

The **WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER**

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

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....from the editor....

June means (or should mean) vacation and a time for us all to relax. For the newsletter that, in turn, means the last issue for this academic year. Because I hope you'll be reading this as you loll in a hammock somewhere where balmy breezes blow, this issue is a contemplative, reflective one to be read at your leisure. This month you'll find thoughtful discussions of where we've been and where we are headed. Even our Tutors' Column author entitles his essay The Journey Continues."

On that hopeful note, we'll meet again through these pages in the September issue- that is, if your mailing label has an expiration date of 9/90 or later. Please use just a bit of that summer quiet to send in your donation for \$10 (before August 1) so that we don't have to lose touch with you.

I wish us all some calm "down-time" to revitalize those creative juices that keep us going during the crisis management period known as "beginning of school" next fall. Until September.....

Muriel Harris, editor

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A Tutoring Retrospective*

Last year I was asked to give the keynote address at the Pennsylvania Association of Tutoring. It was a challenging, albeit worrisome assignment. Here was a chance to put together, for myself and for others, what I've observed and learned during my seventeen years in the field of tutoring. Proceeding methodically, I went through my files and took out my years of tutoring material: books, articles, reports and general memorabilia, and read. Questions, large and troubling questions, began to form in my mind. What did I have to show for all these years of work? And what did the field have to show for all that has been done in it over these years? Would I, I wondered, be able to be positive about a field that has always had to justify itself- to administrators, to faculty, to students. In such difficult times for education, had we survived in a viable way? Would we continue to survive, even prosper? I did a lot of soul searching.

Then one night at a chamber music concert as I leaned back and rhapsurized at the glorious

Mozart piece, I looked at the clarinetist- a young man, in his early 30s. Something about him made me look more carefully. I knew him. How? Where? He must be famous, I thought. I looked at the back of the program. No, that wasn't it. He was a working musician, but he wasn't a household name. Several hours later I realized that over a dozen years ago at LaGuardia's center, he had been one of our first tutors. He used to put notices of his concerts on the tutoring lounge bulletin board. I had al-ways meant to go. Now I had.

Oddly enough, this incident was a kind of epiphany. I keep thinking about it, about seventeen years of tutors whose commitment and talent and intensity have energized students and faculty and administrators and continue to keep us honest. Get a group of tutoring directors together and they'll inevitably start bragging about their tutors, often declaring that they'd rather spend their spare time in the tutoring center than in their own faculty lounges, that despite cutbacks in funding, and diminished administrative support, the tutors continue to bring the magic to education. And what magic- year after year, connecting with students out of intense idealism, out of a real, lived belief in the collaborative efficacy of the learning process. They may not have to deal with the mundane realities of budgets and deans, of testing and grading, of tenure and promotion, but they do not reap the benefits of academia either- the stature and pay afforded a full-time college teacher. Pure love- of their work, of their students- keeps them going. Many jobs pay much more, many jobs are easier or more convenient- but few are more rewarding. When tutors eventually go on to "retire," to begin other lives, they leave a de-voted, admiring following, not only of students, but of we who stay behind.

A few weeks ago, before we had opened for the term, a student wandered into our center and asked for Ellen's tutoring schedule. When I told him Ellen had left to work for a publisher, he asked when she would be back, and I said, "She won't be back. But we can set you up with someone else" to which he replied, quite logically, "But she won't be Ellen." It's moments like that, and at the chamber concert, seeing Richard so splendid and intense at his art, that validate the past seventeen years and give me courage for the future. Whatever else happens, I can trust the tutors. They always come through. If the academic world can seem

like the world Orlando describes in *As You Like It*, "Where none will sweat but for promotion./ And having that, do choke their service up/ Even with the having"- it is the tutors who constantly remind us that education is about learning, and collaborating, and serving, not about self-serving. Unfortunately, most college faculty do not recognize the contribution tutors have made- and the very fact they do not is symptomatic of the problematic status tutoring still has in American higher education. Too many faculty never connect with, or even speak to, tutors; many administrators think first of cutting tutoring when cuts must be made.

My own involvement in the field of tutoring was typical. As a junior member of the faculty, I was "ordered" to start a writing center by the director of the writing program. "What do I know about writing centers; I'm in literature," I told him. But I followed orders and now, for better or worse, nothing but our eradication could pry me loose from working with the Center. I was only one of many faculty with no background in the field pulled from the ranks to start tutoring centers- in fact, seventeen years ago, there wasn't much background and hardly a field at all. The job had little status in those days (I'm not suggesting we have a great deal now- we're still waiting for our first endowed chair of tutoring, I believe). Recruitment of directors was done haphazardly and more than a little arbitrarily. What we lacked in expert-

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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.

ence, however, we made up for in enthusiasm, especially when we recognized that while we might be isolated in our department, we were part of a major cross-campus and cross-institutional movement.

One could call the 1970s "the golden years" of tutoring, for in those years tutoring first became a movement: the number of centers increased by about 50% and there was much optimism about the future. Many of these centers, like mine, were a consequence of the liberal attitudes of the late 60s and the felt need to give untraditional students more of a chance to complete a college education. Open enrollment and other special programs were other responses to this pressure, and the size of the student body at many colleges increased dramatically as a result. The nature of the student body also changed markedly: suddenly minority students, veterans, those who in the 70s recession couldn't find jobs or needed retraining, adults, especially women returning after raising children, and new waves of immigrants, for whom English was a second or third language, seemed to displace the more traditional kind of student just out of secondary school. When the recession of the mid-70s caused a reduction in the number of faculty lines, tutoring was seen in many institutions as an inexpensive alternative to educating students. (Not surprisingly, there were also many very qualified, in some cases overqualified, people around looking for tutoring jobs in those days.) Ironically, while many institutions did not necessarily want these new, harder-to-teach students, neither did they want to lose them. To put the matter baldly: students, no matter how ill-prepared, meant revenue in times of financial hardships. However, aside from a few special programs, often involving segregated instruction, the institution's basic survival strategy became tutoring.

