

The **WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER**

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

Volume 13, Number 7

March, 1989

...from the editor....

You may have noticed that your newsletter issues seem to arrive at various times each month. The reason for this inconsistency is the vagaries of bulk mail. Each Issue is put into the mail on the 15th of the previous month, and from there only the U. S. Postal System knows for sure what happens.

I realize that this is inconvenient for those of you who incorporate the newsletter into your tutor meetings and would like to plan ahead. But if you can put up with this bit of randomness, bulk mail does keep the cost of the newsletter down.

In the conference announcements in this month's issue (on page 10), you'll notice a "first"-- a conference for high school writing labs. The growth of writing labs at the high school level has been explosive in the last few years, and this conference is both a tribute to that rapid growth and to the energy and dedication of the people who worked to bring this group together. Congratulations!

-Muriel Harris, editor

....inside....

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**What are We Talking About?:
A Content Analysis of the
Writing
Lab Newsletter, April 1985
to October 1988**

If you want to join the discussion, it helps to know what the group is talking about. If you are already an active member of the writing center community, you may want to pause and review the discussion. If you turn to the Writing Lab Newsletter M I A for help, what can you expect to find help with? If you wish to contribute to WLN, what topics have received the most and the least coverage?

To gauge what the writing center community is talking about, I read the last three and one-half years of the Writing Lab Newsletter and categorized the articles. As a framework for classifying, I adapted the classic four elements of an educational situation: teacher (change to "tutor"), student (change to "tutee"), content, and context. I first read of this common-sensical scheme in Joseph Schwab's curriculum work in

the 1960s, and since then it has become an educational commonplace. However, I have always thought that it needed a fifth category in order to describe the action among the elements of the instructional situation; thus I have added Tutorial Methods. These five elements require administration, so I have added a final category by that name. These categories not only facilitated the handling of the myriad topics, but they also provide an indicator of what elements of the educational situation WLN contributors emphasize. To create sub-categories I used every topic in the newsletter's calls for manuscripts, placing each topic in the appropriate category. In addition, I sorted my summaries of articles and lengthy letters into topic piles until more sub-categories emerged.

Topics listed in the WLN call for manuscripts are marked with asterisks in the following content analysis table. The number of articles for each category or sub-category is in parentheses. Tutor contributions in WLN's 'Tutor's Corner' or 'Tutors' Column' are enclosed in brackets in order to identify any unique patterns of tutor concerns.

Content Analysis of the Writing Lab Newsletter,
April 1985 to October 1988

- I Tutor
 - *A. Tutor selection/characteristics (7) +[1]
 - *B. Tutor training/acquired skills (7)
 - C. Benefits to the tutor (1) +[4]
- II Tutee (3) +[4]
- III Context
 - A. The writing center (2)
 - B. The university or college (1)
 - *C. High school (7)
- IV Content
 - *A. General descriptions of specific writing centers (10)
 - B. Special programs and services offered
 - 1. Writing across the curriculum (7)
 - 2. Freshman composition connection (3) +[1]
 - 3. Miscellaneous (9)
 - C. Materials
 - 1. Books (1)
 - *2. Book reviews (major) (10)

- *3. Computers (13)
- *4. Software reviews (major) (9)
- V. Tutorial Methods
 - *A. Methods of tutoring +[18]
 - 1. General methods
 - a) General approaches (7)
 - b) Peer tutoring specifically (8)
 - 2. Specific techniques (15)
 - *B Special methods for special types of students (9) +[2]
- V Administration
 - A. Purposes, objectives, goals (6) +[1]
 - *B. Setting up a writing center (11)
 - C. Day-to-day operating procedures (3)
 - D. Promoting the lab (11)
 - E. Evaluation (4)
 - *F. Funding (1)
- VI Miscellaneous (3)

However useful, bringing order to diversity is also risky, so I will explain some of the categorization decisions. 1) Tutor selection and tutor training could come under Administration, but I have included these topics under Tutor because they emphasize the tutor characteristics that writing lab directors seek to find and/ or develop. 2) Thirteen articles appeared concerning high school writing labs, but only

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Manuscripts: Recommended length for articles is eight to twelve double-spaced typed pages, three to four pages for reviews, and one to two pages for the Tutors' Column, though longer and shorter manuscripts are invited. Please enclose self-addressed envelopes with return postage clipped (not pasted) to the envelope. The deadline for announcements is 45 days prior to the month of issue (e.g., Aug. 15 for the Oct. issue).

