with our newly developed writing associates program has allowed us to advance WID and WAC work on our campus. We found that the symbiotic relationship that grew out of mixing online tutoring with WAC initiatives energized us and expanded our writing center's contributions to curricular and instructional advances at our institution. Our experiences reveal that online tutoring is a natural outgrowth of the face-to-face rapport tutors develop with students, and the benefits of online tutoring form a positive nexus of WID and WAC initiatives. We would be remiss not to acknowledge that as a small, tuition-driven, liberal arts

institution, we do not enjoy the resources affordable to other institutions. On the other hand, we have succeeded in creating a highly effective online learning environment for our students using relatively basic forms of technology.

No longer seen as a threat to the very existence of the college writing center, online tutoring should be viewed as a viable outgrowth of tutoring and WAC initiatives. In fact, relationships with faculty and students are strengthened through the use of online tutoring. However, like so many other aspects of sustaining writing centers and WAC programs, constant education of the campus community is a must. As the results of the Saint Joseph College faculty survey attest, faculty members are willing to learn more about the value of online tutoring. Continuing collaborations will enable faculty members, as well as others on campus, to embrace the multitude of benefits of online tutoring in supporting writing across the disciplines endeavors.

## Appendix A. Student Online Tutoring Survey

1. How did you learn about the CAE's online tutoring service?
  - a. From a CAE tutor
  - b. From a professor
  - c. From a classmate
  - d. From a posted flyer
  - e. From a class visit
  - f. From the online Campus Update bulletin
  - g. Other
2. Approximately how many times have you sent papers to the CAE's online tutoring account?
  - a. 1-2 times
  - b. 3-4 times
  - c. 5-9 times
  - d. 10+ times
3. How do you rate your satisfaction with the tutoring service?
  - a. Very satisfied
  - b. Somewhat satisfied
  - c. Neither satisfied or unsatisfied
  - d. Somewhat dissatisfied
  - e. Very dissatisfied
4. Which technique(s) did you find helpful?
  - a. Opening remarks from the tutor
  - b. Next steps
  - c. Embedded comments
  - d. All
5. How often were you confused by a tutor's comments?
  - a. Never
  - b. Rarely
  - c. Occasionally
  - d. Often
6. Would you email your paper to the online tutoring account again?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

- c. Undecided
7. Have you also used the CAE for an in-person tutorial?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  8. Please offer additional comments /suggestions to help us better serve SJC students online.

## Appendix B. Student Writing Associate Program Survey

1. In which course(s) are you currently enrolled?
2. How accessible do you feel your writing associate was?
  - a. Very
  - b. Somewhat
  - c. Not at All
3. How knowledgeable was your writing associate about the writing process?
  - a. Very
  - b. Somewhat
  - c. Not at All
4. Approximately how many times did you consult out of class (meetings, e-mails, workshops, online tutorials) with your writing associate? If you did not consult with your writing associate, why not?
  - a. 1-2 times
  - b. 3-4 times
  - c. 5-9 times
  - d. 10+ time
5. Was having a writing associate assigned to your class helpful?
  - a. Very
  - b. Somewhat
  - c. Not at All
6. What was helpful? (check all that apply) If you did not think the writing associate was helpful, please comment on steps the writing associate could have taken to help you further.
  - a. In person tutorials
  - b. E-mail tutorials
  - c. In-class workshops/lectures
  - d. Out of class review sessions/study tables
  - e. Writing conferences
  - f. Handouts
  - g. Other (please specify)
7. Would you like to see this program implemented in other classes?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Uncertain
8. Please offer any additional comments and suggestions that might help us improve writing associate partnerships in the future.

## Appendix C. Writing Associate Writing Associate Program Survey

1. Overall, how would you rate the success of the Writing Associates Program?
  - a. Highly successful
  - b. Somewhat successful
  - c. Moderately unsuccessful
  - d. Not successful at all

Comments:

2. Do you believe your role as a Writing Associate benefited your tutees? If yes, how so? If no or undecided, why not?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Undecided
3. What are the strengths of the Writing Associates Program?
4. What areas are in need of improvement in the Writing Associates Program?
5. What services did you provide as a Writing Associate?
6. Which services were most beneficial to your tutees?
  - a. In-person tutorials
  - b. Online tutorials
  - c. Study tables
  - d. Review sessions
  - e. Handouts
  - f. Other (describe):
7. If online (e-mail) tutorials were provided, how did online tutorials with tutees from your Writing Associate classes compare to tutorials with students who you were not a Writing Associate for?
8. Often, Writing Associates work with students online by providing feedback via e-mail. To what extent were you satisfied with the quality of online tutorials provided by the Writing Associate?
  - a. Very satisfied
  - b. Moderately satisfied
  - c. Moderately unsatisfied
  - d. Not satisfied at all
  - e. Unable to rate the quality of the online tutorials
9. Please offer any additional comments or recommendations regarding strategies for improving the Writing Associates Program.

## Appendix D. Instructor WAP Survey

1. Would you be willing to work with CAE Writing Associates in a subsequent semester, if they are available?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

- c. Undecided

Additional Comments:

2. If yes, what courses that you teach would be the best fit for collaboration with a Writing Associate? Please explain why.
3. Overall, how would you rate the success of the Writing Associates Program?
  - a. Highly successful
  - b. Moderately successful
  - c. Moderately unsuccessful
  - d. Not successful at all

Additional Comments:

4. What do you perceive to be the strengths of the Writing Associates Program?
5. What do you perceive to be areas in need of improvement in the Writing Associates Program?
6. Would you recommend Writing Associates to colleagues for their courses?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Undecided

Additional Comments:

7. What services did your Writing Associate provide?
  - a. In-person tutorials
  - b. Online tutorials
  - c. Study tables
  - d. Review sessions
  - e. Handouts
  - f. Unable to answer
  - g. Other (describe):
8. Often, Writing Associates work with students online by providing feedback via e-mail. To what extent were you satisfied with the quality of online tutorials provided by the Writing Associate?
  - a. Very satisfied
  - b. Moderately satisfied
  - c. Moderately unsatisfied
  - d. Not satisfied at all
  - e. Unable to rate the quality of the online tutorials
9. Please offer any additional comments or recommendations regarding strategies for improving the Writing Associates Program.

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