While never an educational priority, tutoring was at least being soundly funded in the 70s; Special Services was in the vanguard of federally-funded tutoring programs and was paralleled by state-funded programs like ACT One in Pennsylvania and College Discovery in New York. Dick Donovan's FIPSE-funded Networks began in the mid-70s on the East coast, as did the New York College Learning Skills Association. Martha Maxwell's Summer Institute for Learning Center Personnel in the West, and Milton "Bunk" Spann's Developmental Education Institute in the South brought

together some of the best educators in developmental education and support services, and journals like the Writing Lab Newsletter. Research and Teaching in Developmental Education. NAARDSPE Newsletter, and the Journal of Basic Writing kept us informed and thinking about the field. At conferences and through consultations, I was able to work with many new directors and staff of tutoring centers. There was a lot of energy in those days and much positive feeling. Many of these people had, like me, only recently begun their work with tutoring centers, yet so many more entered the field just behind us that we soon felt like old-timers, wise beyond our few years of experience. Concerns were very practical: new directors wanted to know how to get started, where to get tutors, how much to pay them, how to train them, how to evaluate them, how to evaluate the centers, how to get funding- in sum, how to develop, grow, and survive.

I'm sure these issues sound familiar. At LaGuardia's Center we must have given from 25-50 tours a year in the late 70s to visitors who kept asking the same basic, vitally practical questions. Yet, these were never boring sessions because visitors came to us filled with enthusiasm, promise, and good will. We were all really learning together, pioneering the field, we who had just begun and we who were just beginning. Often the visitors had recently received a grant or been charged by their chair or dean to "do something about tutoring." Usually, they were thrilled with this opportunity to build a program from scratch; occasionally, they were overwhelmed. There was so much to be done so quickly, but the help you could give students was immediate and compelling.

What were the major issues in the 70s? Practical concerns, obviously, came first:

- *Is tutoring best placed in a learning center or individual subject-area labs?
- *Should one hire peer or professional tutors?
- *Should a lab offer 1:1 tutoring, group tutoring or both?
- *What should the status of the director be? (Whom should the director report to?)
- *What is the best way to convince faculty the lab can help their students?

*How can faculty work in partnership with a lab?

Later came more philosophical matters: *How does tutoring differ from teaching?

*Should computer-assisted instruction be part of a lab's programs?

*How much counseling should a tutor do?

*Should tutors help students with work-in-progress (a work not yet handed in) ?

*How much training does a tutor need?

Most of the practical concerns have been, more or less, resolved, in different ways to meet the needs of each particular campus. The philosophical issues, however, are still being debated, and, I suspect, some can never be resolved. One of these, and a particular interest of mine, regards computer use in tutoring centers. At most centers, computers are here to stay. Yet, I remember one day, ten years ago, at Martha Maxwell's Summer Institute for Learning Center personnel, a heated discussion about whether or not to let computers into a tutoring lab at all. (We thought we had a choice!) One professor from a midwestern university was indignant: "Computers cannot be allowed to replace people," he asserted loudly, "We must fight it!" Indeed many fought it - my assistant, for example, refused to take part in training programs when our computers were first delivered three years ago. He still claims he hates them; but he's learned how to use them, and spends much of his time in the computer room of our center, working, not grumbling. What we've learned, I think, is that computers are not a threat; everyone, even deans, now knows CAI cannot replace, but only supplement, human interaction. Tutors can never be replaced by machines, and computers have been proven remarkably efficient at some tasks, like the reviewing and testing of certain kinds of skills and concomitantly in the management of certain skills programs which require the diagnosis and testing of large numbers of students (particularly a competency-based developmental skills program). Their function as word processors facilitates the tutoring of writing by making it easier for students to write and revise and for tutors to intervene productively during the various stages of the process.

Where computer technology has been deficient is in developing interactive programs that involve students productively in the learning process. At my writing center we have yet to find a good program to help students generate, draft or revise an essay, although there are relatively good programs for helping students learn lower-level skills, like rote grammar.

I think if I've learned anything in the past seventeen years, I've learned there are no "model programs," only programs that work at their own institution. For example, there is a well-equipped learning center at Dartmouth College; but little tutoring takes place there, primarily programmed instruction, for it is a residential school and tutoring can be done at a place mutually convenient to tutor and tutee- often a dorm room or student lounge. At my own institution, a two-year commuter school, we have individual subject area labs for math, reading, writing, and ESL, and all tutoring takes place in these labs since there is really nowhere else on campus quiet or secluded enough for the task.

