

Newsletter

Conference on Basic Writing

A special interest group of CCCC



Volume 8, Number 1

Fall 1988

New Editors for *Journal of Basic Writing*

This past July, Bill Bernhardt and Peter Miller, of the College of Staten Island, took over as co-editors of the *Journal of Basic Writing*, as former editor Lynn Troyka stepped down to pursue her own teaching, writing, and research. *JBW*, the only national journal devoted to basic writers and basic writing, is published by the City University of New York's Instructional Resource Center (a division of the Office of Academic Affairs with the primary charge of coordinating and supporting freshman programs throughout the seventeen campuses of the CUNY system). The new *JBW* editors were appointed after a CUNY-wide search, meetings of a search committee, and interviews with a number of finalists.

Bernhardt and Miller, when we talked with them recently, said that each of them had been attracted to the position when he saw the call for applications, but thought its demands would be overwhelming. Then a colleague made the for-them irresistible suggestion that they tackle the job together: they are not only colleagues at the College of Staten Island, but also, for the past ten years, good friends, co-authors, and close collaborators on curriculum at their school.

Both Bernhardt and Miller have been writing directors at the College of Staten Island and serve on its basic skills committee, which oversees programs in reading, writing, and ESL. Their co-authored text, *Becoming a Writer* (published by St. Martin's in 1986), is less a textbook than a whole pedagogy bringing together many of the new approaches to writing instruction in activities designed to develop writers' self-awareness as well as writing skills.

The two new *JBW* editors bring diverse backgrounds to the job — and a strong shared interest in Chinese culture, as well as composition. Both live on Manhattan's West Side: Bernhardt uptown and Miller down. Peter Miller was a science writer for NASA's

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MLA SPONSORS LITERACY CONFERENCE

How to summarize a conference? Perhaps some facts will help. Six hundred forty-five people attended the MLA conference on The Right to Literacy in Columbus, Ohio, September 16 to 18; that was as many as the conference could accommodate, and another fifty or so had to be turned away. The conference included three plenary sessions, 103 papers, a dozen or so responses to papers, several informal special interest sessions, and thousands of individual conversations. But how to summarize all that?

Perhaps a description of the plenary sessions will give some sense of what it was like. After the appropriate people were introduced and thanked at the first plenary session on Friday afternoon, Theodore Sizer, chair of the Graduate School of Education at Brown and author of *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School*, addressed a crowd of about 600 persons gathered in a Hyatt ballroom, looking very much like the crowd at a CCCC session.

In his opening address, Sizer pointed out that, contrary to the assertions of some, a common national culture does exist; in high schools across the country he finds a common "literacy" that is based on television and baseball, on advertising and rock music, a culture of surprising homogeneity. The problem is the composition of that public culture. It is centrally driven by commercial interests, it too often synthesizes the complex into the simple, and it is pervasive. No one has asked "Is it good?" "Is it tasteful?" "Can it be changed?" We in the academy have ignored these questions. We have been arguing about what should be in the canon while 40 million Americans are watching *Cheers*. We need to set about reforming public literacy.

After lunch on Saturday, in the midst of the conference itself, we gathered for another plenary session, this time to hear Thomas Holt, a historian from the University of Chicago. Holt reviewed the traditional support for literacy among Blacks—in Black families,

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From the Chairs

THE STATE OF CBW

The response at CCCC last March to our call for renewal of the Conference on Basic Writing was resoundingly affirmative: More than seventy-five people gathered to meet one another and respond in lively fashion to the featured panel from Pitt. (See Suellynn Duffey's report on page 4.)

Before that panel, a brief business meeting passed three resolutions: (1) that CBW be re-established as a special interest group of CCCC; (2) that an interim Steering Committee be formed by the Chairs, responsible for the business of the organization and for drafting by-laws to be submitted to the membership before our 1989 meeting; and (3) that in this passing of the baton, CBW express thanks to its founders and former co-chairs Chuck Guilford and Karen Uehling, of Boise State, for all their work on behalf of the organization.

Seventeen people volunteered to serve as an interim Advisory Committee, to all of whom we are warmly grateful. From that group, an interim Steering Committee of six has since been formed:

Cassandra Canada (Purdue - IN)
 Marla Cowie (Mississippi Valley State)
 Suellynn Duffey (Ohio State)
 Sallyanne Fitzgerald (U of Missouri - St. Louis)
 Jeanne Smith (Oglala Lakota College - SD)
 Allison Wilson (Jackson State - MS)

These committees are now at work on by-laws for CBW and other plans for the future.