Please send all articles, reviews, announcements, comments, queries, and yearly donations to the editor.

seven appear under Context: High School because five of the thirteen articles emphasized starting a lab and one article offered a general description of a specific lab, while seven dealt with the uniqueness of the high school context. 3) The category Evaluation does not include articles which declared particular writing labs successful but offered no further evidence. 4) Only articles, major reviews, and substantial letters were included in the content analysis. Not counted were job ads, calls for proposals, conference notices, ads for materials, National Writing Center Association news and minutes, requests for nominations, capsule book reviews, and brief letters.

In our recent writing for WLN , we have emphasized the elements of the educational situation as follows:

1. Tutorial methods	65 items	
Content	63	
3. Administration	37	"
4. Tutor	20	
5. Context	10	
6. Tutee	7	

The most popular topics for articles are, in order, the following:

1. Methods of tutoring
2. Computers and computer software
3. Special instructional methods for specific types of students
4. Writing labs in high schools
5. Promoting writing centers
7. General descriptions of specific writing centers

Tutors write far more about methods of tutoring than they do about all other topics combined.

Employing the classic quartet of teacher, student, content, and context reveals how few WLN articles deal specifically with context and with tutees. This is exacerbated somewhat by the categorizing. Often articles on Promoting the Lab or Writing Across the Curriculum are overly sensitive to context. Similarly, essays detailing Special Methods for Special Types of Students clearly pay attention to the tutee. That said, however, we writing center personnel might consider systematically gaining and sharing knowledge about our students. We seem concerned with selecting and training tutors, and we place even more emphasis on the interaction between tutor and tutee, but we have little to say about the tutee. Similarly,

context. The rapid rise of writing-across-the-curriculum programs makes writing center relations with the rest of the institution increasingly important. In what environment do writing centers flourish? What elements of the context are crucial? When Ray Wallace de-scribes how the University of Tennessee at Knoxville lab established a writing-across-the-curriculum program, he mentions that professors from the various disciplines referring students to the lab helped train the tutors over a twelve-week period (46), Wouldn't you like to know more about the environment fostering that cooperation?

We can learn from what we are not talking about. Although the call for manuscripts requests submissions on funding, nothing appeared until the spring of 1988 when James Upton, responding to a reader's query, penned a half page. Since numerous writing centers are struggling to survive, only one item of funding seems a curious paucity. Apart from the dearth of financial information. I suppose that every reader will have his or her unique list of under-represented or missing topics. I was surprised to see little in the following four areas. First, evaluation. We are concerned about starting up labs, and we are ingenious about keeping them going and expanding them, but we seem to have little to say about evaluating them.

Second, research. Given the enthusiasm for teacher-research in composition teaching, I am surprised to find only one article addressing practical writing lab research issues. Action research has a solid tradition reaching back to Kurt Lewin and up to the teacher-research work published recently (Goswami and Stillman). K. Patricia Cross, who has told us so much about the new wave of students in higher education, is now calling for teacher-research as the key to improving the process of teaching and learning. Some good examples of teacher-research--for instance, Ady's appear in WLN, but I was surprised not to find more and not to see more discussion of practical research issues.

Third, adults. Close to 50% of the college and university population in the United States is not traditional undergraduate age. As Sharon Green and Mary Gorman say in the only article dealing specifically with adults in the writing lab, adults are different (2-3). An entire field of study exists called adult education, and if interested, we might get help in dealing with

our older students by consulting some classic works in the field. I recommend *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* by Knowles, *Adults as Learners* by Cross, *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning* by Brookfield, and *Effective Teaching and Mentoring* by Daloz. We might see how well the ideas and techniques advocated in these books work in the writing center.

Fourth, given the current enthusiasm in composition studies for radical or critical interpretations, WLN reveals little neo-Marxist or Habermasian influence. In the February 1988 edition of *College Composition and Communication*, two of the four feature articles are radical. Although we might criticize Chase's neo-Marxist triad of accommodation, opposition, and resistance as too simplistic to account for student's relationships to academic writing, and although we might dismiss as unnecessarily dualistic Tuman's thesis that educational reforms can never benefit the oppressed because the oppressor makes the "reforms," radical critiques flourish in composition studies I do not want to dismiss them. To come full circle to the issue of funding, James Upton must propose suggestions such as a willing lab acting as a "center for book swaps and charging(10c for handling each book" (6). A radical critique might provide a helpful perspective on this funding matter, if only to ask questions such as when the last time was that the Pentagon had to hold a book swap to raise money.