During the past two decades, certain developments in pedagogy have changed the nature of tutoring in very meaningful ways; for example, collaborative learning; cognitive research into the writing process; work on math and writing anxiety; the recognition of writing as a recursive and developmental process; and studies showing the inextricable links of reading and writing. Work in collaborative learning has led to the institution of peer-tutoring programs and, in some cases, to the creation of credit-bearing peer-tutoring courses. More important, it has overturned the notion of the teacher as an inflexible authority, the font of all knowledge, and emphasized instead learning as a communal activity and of knowledge being, and I'll use a rather unpopular word today, relative to the needs and norms of the community. Research into the writing process has had, probably, the greatest impact on writing and ESL tutoring, for it points clearly to the benefits of tutoring as intervention during all stages of the process. Fears of faculty that tutors "do the work for students" can be abated by techniques stressing revision as a natural, desirable part of the writing process from beginning to end.

The description of math and writing anxiety was accompanied by an increase in attention in the 60s and '70s to the affective

domain of learning. Again, it has been tutors who have been able to use an increased understanding of the role of the affective domain in learning, and thus it was in tutoring centers that many of the most effective intervention techniques were developed and tested. The tutoring lab, for many of us, has become a true laboratory where we study and uncover how students best learn and where we are able to improve techniques to facilitate learning.

A logical extension of the pioneering work centers have done in developing methods of working with non-traditional students has been their efforts in faculty development. Such efforts have taken several paths: many tutoring labs give internships to graduate students whose tutoring work gives them valuable experience and training. (Since we have no graduate students at LaGuardia, we recruit and train graduate students from area colleges- whom English departments in the city, including our own, only too gladly steal away as adjuncts once they've gotten some experience- a compliment, surely, to our ability as recruiters and trainers, but, unfortunately, also a big drain on our yearly staff.) Moreover, the placement of reading and writing-across-the-curriculum programs in tutoring centers has given them a leadership role in helping students and faculty understand how to integrate these skills into their disciplines. Through specialized workshops and presentations (for example, on grammar, study skills, research methods, even computer literacy) to students and faculty across the curriculum, centers have become a major interdepartmental network on some campuses.

But the new role of the tutoring center necessitates a competent staff, a staff that is well-trained. Until the late 1970s, programmatic training was all but ignored by most centers; at best it was handled at yearly orientations. Tutors were, after perhaps two or three sessions, left to their own devices, the theory being that they knew more than their students, so what harm could they do? However, with the "professionalization" of tutoring, training has become recognized as a critical priority at many tutoring centers; it is not surprising, then, that so many advances in faculty training have come out of the tutor training that antedated it. For, while it was always recognized that teachers needed to learn their subjects, no one ever thought, until very recently, that he or she needed to learn

how to teach. On the other hand, no one doubted that tutors needed to learn to tutor; what was always in question was how much time, money and energy should be invested in training them. When tutors became responsible for large numbers of students, it became obvious that the investment would be worth it, and if we are to judge by the number of conference workshops, articles, and books on the subject, tutor training was, for awhile, a major preoccupation in the field. Despite impressive advances, however, tutor training is still seen as a luxury and treated all too cavalierly on many campuses. When funds are cut, training is the first item to be crossed off the budget and the last to be put back. When we have funding, we scrimp on it. We often don't pay tutors to attend training sessions or don't require attendance at these sessions. Training costs money, but the benefits are well worth it. Without proper training tutors are no better than mentors, paid friends who, in a hit and miss fashion, might succeed sometimes, might fail sometimes, and might, most often perhaps, make no real difference in student learning.

What kind of shape then is tutoring in today? Although budgets have been declining nationwide due to devastating cutbacks in spending on education, particularly developmental education, never very popular in a Republican administration (where the prevailing idea seems to be tautological, namely, those who get a decent education are those who deserve to get it), tutoring has been permanently changed as a result of the golden years. Centers are more experienced, they've been around awhile, and while supervisory personnel may have moved on, structures and systems are in place, although we must always guard against becoming too set in our ways, too tradition-bound. There are established formal ways of operating that are geared to respond to the changing needs of individual institutions. Centers are known, accepted, expected, and needed on most campuses. Yet, many battles still need to be fought since tutoring budgets are always vulnerable to budget cuts. Nonetheless, I don't think tutoring will ever again be seen as a threat, or worse, as unnecessary to an institution's educational mission. Indeed, in many cases tutoring has been written into many skills programs as a requirement, and a number of developmental programs are even housed in learning centers. Moreover, on numerous campuses the writing-across-the-curriculum

program is seen as a major writing center responsibility- and achievement.

Strangely, despite all the changes, the major issues confronting tutoring administrators today are relatively the same as in the 70s, although the emphases may have shifted. When the CUNY Writing Center Association reconvened last year to form a new association, we all had a chance to list our concerns, which were, as seventeen years before, insufficient and declining budgets, low or insecure status of personnel (faculty status for directors has always been a major issue), procurement, pay, and the training of tutors. But when I visit centers I see the differences: I see more sensitivity to the needs of the handicapped, especially the learning disabled. I see a recognition on the part of tutoring personnel that their students are culturally diverse and in need of sensitive and informed assistance, and I see increased respect and appreciation for tutors, a recognition that shows itself in somewhat higher pay, in an ever-increasing faculty reliance, even a dependence, on tutoring help, and in the recognition that tutoring is a worthy apprenticeship to teaching.