Since the CCCC meeting, our membership has grown to more than 300. We're delighted that so many of you have joined. We invite you to participate in CBW at whatever level (from friendly observer to active collaborator) will fit best with your other professional commitments. □

New JBW Editors, from page 1.

Institute for Space Studies and a reporter for the Long Island paper *Newsday* for several years before he started teaching. He serves as senior college chair of the CUNY Association of Writing Supervisors and has co-authored a history of Chinese calligraphy, to be published by the University of Chicago Press in 1989.

Bill Bernhardt has taught in unusually varied settings, including Reed College, Fisk University, the University of Keele in England, and Hebei Teachers' University in the People's Republic of China. When we spoke to him this fall, he had just returned from a month in

Interviewed separately, Miller and Bernhardt both stressed that they inherit JBW in very healthy condition and don't intend to make major changes.

China, where he lectured at several colleges on the use of computers in language learning and writing instruction. Like Miller, Bernhardt is a long-time student of Caleb Gattegno, to whose influence they attribute many of their own insights about learning, embodied in *Becoming a Writer* and in Bernhardt's *Just Writing* (a publication of the Teachers and Writers' Collaborative, 1977). Bernhardt has for the past three years coordinated a language arts collaboration between the College of Staten Island and local high schools.

Interviewed separately, Miller and Bernhardt both stressed that they inherit JBW in very healthy condition and don't intend to make major changes. "An easy transition," Miller remarked. "Troyka has been terrific and given us all kinds of help." Lynn Troyka will continue to serve on the Editorial Board, as will most former members. Marilyn Maiz, Associate Editor (who has

The *CBW Newsletter* is published twice a year, in the fall and spring, by the Conference on Basic Writing, a special interest group of the Conference on College Communication and Composition. We welcome unsolicited manuscript submissions.

Opinions expressed in these pages are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, the officers of CBW, CBW's Executive Committee, or CCCC.

Membership in the Conference on Basic Writing is \$5 for 1 year, \$9 for 2 years, and \$12 for 3 years. Membership includes a subscription to the *CBW Newsletter*. Address: Peter Dow Adams, English Department, Essex Community College, Baltimore County, Maryland 21237.

Editors: Peter Dow Adams & Carolyn Kirkpatrick

been with the journal since its inception), and Ruth Davis, Associate and Managing Editor, will also continue to serve.

The new editors have invited several new members to the Editorial Board: Brenda Greene, George Otte, John Scarry (all of CUNY), Muriel Harris (of Purdue University and the *Writing Lab Newsletter*), Elaine O. Lees (of Carlow Hill College, PA), and Steve Tribus (Director of Communication Arts, Division of Curriculum and Instruction of the NYC Board of Education). Miller and Bernhardt hope to extend *JBW's* readership and especially to attract new readers among those who teach basic writers at the secondary level. As Bernhardt observed, "More and more new high school teachers are graduates of new composition programs, exposed to new approaches to writing." They hope also to expand the number of subscribers in Canada and Great Britain.

A common theme for both Bernhardt and Miller was their wish to increase *JBW's* practical value to teachers. "We'd like to see more accounts of classroom practices, logs of teachers working under particularly chal-

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lenging circumstances, survey articles bringing teachers up to date on the implications of research over the past decade or so."

Bernhardt and Miller stressed also their wish to increase the flow of manuscripts. They encourage *CBW Newsletter* readers to submit articles. "We have no *JBW* stereotype in mind for submissions." The new editors will continue, as Troyka did, to encourage submissions about ESL. They hope to see more manuscripts on uses of new technologies and word processing, "with particular attention to their impact on assumptions about writing." They will pursue also articles on "the theory and practice of writing instruction in other countries where mass literacy is a major social and academic concern."

The new editors take over a publication with a distinguished history. Begun by Mina Shaughnessy and her associates at the City College of New York in 1975, *JBW* moved, with Shaughnessy, to the CUNY Instructional Resource Center when she became a CUNY dean. After Shaughnessy's untimely death in 1978, her colleagues kept the journal alive; it continued under the editorship of Sarah D'Eloia Fortune to publish issues de-

voted to such themes as evaluation, vocabulary, training teachers, and basic writing and social science research. Back issues remain classics in the field.

The journal entered a new phase when Lynn Troyka became editor in 1984. Although still a CUNY-supported, CUNY-based publication, *JBW* under

... a national forum for fresh ideas about the teaching of basic writing.

Troyka's leadership reached out for a wider national audience (with the support of an Exxon grant) and moved to publication on a variety of topics, with articles refereed by a national board. The journal now publishes two substantial issues yearly and has become, in the words of its new editors, "a national forum for fresh ideas about the teaching of basic writing."