A content analysis of the last three and one-half years of WLN suggests that we are talking about getting the job done and about extending our services. We are concerned with how to tutor and how to integrate computers into our operations. We are concerned with expanding- into high schools, across the curriculum- and we offer and promote a wide variety of service to do so. For example, in the WLN content analysis table, the Miscellaneous heading under Content includes these offerings: a grammar hotline, essay contests, peer groups led by tutors, conversation workshops for ESL students, compulsory attendance for basic writers, services for advanced writers, public speaking instruction, writing proficiency exams, and a description of a writing center's most popular workshops.

What we are not talking much about is how we know that what we are doing is helpful

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and worth expanding. Of course, we know that labs are valuable, but how we know that is limited. To borrow North's terms from *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, our knowledge tends to be that of the Philosopher and, even more so, the Practitioner. The Philosophers usually appear arguing for the efficacy of peer tutoring based on Bruffee's theory of collaborative learning. For Practitioners, practice is inquiry, and they share what has been successful for them. While it is important to say "From what I believe, it should work" and "From my experience, it works," we can add to our expertise with other ways of knowing. In addition to philosophy and practice, North describes these modes of inquiry: history, criticism, controlled experimentation, clinical studies (e.g., Emig's *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*), formal models (e.g., Hayes and Flower's model of the cognitive processes in composing), and ethnography. Our most common method of measuring our effectiveness is to count our clients. Although we attribute the high volume of students to our effective services, alternative interpretations are obvious; for instance, students like the service because they get what they want, but they do not get what they need in order to become significantly better writers. For administrators controlling the purse strings, for ourselves as professionals, and for our students, we need a variety of methods for creating knowledge of our effectiveness. What do you do? What ways can we use to see how well we are meeting our goals?

Jim Bell
University of Texas at Austin

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Some Writing Lab Newsletter History

For those interested in the origins and growth of the Writing Lab Newsletter, Kim Ballard and Rick Anderson, instructors in the Purdue University Writing Lab, have written an article entitled "The Writing Lab Newsletter: A History of Collaboration," which appears in Vol. 1, No. 9 (January 1989) of *Composition Chronicle*. That issue also has "A User's Guide to Writing Centers" . by Muriel Harris. If you are interested in subscribing to this composition newsletter, contact Viceroy Publications, 3217 Bronson Hill Road, Livonia, NY 14487 (7 16-346-6860). This lively report of what's new in composition appears in nine monthly issues and costs \$25/year.

Electronic Mail ?



The peer tutors at the University of Michigan are experimenting with using a computer conference as a way for tutors on campus to keep in touch with each other. Once the tutors sign on to the message system at UM, they have access to remote mail services through Bitnet. If other tutors have access to remote mail via their school's computing services, we could begin a multi-campus conversation about tutoring.

The question we have is: Are there tutors who can use remote mail who would like to "talk" with tutors at Michigan (and elsewhere)? If so, they should contact me at my computer address: usergdhh@michum, or through the regular mail. If there is enough interest in having a conference (computer) for tutors, I can work with the computer people here to see whether they would help us start one. Using remote mail would be a way to use existing resources to get started.

Emily Jessup
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

CUNY Writing Centers Association

The City University of New York (CUNY) Writing Centers Association was formed in 1986 as a means to create a forum to share common experiences and to address the issues and concerns pertaining to writing center administration. Comprised of eighteen centers from all campuses of the City University of New York, the Writing Centers Association represents a collaborative effort to provide effective services as well as a unique voice that assists and encourages the student writer.

Since the formation of the Association, several writing center directors from other colleges and universities have requested that the Association open its membership to the larger New York City area. Association members agreed to this request, beginning October 1988.

Student writing has clearly emerged as one of the major issues facing educators as well as administrators. As a result, colleges and universities throughout the country have had to respond with renewed emphasis and commitment to improve the writing abilities of their students. This response has been greatly enhanced by the development of writing centers to provide students with supplementary services, including individual and small group writing tutorials. CUNY recognized this need early and presently supports a writing center component at each campus.