However, I do see a major challenge for tutoring in the next decade, and that is the crisis over literacy. No longer are educational pundits concerned with giving students "basic skills," as they were in the 1970s, but rather with filling them with information: indeed, it is implied, skills are easy enough to acquire by those who are deserving. The avatars of literacy write about an academy too committed to the process of education, and not enough to what they are learning. The derogation of standards that has resulted, they tell us, can be stopped and standards raised only by a return to a more traditional curriculum. E. D. Hirsch contends in *Cultural Literacy* that at around fourth grade, reading comprehension begins to depend on more cultural knowledge than culturally disadvantaged students have. They must be given this knowledge, and the second half of his book contains a list of "things" (books, facts, dates) that will ensure a student's cultural literacy, at least Hirsch's version of it. Wayne Booth, among many others, has challenged that notion. In a Summer 1988 *Change* magazine debate, Booth challenged Hirsch directly: "For you the goal seems to be a nation of knowers who can talk with each other about what they know. For me, it is a nation of learners, a nation in which

teachers, students, parents, and the great public would all be engaged in self education - all eagerly reading and talking together about matters that matter." Education, Booth writes, is not a closed matter, where you learn a series of facts: it is an open and ongoing process where you learn about something as a way of continuing to modifying your knowledge through discussion and experience. For Booth, and for most educators, there is no list, there can be no list: an educated person is a person of intellectual abilities, not sheer information.

What does all this have to do with tutoring? For me, Booth's description of a nation of learners sounds like a description of a tutoring center at its best. For tutoring is a way of "empowering" students to become independent learners. No one would want to argue that our students do not need to know more, but if the problems in higher education in our country came from mere lack of knowledge, they could have been easily solved long ago by traditional methodologies. (We can all imagine, I suspect, the Gradgrind-like approach that would probably be used in teaching and testing students on their ability to master Hirsch's list.) What studies have found is that students, particularly nontraditional students, do not learn best with traditional teaching methods or curricula, but then it should come as no surprise that methods devised where education was meant to be exclusionary do not work when education has become, or is attempting to become, more inclusionary. Tutoring centers long have offered successful alternative approaches, not only in giving students a chance to interact intimately with a tutor but in helping them to learn how to learn. We specialize in teaching the learner, not the list.

My suspicion is that all this emphasis on product- on how many things a student knows- is really a way of disempowering the learner, of increasing his/her dependence on authority, an authority empowered by tradition; it is, in sum, the power of a white, patriarchal, essentially reactionary establishment, an establishment that encourages everyone to come to the game and compete, but loads the cultural dice in its favor beforehand. The non-traditional student cannot be expected to fare well in such an alien environment. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Professor of English, Comparative Literature, and African Studies at Cornell, said at a recent conference on the

Teaching in the Center

Six years ago, Stephen North expressed the frustration at the marginality- even invisibility- felt by many writing center staff in "The Idea of A Writing Center":

The source of my frustration? Ignorance: the members of my profession, my col-leagues, people I might see at MLA or CCCC or read in the pages of College English, do not understand what I do. They do not understand what does hap-pen, what can happen, in a writing center (433).

Six years later, not much has changed. Besides the uncertain staffing and budget, and the less-than-ideal physical conditions, writing center personnel continue to contend with the misunderstanding not just of colleagues in our departments, but surprisingly, of those we think should know better- our compatriot writing teachers. The frustration writing center staff feel is certainly buttressed by the lack of money and space, but a key source of that frustration is the continuing view of tutoring in writing centers as academic clean up work.

One important cause of this mistaken perception, often cited by authors like Ken Bruffee, and John and Tilly Warnock, is that the teaching in writing centers runs counter to the conventional notion of teaching: students, not teachers, set the agenda; the tutor responds and suggests rather than directs. The student may or may not take the suggestions, and for that matter, may not return for another session. And of course, there are no grades or evaluations. Because the teaching that occurs in writing centers is often informal, collaborative, and egalitarian, it is invisible. And this invisibility makes writing centers vulnerable to uncertain budgets, staffing, and locations, but most importantly, vulnerable to the misunderstanding that marginalizes writing centers not just within our home institutions, but even within our departments' writing programs.

All of us are accustomed to naming the differences in teaching as those between the conventional lecture model and the process-oriented model. These differences are real: however, subtle, but significant, differences exist even within the process-oriented model. This very subtlety renders them invisible. In other words, the similarity between the teach-

ing in many writing classrooms and the teaching in the writing center invites writing center staff and writing teachers to make two assumptions. They are that writing teachers already know (1) how teaching and learning occur in the writing center, and (2) how the writing tutor's stance toward clients differs from the writing teacher's stance toward a student in conference. However, differences- important ones because they are unacknowledged- do exist between the two kinds of teaching.

One difference is hidden by the assumption of both writing teachers and writing center faculty that conferences and tutorials are identical. They are not. Individual conferences do not have the same tasks and goals as tutorials; they are different because in the average 15-20 minute conference between teacher and student, the teacher is concerned with how this piece of writing fits into the semester's writing goals. In addition, she is concerned with the demonstration and development of certain skills (e.g., providing appropriate evidence, supplying a thesis statement), and that these be practiced and mastered before moving to the next piece. Whereas, in the writing center, the tutor can focus exclusively on one piece of writing, often on one problem in that piece, and on one student-without the teacher's concerns.

More importantly, in the conference, the teacher remains the evaluator. So much has been written about the power of the grade that most teachers recognize that its impact on the student-teacher relationship, though regrettable, is a necessary condition in that relationship. However, that recognition does not negate the grade's impact upon the interaction between student and teacher. In a conference, no matter how non-directively the teacher may phrase suggestions, the student is far more likely to interpret them as something closer to commands. The student is also far more willing to turn over ownership of the paper to the teacher in exchange for a higher grade. In a tutoring session, the absence of this power dynamic does not necessarily mean that tutor and client are completely equal. But in the absence of the grade, the student is freer to interpret the tutor's comments as suggestions, not commands, and thus retain primary owner-ship of the paper.