At each stage of its life, *JBW* has become more polished in format and design. At every stage, *JBW* has been full of rich material for those interested in the teaching of basic writing: "what is, in some ways, a new profession," as Shaughnessy put it fourteen years ago. All best wishes to Bill and Peter. We look forward to *JBW's* continuing growth and development under their direction. □

Does Your College Library Subscribe to *JBW*?

Individual subscriptions to the *Journal of Basic Writing* are \$8 for one year, \$15 for two. Institutional subscriptions are \$12 for one year and \$23 for two. Your librarian may be interested to know that free sample issues are available (to libraries only). Most back issues are available at a cost of \$4.50 each. Write to

Journal of Basic Writing
Instructional Resource Center, CUNY
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New York, NY 10021

A DRAMA: THE TINKLING OF GLASSES, THE SOUNDS OF A NEW CBW

THE SETTING

St. Louis. March, 1988. Cocktail hour at CCCC. The conference nearly over. People hungry and starting to tire after hours of presentations and socializing.

THE SCENE

Our small room crowded, folks leaning on the door jambs, others climbing over tightly spaced chairs in search of empty seats. Wine and cheese in the corner, a bribe to encourage us to imbibe with each other and not with the publishers. So we did.

THE PARTICIPANTS

Some of us acquainted; many of us strangers. Most of us teachers, but at least one of us an assistant dean. We had come from all over North America and from different types of schools: a community college in New Orleans, a Big Ten public university, Chicago and St. Louis, Nevada and Kentucky. . . . We were gathered because Carolyn Kirkpatrick and Peter Adams had organized a panel for us. Nicholas Coles, Marilyn DeMario, and Mariolina Salvatori, contributing authors to David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky's *Facts, Artifacts and Counterfacts*, and all teachers of the basic reading and writing course described in the book, were behind the table at the front of the room.

THE DRAMA

What drew us there? The wine and cheese? They helped our spirits, perhaps; but the real excitement in the room came from other sources.

It came partly because so many of us had collected in one place to discuss basic writing. The time was right for renewing the Conference on Basic Writing.

The excitement also came from the planned subject of discussion. After Peter's provocative introduction following up on issues he had raised earlier in his *Newsletter* review of the book, the panelists spoke briefly; and soon panel and audience were engaged in lively dialogue about issues involved in teaching courses such as the basic reading and writing one at Pitt — whether such a difficult course can really be taught — at a particular school and with particular students.

So much interest in this course suggests that we may be shifting our self-definitions as basic writing teachers — seeing ourselves as teachers of writing and

reading, as teachers of novices who should be involved in the processes of experts (to use Bartholomae and Petrosky's phrasing). This new curriculum is one that interests many of us — it reaches so far beyond what has traditionally been called basic skills that it both lures and frightens us.

We parted, with plans to reconvene at next year's CCCC and with promises to join the Conference on Basic Writing and to volunteer for the necessary committee work to accomplish our future tasks.

(And the assistant dean returned to Ohio, moved by the expertise and energy in our room and resolved to modify his basic writing courses. So we spoke not only to ourselves but to an administrator. And he listened.)

Suellynn Duffey
Ohio State University

REVIEWS

Recent Articles on BW

In this column of each issue, Linda Stine will review recent journal articles of interest to teachers and researchers working with basic writers. If you would like to recommend an article for inclusion, please send a copy of the article to her, c/o Master of Human Services Program, Lincoln University, PA 19352.

For a basic writer overwhelmed with problems, the computer has been welcomed—and much touted—as a liberator. Lest we are tempted simply to drop our students off at the computer lab, advising them to take one of these and call us in the morning, I draw your attention to several articles of warning.

Nichols, Randall G. "Word Processing and Basic Writers." *Journal of Basic Writing* 5 (Fall 1986): 81-97. Back in 1986, Nichols warned of the possibility that computer use might simply extend the ineffective writing habits of basic writing students rather than improve those habits. He studied five Ohio State freshmen placed in a remedial writing class on the basis of low (15 or less) scores on the English section of the ACT and on a placement essay. Nichols suggested that students' revising practices, at least initially, do not improve in quality or quantity when using word processing. Instead, he feels that the interruptions in short- and long-term memory occasioned by com-

puter use put the basic writer at a disadvantage. Although Nichols' study was conducted with just a few students over a very short period of time and intentionally kept computer instruction separate from the writing classroom, the problems he mentions seem to be consistent with those described recently by other researchers.