The Association's goals now include assisting centers to continue to develop their training programs, instructional materials for students, programs to enhance collaboration between centers and academic departments, assessment instruments to determine program effectiveness, and research models applicable to investigate tutoring conferences. In addition, the Association intends to build a collaborative network with other Writing Center Associations that exist throughout this country. A CUNY member will also represent the Association on the National Writing Centers Association Board,

A DIRECTORY of CUNY Writing Centers has been compiled and provides center information, including each center's philosophy, history, funding sources, evaluation procedures, training methodology, and student utilization. Copies of the DIRECTORY can be obtained by

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contacting Steven Serafin, Director, Writing Center, Hunter College, 695 Park Avenue, New York, New York, 10021. For additional information about the CUNY Writing Centers Association, please contact Linda Hirsch, co-chair, Hostos Community College (960-1328) or David Fletcher, co-chair, Lehman College (960-7874).

**David Fletcher Lehman
College-CUNY New
York, NY**

MCA Conference Report

"Trends and Traditions" was the theme of the 1988 Midwest Writing Centers Conference in Kansas City. The two day, October conference began with a keynote address by Muriel Harris, Purdue University. Almost two hundred participants from across the Midwest heard speakers present research, teaching strategies, tutor training techniques, and a variety of other topics.

Conference planners made a special effort to include peer tutors and high school writing lab personnel. At least two panels included peer tutors who discussed their labs and their training programs. Peer tutors also participated in a "think tank" designed to allow them time for discussing their unique concerns.

Additional special sessions were planned for high school writing lab personnel. For example, two experienced high school writing lab teachers/administrators offered a workshop. Two high school writing lab people also joined Muriel Harris and Mike Vivian, University of Missouri-Kansas City, to form a panel for a "think tank" on high school writing labs. Participants met between sessions, over lunch, and during the Embassy Suites cocktail hour to talk about writing. Such informal meetings gave the peer tutors as well as the professionals an opportunity to discuss what we do and what we plan for the future, including next fall's conference in St. Louis.

Muriel Harris summed up the essence of the conference in her keynote speech: "In sum, we have traditions to be proud of and some trends that will keep us busy developing new services and moving in new directions. But we are still a growth industry- and that may be the best tradition of all."

Sallyanne Fitzgerald University
of Missouri-St. Louis

A workshop on note-taking: how to manage information

A Less Commonly Looked at Form of Student Writing

As tutors working in Writing Centers we usually look at pieces of students' writing that are eventually handed in as writing assignments. Undoubtedly, these are probably the most significant writing items during any student's university career; however, they are not the only kind of writing expected of students while they attend college. Last Spring Quarter at Michigan Technological University some of the tutors in the Reading and Writing Center decided to diversify their interests, and to look at other types of reading and writing skills required of our students. I chose to concentrate on one type of writing which is often overlooked: the writing of notes during lectures. Of course, these notes are significant: without them many students would fail their exams. With this consideration in mind, I devised a workshop, consisting of four one-hour sessions, which we intend to offer this Fall Quarter. I began by considering the aims of the workshop, and decided on four main objectives.

Enhancing Classroom Listening Skills

Before any students can write accurate lecture notes, they need to be good listeners; so the first aim of the workshop is to enhance classroom listening skills. The first session covers such issues as why informative listening is difficult (Coffman 48), and what kind of bad listening habits students often fall into (Pack 119-120). Unfortunately, we all have a tendency to judge a speaker's appearance and manner of delivery, and so become distracted from the content of the lecture. Another pitfall that lecture attendees often fall into is wasting thought speed. The term 'thought speed' refers to the fact that we can think at a speed of approximately 1,000 words per minute, but we can only speak at a rate of about 125 words per minute; the difference, 875 words per minute, is the thought speed. Because we can all think so much faster than anybody can talk, it is easy to let our minds wander away from the topic. When we give our workshop, we plan to discuss listening problems like these with our students, and to suggest that they try to concentrate on the day's lecture by doing things like using their extra thought speed to try to review their notes, or add further details, or summarize, or predict

the next step, or memorize some important points.