However, because neither writing teachers nor writing center faculty have explored these differences, the understanding we think we have between us is incomplete and sometimes distorted. To compound the problem, none of us seems to be aware that this misunderstanding even exists.

One result is that instead of discussing what happens in a tutoring session, we emphasize the center's academic support services, such as workshops, hot lines, and lending libraries, to enhance our visibility. Rather than reporting on the learning that goes on, we offer head counts. In the process, we increase visibility, but it is the visibility of the center's administrative function; its teaching function remains hidden.

Ignoring its teaching function reduces writing center work to a luxury, a support service which enhances classroom teaching rather than extends and completes it. This denies the unique power of the writing center setting to facilitate an individual writer's development. Thus, faced with possible budget cuts, the center is viewed as "fat," which can be trimmed for the continued health of a writing program rather than as a vital organ whose removal might endanger a healthy program.

Stephen North and others have eloquently called for writing center faculty to examine writing center teaching. We would add that we must begin to talk not just to ourselves but to our colleagues about teaching writing in this unique setting. We must document for them the specific differences between conferences and tutorials. We must begin to talk with them about how those differences are manifested in power relationships, goals, methods, and results. All the other strategies we have tried have underscored our marginal status. If we want to establish writing centers as necessary components in well-developed, coherent writing programs, we must reclaim the primacy of the writing center's teaching function, not only for our writing teacher colleagues, but for ourselves.

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A New Book for Middle and Secondary School Writing Labs

Penny Frankel and Kay Severns, whose writing center at Deerfield High School was designated as a Center of Excellence by NCTE, have just written a booklet entitled *Building a Writing Center: From Idea to Identity*. The subtitle, "Guidelines for Establishing a Writing Center at the Middle and Secondary School Levels," indicates the purpose of this highly useful 69-page booklet which includes the following sections: The Foundation, Philosophy, Staffing, Staff Training, Validation and Records, WERCS Perks, and Evaluating the Center. There is also a bibliography, and numerous examples of forms (such as sign-up sheets, tutor recruitment letters, appointment notices, tutor evaluations, tutor tips, and teacher questionnaires) are offered in the appendices.

Distribution details will appear in a future issue of the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, but if you'd like more information now, contact the authors, Penny Frankel and Kay Severns, at Deerfield High School, 1959 Waukegan Road, Deerfield, Illinois 60015.

Tutors' Column

The Journey Continues

Why am I a tutor? Over the past semesters, many incidents and comments have influenced and changed my perceptions on tutoring. These incidents and comments are part of my journey; this journey's goal is to answer the above question. Some of the reasons I tutor are clear and obvious, such as wanting to help others and improve my own writing. However, other reasons are more complex and confusing, such as acknowledging a part of myself and understanding a little more about people in general. The journey is difficult because it is an emotional and personal one. I don't have much of an idea where this journey leads, but I do know where it started.

I entered the first semester of tutoring full of idealism. After completing extremely useful writing workshops in English IA and IB and hearing about a shortage of writing tutors, I decided that becoming a tutor might be an interesting and challenging assignment. I would get a chance to develop much needed interpersonal skills, and the students and I would work together to develop essays and improve our writing skills. Our sessions would be totally professional; few, if any, outside interests would inhibit us for that hour or two hours a week that we met. And yet, as the sessions started, I began to see other purposes that I could serve as a tutor.

I started to share parts of my University of California experience. Depending on the student's major, we discussed classes, instructors and other relevant topics like scheduling, commuting and dorm life. In terms of classes, I always highlighted the fact that the Golden Bear Student Learning Center sponsors study groups in most introductory courses and that most people found them useful. Also, I shared the fact that the study groups provided an opportunity for students to make friends. Tutoring, though, remained a very objective experience; I never did much self-examination, but as I now think more about it, there are more subjective and personal reasons why I became and remain a tutor.

Maybe it was the first time that I noticed the

cultural and racial divisions in the Golden Bear that forced me to reconsider my role as a tutor. It amazes me that the white tutors, for the most part, hang out together, and that the minority tutors, for the most part, hang out together, and it appears that there is little informal cross communication between the two groups. This seems expected and accepted by most people in the center. Given that a substantial number of Golden Bear customers are students of color, it looks strange that this polarity between the races would exist; this realization irks me because it reminds me of classes like Math 16A, History 4B and Physics 10 that I've taken here at Cal. I remember too clearly how the races, for the most part, polarized themselves. For some reason, I thought that the Golden Bear was different, but it too is infected with the same ethnocentrism as the rest of the campus.

When I spoke with a few white tutors, they expressed a sincere desire to help and empower their students. And yet, if on an informal basis white tutors feel uncomfortable with students of color, then I wonder how they feel interaction with their tutees of color. Also, when I spoke with a few Afro-American tutors, they too expressed a strong desire to empower their students but seem to prefer hanging out with other Afro-Americans. This scenario goes against the pseudo-liberal idealism that brings some students to Cal and breeds a great deal of cynicism. Given that this ethnocentrism exists on both sides, I wonder how many people acknowledge it. This realization irks me not only because it represents something "disturbing," but also because it forces me to deal with my own ethnocentric feelings and for good or bad how the Golden Bear itself reflects and perpetuates some of the exclusive attitudes on campus. As a tutor, I must strive to understand these attitudes and how they affect me in tutoring.