Hult, Christine. "The Computer and the Inexperienced Writer." *Computers & Composition* 5 (Spring 1988): 29-38. Hult, too, points out that computer use *which is not accompanied by appropriate instruction* [italics mine] may reinforce the ineffective composing habits of inexperienced writers. She focuses on revision and the possibility that computer use encourages student tendencies to see writing in parts rather than as a whole, to substitute and delete rather than add and rearrange text, and to concentrate on words and rules rather than overall meaning. Hult concludes by suggesting appropriate pedagogy for computer-intensive writing classrooms.

Grow, Gerald. "Lessons from the Computer: Writing Problems of Professionals." *College Composition and Communication* 39 (May 1988): 217-220. Gerald Grow extends Hult's warning to a different population, describing the problems—over-editing, ineffective collaboration, over-use of boilerplate prose, and inappropriate length—which he observed when professional writers used word processors.

Much more research is needed before we can decide whether we should counteract possible negative effects of computer use—if these negative effects do indeed exist—by separating the learning of word processing "as much as possible from the composing task," as Nichols suggests, or whether we should be looking, with Hult, for the most effective ways to integrate computers into our writing classrooms. Teachers of basic writers, I hope, will be highly involved in research around this question, for our students have perhaps the most to gain from the answer.

Linda Stine
Lincoln University

Literacy Conference, from page 1.

in Black churches, in traditionally Black schools and colleges—and suggested that the lowered interest in literacy in the Black community today, if it does exist, does so because Blacks have lost control over their own institutions.

On Sunday we again gathered, many of us with

suitcases—preparatory to a dash to the airport—to learn a heartening fact. One of those prestigious and lucrative MacArthur prizes has been awarded to an English teacher (to be precise, a professor of English and linguistics at Stanford), Shirley Brice Heath, who delivered the third and final plenary address. Heath pointed to factors outside of school that were foes of literacy. New patterns of family life, she pointed out, deprive children of language; few contemporary families, even or perhaps especially among the middle class, have time for conversation, for sitting on the front porch and telling stories. Television has greatly reduced the amount of active language use by children. Brice even included our churches in her criticism for minimizing children's opportunity for

John Trimbur: The demand for literacy is never innocent. . . . The problem of literacy is the problem of democracy.

speaking and for restricting acceptable interpretations of texts.

Again, how to summarize a conference? Conference co-chairs Andrea Lunsford, Helene Moglen, and James Slevin had deliberately cast their nets wide in the call for proposals, while suggesting a political orientation in the title (*The Right to Literacy*) and suggestions for who might want to attend: "teachers at all levels, researchers, representatives from state humanities councils, labor unions, and prison literacy programs." Presentations ranged from analyses of Foucault to Monday-morning tactics. Almost a sub-theme were references to E. D. Hirsch and Allan Bloom, even in those papers that did not directly take on the issues raised by *Cultural Literacy* or *The Closing of the American Mind*.

The topics addressed and perhaps something of the flavor and even the quality of thought may be suggested by these "quick takes" from the panels I attended:

Thomas Flynn: *Both literacy and testing, perhaps not coincidentally, are now "hot" issues.* Suellynn Duffey: *It may turn out that our tests and measurements are simply too crude to measure the complexities of literacy.* Lucille Schultz: *Literacy measurements invariably decontextualize literacy, implying that the text doesn't mat-*

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ter; any text will do to test literacy. Mary Savage: *Assessment should measure consequences.*

Lucille Schultz: *Does making people literate protect the existing order or undermine it?* Jan Swearingen: *Hirsch's list represents "tribal consensus" rather than an attempt at inclusion.* Donald Lazere: *Hirsch's cultural literacy is not incompatible with thinking or with radical politics; in fact, it is essential to both.* John Trimbur: *The demand for literacy is never innocent. . . .The problem of literacy is the problem of democracy.* John Clifford: *Students must be taught to think more deeply, to problematize.*

Nan Elsasser: One becomes a member of a speech community by participating in it, but, typically, we exclude remedial students from the speech community they need to join.