In this first session we will also explain a number of keys to effective listening, which include how to identify the main ideas (McWhorter 206) and how to utilize signal words that indicate such relationships as cause and effect and comparison and contrast; these devices will usually help students to follow the organization of the lecture more easily. Since students often feel frustrated because they can't get everything down, we will also discuss methods of devising abbreviations to use as time-saving devices (Coffman 63-64; Sotiriou 173-6), and we will discuss how to condense information so that it can be written quickly (Sotiriou 170-171).

At the end of the first session we plan to give students two inventories that they will use in order to judge the quality of their own notes and the quality of their own skill as note-takers (Sotiriou 163-166). These inventories cover the most common problems faced by note-takers, such as taking disorganized notes and letting one's mind wander during a lecture. Both inventories follow the list of problems with another list of suggested coping strategies. The students' reactions to these inventories will form the basis of a discussion of note-taking problems to begin the second session.

Two Methods of Recording Notes

The second session then aims to introduce to students two methods of recording notes. I want to discuss more than one method because one single method will never suit all students, nor can we hope that one method will effectively deal with all the problems that students mention in the initial discussion. The first method is the traditional outlining method where we record the major topics, the main ideas and any relevant details and examples (McWhorter 208-9). The second method is the Cornell method, which means recording notes on the right hand side of the page and after the lecture, writing in questions on the left hand side of the page (Fault 127-132; Heiman & Slomianko 12-31; Sotiriou 172-3). With practice, students will come to see their notes as a

series of answers to questions, which means that in the long run students will be better prepared for their tests. When we present both methods, we will also use overhead transparencies with good and not-so-good example sets of notes, so that the advantages of using these two methods will become clear to students. The second session will conclude with some tips about taking notes in math and math-related courses (Sotirlou 169-170). Since approximately 80% of students at Michigan Tech are majoring in some field of engineering, problem solving topics predominate in lectures they attend.

Practice What You Preach

The third session aims to provide an opportunity for students to practice what was discussed in the previous two sessions. We have made a video of a segment of a lecture given in the Business School, and we will ask students to use one of the two methods for taking notes while watching it. After viewing and taking notes, they will form discussion groups; those using the outlining method and those preferring the Cornell method will be grouped separately. Students will compare their notes, and discuss problems they encountered while trying to take notes.

Reviewing Notes for Exam Preparation

The fourth aim is to present ways of using lecture notes when studying for exams. The key here is encouraging students to do active, mental work, rather than just reading passively. The ubiquitous highlighter really is a scourge that should be done away with: students use it, thinking they are marking out the important points, but really it covers up a lot of mental laziness, and delays serious learning. We feel that in order to commit ideas and facts to long term memory, students need to re-organize, synthesize and summarize material. We aim to attack this mental laziness on two fronts. First, we will discuss some faulty assumptions about studying (McWhorter 101-3), such as questioning the timing of study programs: eight hours spread throughout the week is probably more effective than eight hours spent cramming the night before, again because long term memory requires more time in order to work properly. Second, we will present three different techniques for reviewing notes, techniques which do in fact require active reorganization of a student's notes. These techniques

are mapping, laddering and boxing. all of which involve changing the spatial organization and physical appearance of ideas on the page (Chaffee 260-266; Sotirlou 197-203). Hopefully, as students are challenged to move ideas around in a visual sense, they will also be able to see relationships and grasp concepts more thoroughly. The fourth session concludes in the same way as the third one: with a chance to practice these new techniques. Students will practice mapping, laddering and boxing lecture notes, and in discussion groups will compare their revised notes.

The Outcome

We have yet to see what the success rate of our workshop will be. We hope that by presenting various methods of recording and reviewing notes, students' confidence in managing information will improve. This workshop means that our Writing Center is diversifying its services into the study skills area, but the techniques mentioned here can also be applied at various stages of the writing process. In the long run we will probably find the techniques described here to be useful tools in the context of discussing writing assignments as well as when developing note-taking skills.

Lyndall Nairn

Michigan Technological University
Houghton, Michigan

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Tutors' Column

The author of the following essay, Aisha O'Connor, is a former student of mine, presently a senior at Friends Select School who will be entering Bryn Mawr College next fall, and possible the best of a group of approximately forty student tutors selected from the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades who make up the staff of our writing center. A reader of the *Writing Lab Newsletter* and thoughtful as well as hard-working in her teaching, she impressed me earlier this school year by the work that she carried to a successful conclusion with the unnamed eleventh-grader who stars in the enclosed report of her activity. I encouraged her recently to put her account into writing, on the strength both of what she had to say and of the occasional calls for tutor-based descriptions of the tutorial process.