A study group leader's comment made me aware of another role of a tutor. This leader asked me why I was always in the Golden Bear, and when I told her that I was a writing tutor, she expressed surprise- she actually told me

that she thought that I was being tutored all those times when I was sitting at a table. Those types of comments make me angry, upset and frustrated. Her comment angers me because it is extremely disempowering. Her reaction suggested that somehow because I was going to her study group for one class, I couldn't be proficient in another. This reflects one of the greatest negative stereotypes about seeking help- if you need it for even one class, then you must be dumb. I was upset that this leader somehow saw my study group attendance as a sign of weakness and not one of trying to get ahead because that's why I was there. One thing that I definitely try to do as a tutor is maintain the assumption that my students are coming to sessions to get ahead.

The Affirmative Action meeting also reinforced another role of a tutor. As we discussed issues of race and the person-of-color experience at Cal, an anger that first erupted freshman year was now resurfacing. This rage centers on the fact that white tutors and minority tutors have different frames of reference. It is difficult for a minority tutor to appreciate the white student's experience at Cal and for the white student to appreciate the person of color's experience at Cal. For example, there is no question that racism is still a problem today; however, a white tutor may not agree or even see my point. The emotional charge of these issues makes it difficult for me to acknowledge or even express their importance. When a white social science tutor expressed his need to show his students how much he knows about the subject in their first session... I wanted to rip his head off. How could he take such a paternalistic attitude toward his students? I hoped that none of his students were people of color. At a campus where a significant number of people consider minorities academically inferior, you don't need some insecure tutor further perpetuating this stereotype and untruth. As a tutor, I now see that I must be sensitive to my attitudes regarding these issues and accept their existence.

The change in the ethnic makeup of my students also enhanced my understanding of the tutoring process. The first semester, my students were Hispanic and Asian. This semester they are all Afro-American. At first, I didn't think that this would matter, and yet it does-I'm quite pleased. I appreciate the chance to help another Afro-American student. This is strange for me because I've never thought of

myself as being ethnocentric, though I've always been sensitive to racial issues. I guess I never expected this feeling to demonstrate itself in such an obvious manner. Having all Afro-American students makes it easier for me to think about my own experience though I'm still mega-uncomfortable discussing it. As I talk with students, I gain an appreciation for the "Black" student experience at Cal and not just the "student" experience at Cal. As a tutor, I am now more willing to acknowledge this experience though I've just done so two times this semester. First, I shared with students a 1983 Daily Cal article on the Black experience at Cal. Second, as a student and I worked on an essay on Dr. King, I discovered a sentence where the student refers to the 1960's society as Dr. King's society. For a quick moment, I thought about what progress and lack of it there's been in race relations; and then I asked the student to change the "his" society to "our" society to highlight that the battles Dr. King fought years ago are still raging today- are still raging in me.

My reasons for tutoring are much more complex than I first realized. Wanting to help others is always meaningful, but I stay for more subjective reasons. The idealism is still very strong; however, it is also complemented by a firm sense of reality. I remain at the Golden Bear because every day I'm forced to deal with issues of race. True, the ultimate goal of all tutors regardless of race is the same- the empowerment of our students to become better writers, but we cannot say that race doesn't matter. We must be willing to admit and accept differences of opinion, experience and attitude. The challenge is not for all of us to see each other as being alike; rather the challenge is for all of us to examine, appreciate and respect our differences. We must strive for inclusiveness, not sameness. The Golden Bear is at the forefront of a timeless tension- race relations. The Student Learning Center is one of the few places on campus that openly strives to achieve some understanding of this complex and dense issue. I stay to comprehend these relations and how and why they affect me. I stay because this journey is a difficult, challenging, rewarding and personal one. I'm not here to accuse or attack, but I wonder how many others are on the same journey.

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Tutor
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Empowering Ourselves: New Directions for the Nineties

The 1985 Guide to Writing Programs by Tori Haring-Smith briefly outlined the make-up of writing centers across the country. It is evident that at that time writing centers were forming vigorous expansion plans: moving into larger spaces, beginning work with Writing-Across-the-Curriculum programs, thinking about computer-assisted tutoring, working out writing fellows programs, and pleading for more than minimum budgets. What has happened in the four or five years since that information was gathered? That question stimulated my over-zealous survey this past fall. I'm sure some of you answered it; slightly over one hundred center directors responded, and we have just finished entering all they wrote. (Writing center directors have little time to answer, but once they get started...!) While there are many interesting profiles which are shaping up as a result of the questionnaires, the final essay question intrigued me: In what direction do you see your writing center developing? What barriers or supports exist which will direct this movement? The answers showed that we had indeed "empowered" ourselves, but they also implied that writing center directors may face some uninvited consequences as a result of their expansion.

There were, of course, the expected answers to this question: we are looking for permanent funding; we'd like to move out of the English department because of their suspicion and lack of support; we need more space; we need more staff. But there were also stories of acceptance: writing centers speak of stronger faculty relationships (even with English department members), of finally getting some university funding, of rolling in computers, computers, and more computers and of moving into larger space. However, as I read about the changes that occurred over the last few years in these writing centers, one shift repeatedly emerged: the movement from being a writing center to being a center for writing. Directors no longer exclusively focus on bringing people into the center; they move out with the re-search and experiences of the center's work.

This may not seem new. Brown University's writing fellows and the practice of attaching writing consultants to courses at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point were

both reported in the 1985 Guide to Writing Programs, as were others. Yet few other writing centers reported having staff, support, funding or inclination to pursue that direction. That is no longer true.