Dana Beckelman: *Like a living cell, literacy must continue to split in order to live; instead of seeking consensus, we must learn to accept diversity.*

About research and programs for basic writers: Glynnda Hull: *What Mike Rose and I are trying to do is to define who remedial writers are, cognitively and socially.* Nan Elsasser: *One becomes a member of a speech community by participating in it, but, typically, we exclude remedial students from the speech community they need to join.* Susan McClelland: *We wanted to avoid "drill and kill" or "fill in the blankety-blank" activities.* Ben McClelland: *Are literacy programs designed to teach people to read and write or to enhance self-image and liberate students?* Ben McClelland, again: *The Mississippi Remedial Project was politically successful because it produced dramatic test results.*

Inevitably, participants struggled with the problem of defining literacy and its consequences. Jerry Ward: *Literacy is composed of the diverse skills of reading, writing, thinking, speaking, computing, and computerizing.* Shirley Brice Heath: *Literacy means more than the mechanics of reading and writing; it means being able to interpret text and relate it to context, to make predictions, to compare, to evaluate, and to talk about all this.* John Trimbur: *Literacy is a way to know your rights.* Charles Schuster: *The appropriate model for illiteracy is Cassandra --she speaks but does not communicate--she is struck dumb by the very act of speaking. Literacy is not just the ability*

to read and write; it is the ability to use language to make sense . . . the power to communicate.

How to summarize a conference? Some background information is relevant. The MLA Commission on the Future of the Profession, which completed its work in 1982, reported a serious problem with the growing split between the teaching of literature and the teaching of writing. On their recommendation, the Commission on Writing and Literature was appointed in 1983. Lively discussions ensued among members Fredric V. Bogel, Paul Hernadi, James L. Kinneavy, Andrea Lunsford, Helene Moglen, Robert Scholes, James F. Slevin. The group submitted its final report, which is included in *Profession 88*.

At their suggestion, the Executive Council of MLA agreed to sponsor a number of projects, including this literacy conference—the first national conference besides the annual MLA convention ever sponsored by MLA. Funding for the conference came primarily from Ohio State University, which contributed \$15,000. MLA provided its reputation, its staff, and its considerable experience.

Was this a historic turning point for MLA? If so, the participants certainly had some reservations. In fact, skepticism about the MLA's role surfaced repeatedly throughout the three days, and Shirley Brice Heath, speaking at the closing plenary session, observed that

Andrea Lunsford: It would help if more comp and rhetoric people would become involved with the MLA.

MLA had sponsored a competing conference in North Carolina and that the entire Executive Council of MLA was there. As it turns out, the competing conference was the Duke conference on the canon, and it was not sponsored by MLA. Nevertheless, as Helene Moglen observes, "We were all disappointed that more of the MLA staff and Executive Council did not attend the literacy conference." David Laurence, MLA's Director of English Programs and the staff member who was present, notes that perhaps "the symbolic pieces did not get the attention they should have." Both Laurence and Phyllis Franklin, Executive Director of MLA, point out that members of the Executive Council frequently do not attend MLA conferences. No one at MLA antici-

pated that they would be missed if they didn't attend this one.

Laurence expresses some disappointment in the turn-out of people who traditionally teach literature. In a questionnaire returned by some of the participants, 160 indicated they were members of NCTE, 80 were members of CCCC, and only 60 were members of MLA. The hoped-for conversation between teachers of literature and teachers of writing was not a major feature of this conference.

Another sign of tension surfaced at a panel in which James Sledd, after a presentation arguing his view of the profession's political self-satisfaction, started a petition urging the MLA, through its Executive Council, to take "prompt, strong action against the continued exploitation of graduate students and part-timers." A second petition to reform the editorial policies of PMLA to encourage articles on literacy and writing got a slightly later start.

Phyllis Franklin reports that both petitions have been received at MLA. The Sledd petition has been referred to the Committee on Careers and to the Executive Committee of the Association of Departments of English. She cannot predict what the outcome might be, but has made her own position public in an article in the May/June 1988 *Academe* entitled "When Solutions Become Problems: Taking a Stand on Part-Time Employment," in which she argues that writing faculty should exist on the same professional level as literature faculty.

The second petition has been referred to the editorial committee of PMLA. Ms. Franklin points out that no policy at PMLA restricts publication of articles on writing or literacy; the problem has been that very few manuscripts in these areas are submitted.

So what does all this mean about the future of the MLA and writing instruction? In the words of conference co-chair Andrea Lunsford, "It is hard to say how the MLA will go. Comp and Rhetoric people in MLA are not very well-organized. There is considerable support, especially from Phyllis Franklin. . . . It would help if more comp and rhetoric people would become involved with the MLA."

Such questions aside, there seems to be a widespread sense that the conference was highly successful. The unusually high quality of the papers and especially of audience involvement was remarked by Slevin and Moglen. David Laurence reports that the MLA will publish at least one volume of papers from the conference. Further, one or more additional conferences are

possible. Franklin observes that "we went out on a limb on this conference. We had no experience in this area and no idea whether anyone would come." The enthusiastic response and the quality of the discussion would seem to have justified the risk.