J.T. Barbarese, Director of the Writing Center

Whose paper is it, anyway?

The issue of "immediate help" brings into question the individual character of a subject's final product; at what point does a paper begin to sound like the tutor, and not the tutee? It is quite tempting for a tutor to insert the supposed "right word." The tutor's natural urge, however, may result in the complete transformation of his subject's work, which eventually may be a more accurate reflection of the former's ability and not the latter's.

Nevertheless, when I recall the individual sessions and conversations I had with F- - -, it is clear that he and I both learned several important things: I gained experience as a writing tutor, F- - - experimented with the niceties of analytical prose, and we both got to know each other as students and as people.

The aforementioned issue of individuality certainly arose during the period in which I worked with F- - - on a major research paper concerning witchcraft in 17th century Puritan New England. Although he was able to understand and interpret complex ideas presented in scholarly sources, he experienced difficulty in effectively paraphrasing them. His sentence structure and vocabulary are considerably weak, and I found myself, not infrequently, contributing what I perceived as a particularly impressive transition and rearranging his often horribly mangled creations into clear and flowing sentences. In one instance, he and I had a heated and prolonged argument which stemmed from his rejection of my ardent plea to use the term "deep-seated misogyny."

Upon realizing that my actions were pre-venting the two of us from accomplishing any-thing, I trained myself (not without much difficulty and remorse) to refrain from dissecting each sentence and scrutinizing every word.

I engage in such scrutiny of my own work, so naturally! would be inclined to apply this same practice to someone else's efforts. Alterations, however, though they may be fluent and desirable, often provide the tutor with a sense of accomplishment that surpasses that of the needy student. Indeed, F- - - objected to my word choices on several occasions, claiming that his teacher would never believe that he was the possessor of so expansive a vocabulary. In most instances I relented, but only after much altercation.

I have concluded that tutoring is, in many respects, a selfish practice that may bring more satisfaction to the tutor than his subject. Assuredly, I have not eliminated the altruistic element that involves tutoring an individual over several months. Still, it is a marvelous (and potentially dangerous) feeling to want to implement my ideas and words in someone else's work. F- - -, then, was perhaps justified in objecting so virulently to my earnest suggestions. Of course F- - - wanted his final effort to fully reflect his writing ability. Our two diverging interests collided, and a tacit agreement was reached: I stopped interjecting florid and often superfluous vocabulary words, hence refraining from literary self-glorification. F- - - made a greater effort too, soon after realizing that the paper's date

loomed near. He still remained open to any suggestions I had to offer and was impressed and content with several word substitutions that I made in his preliminary drafts.

Am I happy with the experience I had with F- - - ? The answer would have to be in the affirmative. I was not only made cognizant of the darker aspects of tutoring, but got to know F- - - himself: I previously thought he was just another rowdy junior that I could possibly shape into a more perceptive writer. I never thought that he had something to offer me.

Aisha O'Connor
Peer Tutor
Friends Select School
Philadelphia, PA

Young Rhetoricians' Conference

**June 22—24, 1989
Monterey, California**

The fifth annual celebration of the art of rhetoric will be held at Monterey Peninsula College and will include among its speakers William Lutz, Edward P. J. Corbett, Paul Hunter, and Don Lazere. For information contact Hans Guth or Gabriele Rico, Department of English, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA 95192-0090. Messages: (408) 924-4436.

Call for Papers

**Third Basic Writing Conference
September 30, 1989
University of Missouri-St. Louis**

The Third Basic Writing Conference chair has issued a call for papers to be presented Saturday, September 30, 1989 at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Abstracts for proposed sessions should be limited to two pages and, if a panel, should include the names and titles of each panel member. Possible topics include writing and reading labs, speaking/reading/writing, research, ESL, and special education. The chair is also seeking presentations about secondary school Basic Writing. Send abstracts by May 5, 1989, to Sally Fitzgerald, Director, Center for Academic Development, UM-St. Louis, 8001 Natural Bridge, St. Louis, MO 63121.