Of the nearly 100 college writing center: which responded to the survey, 50% reported planned or recently implemented programs where staff act as consultants to classes, or to faculty, university or community programs. Whereas before, writing centers were tucked in remote corners of campus, we now see prominent directors and staff taking part in creating classroom practices and assignments on which previously they had passively worked. I use the word passively because, like others, I have silently fumed over a senseless assignment in which the students are asked to "write five sentences with semi-colons in a cohesive paragraph"; tutors have walked into my office and asked in disbelief how they are supposed to tutor international students who must "write about anything" In their first composition class our tutors write in their journals about assignments that consist of exercises in memorization and writing games which amount to figure-out-what-the-teacher-believes-and-write-it. Instead of pushing silently against these practices, centers are forming cooperative alliances writing the academic community; they have become active advocates of good writing practices at all levels. The most obvious position for a writing center to start is within a WAC program.

Of those centers who reported increased roles in academic decisions, 49% indicated expanding their role in writing across the curriculum. According to the survey, many universities and colleges are just beginning WAC programs and centers are being asked to hold faculty workshops and educate teaching assistants in composition theory and conferencing techniques. Along these lines, centers are being asked to perform the role of consultant: tutors are called upon for "classroom intervention." At the University of Toledo last year, two of our tutors worked with an upper division history class that, together with local and state historical societies, created a public history exhibit for Toledo Edison. Tutors helped with both the organization of the pictured display since it followed a historical

narrative order- as well as with the copy which accompanied the pictures.

In addition to requests for tutors in classes, writing center directors are increasingly called upon to act as the main facilitator for WAC. Directors serve as consultants to departments developing writing intensive courses; directors sit in on classes to see how writing can be incorporated into them; directors often act as faculty workshop coordinators.

For writing centers, the WAC role also includes serving as a resource/research center. Many writing centers have collected articles on writing in various disciplines. At the University of Toledo, these are available to faculty members who need to begin researching writing in their disciplines. In turn, faculty are asked to send back copies of articles on discipline-specific writing that they might find, and to forward copies of their writing ideas so the file can grow and evolve. Because of these efforts and the writing center resources, there is an increased emphasis on stimulating faculty to write articles for professional publications. Supporting this movement in Toledo is a bimonthly faculty writing workshop with a fluctuating attendance of five to ten faculty members. Participants read one or two works in progress and collegially critique the text. We also discuss writing in general, exchange journals which welcome interdisciplinary writing, serve as resources for grants, and have devoted a meeting to the writing of successful (and unsuccessful) grants.

In addition to the activities which stem from a campus writing-across-the-curriculum movement, 15% of the total respondents re-ported " gradually gaining control over the basic writing courses" or being "significantly involved in creating curriculum for the fresh-man writing programs." One center reported that "we will be responsible for administering and teaching basic writing classes... [and] have already acquired a greater role in the newly developed orientation program." This is a trend I recognize as I am called on to participate in freshman composition book selection or in teaching assistant and adjunct instructor training sessions. In my capacity as chair of the WAC Committee, I exchange ideas with an English Department that is incorporating more critical skills into their freshman composition courses.

Directors also reported "providing feedback to departments about the kinds of problems students are having in classes." Many of the centers, as we do, send xeroxed reports to professors whose students use the centers. Some centers provide end-of-the-year reports to department chairs; these address the kinds of problems (and, indirectly, the kinds of assignments) students bring into the center.

The influence of these centers for writing extend beyond their immediate settings to outreach programs. These efforts come from centers in colleges or high schools that connect via tutor training exchanges, tutor pen pals, high school teacher in-service sessions run by WC directors, and from those centers which offer community and business writing hotlines.

Indeed, the responses to the questionnaire demonstrate that writing centers have become empowered beyond many of our dreams. Having played the underdog long enough, there is a new brand of director who can point to other, established centers and show the possibilities for enhancing programs. Having claimed we can assist writers in all disciplines, having promoted writing to learn, we are now being asked to share our expertise. Having participated in the conflicts within English departments- the split between composition and literature among others- our research is being sought, our professionalism acknowledged. Writing centers are beginning to or are already accepted as viable programs in many universities. And if that is not yet true on your campus, believe me, there is hope to be taken from what has happened on other campuses. But as a result of our new status there are some dangers on the horizon:

New skills requirements are being mandated in many states. In Texas, students will have to pass a rigorous assessment exam before completing nine non-remedial credit hours; directors report added pressure to teach for the test in their writing centers. Similarly, New Jersey requires an eleventh grade skills test which puts pressure on some high school writing centers to teach to that test. In Texas, one center's solution was to establish a separate remedial lab to answer the special needs now dictated by the state legislature. But other centers feared that such accountability would reattach the remedial label they have fought so hard to shake. Ironically, these centers ac-knowledge that it is precisely because of their

success on campus that they have been given this additional task.

Two writing centers report that due to increased legislative pressure, their peer-run group sessions have turned into mini-classes. Syllabi have been drawn up to meet the demands of assessment tests, and directors find themselves acting the role of teacher rather than tutor. While collaboration still guides these groups in theory, one director wrote of "teaching for the test" and the other reported "structuring workshop exercises to meet the perceived needs of the students."