So then finally, how to summarize a conference? A couple of personal reflections, one somewhat frivolous, one serious. This was the first conference I've been to in years at which the name tags didn't have any ribbons to indicate the Pooh-bahs, didn't have any maroon stripes to indicate speakers, and didn't even have a designation of the wearer's school. It was most disconcerting. The name tags were just that: *name* tags. A glitch in the planning? A carefully thought-out gesture toward democracy?

And finally, a serious observation. A group of intelligent and humane people spent three days discussing a complex and important issue: no earthshaking results yet, but a beginning.

Peter Dow Adams
Essex Community College

NEXT MARCH IN SEATTLE

Our SIG meeting at the 1989 CCCC in Seattle will be held on Thursday evening, March 16, at 6:30. Joining us for what is sure to be a spirited discussion of the "state of basic writing" will be four people who recently took stock of that state, the editor and contributing editors of *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers*: Theresa Enos, David Bartholomae, Andrea Lunsford, and Lynn Troyka.

Note: The Sourcebook can be ordered from Random House, 1-800-638-6460, for \$26 plus \$1 for shipping and handling. If you don't want to wait thirty days for delivery, you can order it sent UPS or through your college bookstore.

U of Wisconsin Adopts Fees for Developmental Students

The Chronicle of Higher Education (July 13, 1988) reported that the University of Wisconsin system was considering major changes in its treatment of developmental students. "The task force [that studied this issue] is sensitive to the argument that the taxpayers should not pay twice, in the secondary schools and the university, for pre-college courses." The Chronicle reported that, if the recommendation is adopted, "all students in the University of Wisconsin System [will] be charged extra fees for remedial courses and that no credit [will] be given to those who complete such courses."

Having heard that such proposals were afoot in several states, your editors decided to investigate the situation in Wisconsin. That investigation led us to Charles Schuster, Director of Composition at U of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. In the following article, he makes clear that the situation is much more complicated than the brief Chronicle report would lead us to believe.

This fall, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) is, for the second year, requiring students to pay extra for remedial English and mathematics courses. In-state students will pay \$200 per course over their regular tuition fee. Moreover, students will earn no credits toward graduation for taking these courses.

A terrible idea? Something thought up by a neo-fascist anti-educationist?

The answer, surprisingly, is no. As Director of Composition at UWM, I supported this proposal from its conception: it has greatly benefited students and instructors and may have much to offer colleges and universities nationally. In fact, the entire University of Wisconsin System may adopt a similar funding formula this year.

Why is this seemingly punitive proposal a sheep in wolf's clothing? Let me explain.

History. The scale at UWM is considerable; we enroll about 26,000 students, of whom at least one-quarter place into one of our two remedial writing courses.

In fall 1986, William Halloran, Dean of the College of Letters and Science (and, I might add, an English professor), proposed that students be required to pay extra for remedial English and mathematics courses. Through a complicated (and virtually unexplainable) budgetary formula, Dean Halloran proposed that the extra monies generated by remedial students be tagged "for remedial instruction." In effect, his proposal created an entirely separate budgetary base for remedial education in English and math, funded primarily by student fees. Moreover, the monies currently being used to provide remedial instruction would be freed and returned to the respective departments to be used for traditional composition, litera-

ture, and mathematics courses. This proposal, after many visions and revisions, roadblocks and detours, was finally adopted in fall 1987.

Advantages and Disadvantages. The disadvantages are obvious. Some students—and their parents—resent paying extra. For some of them, it is indeed a financial hardship. Often as a result, students challenge their placement into these courses. They call me. They call the Dean. They'd call the governor, if they had his phone number. Fortunately, we have an elaborate placement procedure which is about 98% accurate. Once a student is placed in a remedial writing course, I am virtually certain he/she belongs there. Still, having

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to pay extra for a course is a serious penalty for our students, most of whom work 10-30 hours a week to pay for their education.

Second, once so placed, students resent taking a course and receiving no credits toward graduation for it. What's worse from my point of view, the grade they receive (and it is graded A-F) does not count toward their GPA. In this course, students, it would seem, have little incentive to excel. To compensate for these disadvantages, I place our very finest instructors in the basic writing courses. Innovators and inspirers, these instructors achieve miraculous conversions. I tell students and parents honestly that the best writing instruction in the University takes place in our basic writing

courses. Furthermore, I have instituted an end-of-the-semester essay exit exam which all students in the upper level course must pass in order to pass the course. The instruction in combination with the exam creates energy and motivation.

The last disadvantage: I have more budgetary responsibility now. As director, I am responsible for making sure that our Basic Writing Program ends each fiscal year in the black.

Advantages? They are more numerous.