11th Annual Writing Centers Association: East Central Conference

**May 5-6, 1989
Ohio Wesleyan University
Delaware, Ohio**

This year's theme will be "Empowering our Students; Empowering Our Writing Centers." Keynote speakers will be Andrea Lunsford (The Ohio State University) as well as Chet Laine and Lucille Schultz (University of Cincinnati). Concurrent sessions will focus on such matters as tutor training, high school-college collaboration, disabled students, tutoring techniques, writing across the curriculum, relations between the writing center and administration, sharing sessions, and open forums. For more information, please contact Professor Ulle Lewes, English Department/Writing Resource Center, Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, OH 43015. Telephone: 614-369-4431, ext. 101 or 301.

The North Shore Writing Center Conference

**Sponsored by Maine Township
High School West and
Glenbrook North High School**

**May 1, 1989
Oakton Community College
Des Plaines, Illinois**

This one-day regional conference will bring together teachers and administrators at the high school level who are involved with or interested in writing centers. For further information, contact Paula Williams, Maine Township High School West, 1755 South Wolf Road, Des Plaines, Illinois 60018-1994 (312-827-6176) or Stu Snow, Glenbrook North High School, 2300 Shermer Road, Northbrook, Illinois 60062 (312-272-6400).

Addressing professional concerns

As professional directors of writing centers and teachers of composition, we have a document in our possession that can be very helpful to us in meetings involving other educators, as well as in proposals for advancement, grant writing, and other matters. I suggest that each of us become thoroughly familiar with this document and use it effectively in our professional activities. In 1985, Jeanne Simpson published a Statement of Professional Concerns for Writing Center Directors in *The Writing Center Journal*, which is now available as part of the starter kits offered to members of the National Writing Centers Association (NWCA). According to Simpson, the statement is the product of effort by the Executive Board and the Professional Concerns Committee of NWCA" and other members who provided answers in work-shops and through correspondence. This statement was very helpful to me since it listed many of the qualifications that I consider important in my work. It has also been helpful in a more global way. I have since used that document on a number of occasions to inform others of what is expected of writing center personnel.

At times, I have felt like John the Baptist crying in the wilderness, but our collective voices are more likely to convince others that the day of the writing center is coming. Administrators and other interested persons are far more likely to become convinced of the importance of our work when we can present a well written, carefully thought-out document that expresses not one person's convictions, but the commitment of a national organization, our own National Writing Centers Association. Now we have gone even further, thanks to the diligence of our leaders, and we have the official written endorsement of the National Council of Teachers of English. Some people in decision-making positions concerning salary and tenure have never heard of our regional writing center organizations or even NWCA, but they all understand the language when we say NCTE. We now have the support of a large group of dedicated, professional teachers of English who are saying that we are an essential part of a writing program.

It is surely our responsibility to be certain that our in-state colleagues know our needs and concerns. Last spring, I was asked

to participate in a panel discussion at Auburn University on the history and development of writing centers for the Alabama College English Teacher's Association (ACETA). I was pleased that my fellow writing teachers in the state were interested in our concerns as writing center personnel, but I was even more pleased at their enthusiastic support in response to the issues raised during the discussion. There was a suggestion that we form a committee to look into issues concerning writing center directors in the state. I was glad to have in my briefcase just the set of guidelines any committee would need as a starting point for such scrutiny. When our friends ask if they can help us, it speaks well for us that we have done our home-work. I had a flicker of hope that reminded me of the moment we all shared in our common history as writing teachers when the Wyoming Resolution was passed at Conference on College Composition and Communication in Atlanta. This resolution set up professional standards for salary norms and working conditions for post-secondary teachers of writing. I knew that something important was beginning at the national level, and I see that hope growing in my own state. How can we expect our col-leagues to work with us toward the common goal of excellence in teaching unless we make them aware of our needs? Since that meeting at Auburn, I have received expressions of concern and support from my friends in a statewide organization of English teachers that I have belonged to for nearly ten years- an organization in which I have mainly participated as a shy, quiet member because my position is different. Now that the discussion is open, I am not sure that I am so different. I share the goal of teaching our students to write well with a number of people who are concerned about my well-being, as well as that of our students. In fact, in the next issue of ACETA's newsletter, I was glad to see the following announcement listed under News from NCTE:

Resolved, that the National Council of Teachers of English endorse the principle that the establishment of a writing center should be a long-term commitment on the part of an institution, including stable budgeting and full academic status; and that NCTE widely publish this resolution to its affiliates and other professional organizations and refer institutions to the full text of the " Position Statement on Profes-