First, we can now offer as many basic writing courses as students need. Since the courses are completely funded by the students' fees, the more students who enroll, the more sections we offer. Before the new funding system, we turned away a hundred or more students from basic writing each fall. Now we can accommodate them all—if I can find qualified instructors.

Second, the additional instructional money in the English Department has allowed us to offer more 100-500 level composition and literature courses. This funding compensated, in part, for large cuts we took during the last biennium. Frankly, it allowed us, if not to flourish, at least to survive.

Third, students in high school have an increasing incentive to improve as writers. As word of our funding system is publicized and as other UW schools adopt it, all Wisconsin high school students will be motivated (I hope) to strengthen themselves as writers.

Fourth, a small amount of "operational" money generated by the new funding has allowed us to begin enhancing the Basic Writing Program. That money pays for needed paper, supplies, furniture, typewriters. For the first time, I can provide instructors with more than one ream of paper per class per semester. It allows us to bring in national speakers in the area of basic writing. (David Bartholomae and Andrea Lunsford visited last year.)

Fifth, part of the money generated by the new system supports our growing Peer Tutoring Writing Center, now starting its second year of operation. This year, we begin operation of the Center with four computers, a laser jet printer, and audiovisual equipment (for research and instruction)—all funded by the new fee structure.

Sixth, we have been able to support some conference activities for faculty and graduate students in the basic writing area. Last year, we helped some of our basic writing faculty and graduate students attend a peer tu-

toring conference at Purdue, and we helped them get to CCCC in St. Louis.

Finally, as it turns out, some students do *not* wind up paying more. Developmental courses are offered "at cost," a cost slightly less than that of credit-bearing courses. Because students pay on a "per credit" basis when they take 12 or fewer credits, but pay the same fee no matter how many more credits than 12 they take, students actually can save money by taking a basic writing course in their first semester and shifting some credit bearing courses to their second semester. Such a procedure is recommended to all students, particularly those who place into only one developmental course.

Recommendations. For us, the Dean's funding proposal was, frankly, a godsend. We still have significant problems: convincing the appropriate educational leaders that remedial college instruction, when needed, can best be offered within a university setting; hiring and training basic writing teachers; administering a growing composition program; convincing students that placement in basic writing courses may actually be to their advantage; working with high school English teachers and administrators to improve writing instruction and classroom conditions. But the benefits, I think, greatly outweigh the disadvantages. I have no doubt that without this proposal, the English Department

The Dean's proposal has allowed us to keep our ship afloat and even outfit several new staterooms. Otherwise, we might well have foundered.

would have suffered so grievously under budget cuts that its effectiveness would have been seriously impaired. Philosophically, I wish we could offer our students free instruction at whatever level is appropriate. After six years of administering writing programs, I recognize educational and political realities when I see them. The Dean's proposal has allowed us to keep our ship afloat and even outfit several new staterooms. Otherwise, we might well have foundered.

Charles I. Schuster
Director of Composition
U. Wisconsin-Milwaukee

QUERY COLUMN

CBW would like to encourage panels on topics related to basic writing at CCCC and other conferences. To this end, we plan to include in each issue of the *Newsletter* a space for members to announce their intention to form such a panel and to invite others to join them. If you are thinking of organizing a panel, your query might be as simple as this:

Is there anyone out there who would like to discuss forming a panel on [name your subject] for the 1990 CCCC? Get in touch with _____ at _____ or call at _____.

The deadline for getting your announcement copy to us for the spring *Newsletter* is January 5 and for the fall issue is August 15.

It may seem a little early to be thinking about 1990, but next spring will be almost too late; proposals must be in to CCCC by June 1. Give it some thought. Panels designated as focused on basic writing have declined from 10 in 1980 to 6 in 1988. If you have never made a CCCC presentation, you should know that this fact would be a "plus" for your proposal; all concerned are eager to involve new talent and new ideas in the convention. Send your notices to Peter by January 5 for the spring issue.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

As we prepare a slate for our first elected Executive Committee, those interested in serving are urged to make their interest known. Committee members, who serve two-year terms, must be willing to keep in touch by phone or letter — and must be able to attend the annual meeting at CCCC.

Beyond those, the only requisites are interest and zeal for the cause. Please send a short letter expressing your version of said qualities, along with your vita, to Carolyn Kirkpatrick, Dept. of English, York College/CUNY, Jamaica, NY 11451 by January 30, 1989.

THE CBW INTERIM ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR 1988-89:

Alice Adams	Prestonburg Community College (Kentucky)
Linda Barnes	Southern Illinois University
Cassandra Canada	Purdue University (Indiana)
Sigrun Coffman	Truckee Meadows Community College (Nevada)
Marla Cowie	Mississippi Valley State University
Suellynn Duffey	Ohio State University
Sallyanne Fitzgerald	University of Missouri - St. Louis
Roy Fox	Boise State University (Idaho)
Gene Hammond	University of Maryland
Sally Harrold	Loyola University of Chicago
Robert Hookey	Sheridan College (Ontario)
Kay Puttock	Mankato State University (Minnesota)
Bob Roth	Middlesex County College (New Jersey)
Jeanne Smith	Oglala Lakota College (South Dakota)
Harriet Spitzer	New York Institute of Technology
Linda Stine	Lincoln University (Delaware)
Allison Wilson	Jackson State University (Mississippi)

BULLETIN BOARD

For Teachers and Researchers in Basic Writing

For a hands-on introduction to writing-to-learn approaches, the **Institute for Writing and Thinking** at Bard College sponsors weekend workshops on such topics as "Writing and Thinking" and "Essay and Inquiry," and occasional conferences on subjects of special interest. Inquiries to Paul Connolly or Teresa Vilardi, Institute for Writing and Thinking, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504 or call (914) 758-7484.

A team of researchers at North Lake College has begun a long-term project to examine the writing processes and written products of learning disabled students. The team's first project is a **bibliographic essay on learning disabilities**. If you have suggestions for this bibliography or would like to review an early draft of it (late 1988 or early 1989), contact Paul Hunter, Communications Division, North Lake College, Irving, TX 75038-3899 or call (214) 659-5270.

CCCC Winter Workshops on Teaching Composition are scheduled for Jan 5-7, 1989, in Clearwater Beach, FL. Topics are "Adapting to Diversity in the Composition Classroom," "Managing the Writing Process," and "Evaluating Writing in Composition Classrooms." Write CCCC Winter Workshop Information, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

The **Midwest Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College** will take place in Kansas City, MO, on February 9-11, 1989, with the theme "Literacy for the 21st Century: Trends in Two-Year Colleges." Write to Ron Taylor, Metropolitan Community College, 2700 East 18th Street, Kansas City, MO 64127 or call (816) 483-3500.

Computers & Composition invites submissions for a special issue entitled "Questions for the 1990's." Among the suggested topics is "computers and basic writers." Two-page abstracts should be submitted to Gail Hawisher, English Department, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61761, by Feb 15, 1989.

The **Southeast Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College** will take place in Mobile, Alabama, on February 23-25, 1989. Write Raymond Bailey, Bishop State Junior College, 351 North Broad Street, Mobile, AL 36690 or call (205) 690-6429.

The 13th annual conference of the **National Association for Developmental Education (NADE)** will be held March 2-4, 1989, in Cincinnati, OH. NADE is a national organization concerned with improving the cognitive learning processes of all students with special emphasis on the needs of non-traditional students at post-secondary institutions. Write to John Elder, Developmental Studies Department, Sinclair Community College, 444 West Third Street, Dayton, OH 45402 or call him at (513) 226-2701.

The **Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)** will meet in Seattle, WA, Mar 16-18, 1989. CCCC members will receive registration info in December. Others should write CCCC Convention Information, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

The National Testing Network in Writing, Dawson College, and The City University of New York announce the **Seventh Annual NTNW Conference on Writing Assessment** on April 9-11, 1989 in Montreal, Canada. This national conference is for educators, administrators, and assessment personnel and will be devoted to critical issues in assessing writing in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary settings. Keynote speakers include John Dixon, Peter Elbow, Peter Evans, Alan Purves, Leo Ruth, Helen Schwartz, Bernard Shapiro, Edward White, and Janet White. Write to Linda Shohet, Dawson College, 3040 Sherbrooke Street W., Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3Z 1A4.

The East Central Region of the **Writing Centers Association** will hold its 11th Annual Conference at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, OH, on May 5 & 6, 1989, with the theme "Empowering Our Writing Centers/Empowering Our Students." Three copies of a one-page proposal should be submitted by December 16, 1988, to Ulle E. Lewes, Writing Resource Center, Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, OH 43015.

The Writing Lab Newsletter is an informal means of exchanging information among those who work in writing labs and language skills centers. Brief articles describing labs, their instructional methods and materials, goals, programs, budgets, staffing, services, etc. are invited. Those wishing to subscribe are requested to make a donation of \$7.50 per year, checks payable to Purdue University. Submissions and memberships should be sent to Muriel Harris, Editor, *Writing Lab Newsletter*, Department of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907.

**Conference on Basic Writing
c/o Peter Dow Adams
English Department
Essex Community College
Baltimore County, Maryland 21237**

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