There is another evident problem with the center's new-found circle of influence: the English department. If the center works within the department in an amicable relationship, there is, of course, no problem. That has not been the case expressed by 48% of the college respondents: either centers are located, grudgingly, in the English department and receive little or no support from the faculty, or they are not connected to the English department and very glad to be free of it. When the writing center first started up at the University of Toledo, an English Department member, after observing our operation, ran back to the department exclaiming that we had to be stopped because we were going to take jobs away from the department. At the time, it seemed a ludicrous statement. Yet as centers report more involvement in freshman writing pro-grams, that fear may be well founded. Writing centers embarking upon composition-directing roles must work to ease relations with all departments, including English. As a supportive service with non-threatening environments, centers need to evaluate how effectively that role can be maintained if they assume curricular responsibilities. I favor using our expertise for curricular design, but as we assume powerful advisory roles, we must examine the effects on our heretofore neutral role.

Success came back to haunt me as I read through the questionnaires, and as I struggled to find time to enter those responses on the computer, as I ran from faculty writing workshops, to WAC meeting, to the Sociology Department meeting; as I facilitated a tutor training session, orientation program, international students workshop, tutoring task force discussion; as I acted as the consultant to the freshman composition textbook committee, an economics professor's writing intensive class,

and as I stopped to turn in my grant proposal to expand the writing fellows program that was piloted this year. Pausing for breath, I ask myself: Do I want to be empowered? I quickly reply, of course I do. But I also recall the respondents' desperate need for more staff, more help, more time off, and I wonder if we who have been involved in these programs need to set up some warning signals for others.

One of my fears is that I will no longer have the time to teach classes. I have long worried about my credibility when discussing the teaching of writing if I no longer teach a class, and I am aware that I'm tutoring much less lately. I was not surprised to see the same fear expressed by 20% of the directors surveyed and one respondent stated the problem concisely: "More and more, my work seems to involve administration, sitting on committees, task forces, etc. It makes staying in touch with the basic issues of tutoring much harder. I think that long-term writing center directors, especially successful ones, need to anticipate this result and plan for it by making sure there is a second person around who really knows the ropes." Does the writing center director then become entangled in so many administrative duties that she loses sight of the center'?

We have been empowering ourselves, liberating ourselves from past images, by aggressively extending our spheres of influence outside our writing center doors. The nineties will definitely see an increase of writing center participation in WAC programs, faculty development, curricular reform, the training of future teachers; we will continue to participate in and expand programs which affect the business and community members surrounding our campuses. We have started to acquire the power to change practices and attitudes of our colleagues. But empowerment carries responsibilities and consequences. Without careful thought our expansion may end up diluting the necessary function of writing centers; we may become as administrative and directive as the very structures against which we have pushed. We must enter the nineties with a realistic definition of our roles, or the very collaboration which we use in tutorials will draw us away from our own centers.

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Peer Tutors and the Making of Meaning

Among high school writing centers, an issue in contention is the use of peer tutors. That is, "peer" means "equal" not "expert," or, as some would scoff, "the blind leading the blind." Acceptable on the college level- after all, most of them will be English majors- high school is thought of as different. My experience, however, is that peer tutors form the heart of the high school writing center because they provide the writer with real considerations that need to be answered. Unlike teachers, tutors do not measure student papers against some ideal text whose perfection the student is unlikely to achieve. Rather, tutors are a living, breathing audience who help negotiate appropriate task definition, who aid in invention, who focus upon clarity, and who create a setting that makes writing real and immediate. The transcription offered here is of a conference between a senior trained as a Writing Center peer tutor and a sophomore with rough draft. It is an apologia pro high school peer-tutor (with my pedagogical intrusions).

Betsy: What would you like me to help you with? (She immediately establishes the writer as owner of the paper.)

Tutee: I have my topic and stuff. I have...

Betsy: Partial drafts? First of all, I'll ask if you understand inductive reasoning. (She focuses on understanding the assignment.)

Tutee: Kind of - do you want to explain it a little?

Betsy: Okay, what do you think it is? (Once again, she shifts responsibility to the writer.)

Tutee: I think it's a question, and then you go through the process, and then you answer.

Betsy: Okay, then at the end you come to your hypothesis directly. What's your topic? (She restates the focus and lets the tutee lead.)

Tutee: Like, my question is the harmful effects TV has on people, what are they.

Betsy: Do you think there are harmful effects?

(She helps the writer clarify her point of view.)

Tutee: Yeah, I explain three of them. In my first paragraph, I say that... (gives long explanation of the paper).

Betsy: That's an interesting topic. It's good. (She gives praise.)

Tutee: Then I'm stuck on my conclusion.

Betsy: Why don't you read it to me? (She makes herself the audience. She keeps the writer the owner.)

Tutee: (reads)... It's not, like, all tied up to gether.

Betsy: The only suggestion I would have...well, how you can tie it all together is to start with an actual situation like a kid watching TV. It's an interesting topic. It's so true about what it does to kids... (creates hypothetical situation).

(She concentrates on one focus. She provides a rhetorical function. She aids with invention.)

Tutee: Well, I have some in here... (reads). My paragraphs aren't that good, but I know what I want to say.

Betsy: Oh, I think it's very good. At one point in here you ask the question...do people realize possible harmful effects. That's a good question to put at the end because then you'll answer in your hypothesis. (She praises, continues with rhetorical consideration.)

Tutee: Should I put it in my introduction?

Betsy: Yeah, you're not going to have a thesis in the same sense like your last paper. I think you have it all together. Any questions?

(She knows when to wrap it up. She reiterates the contrast between the previous essay and this one. She bvrlrc confidence.)

Of course, "peer tutors"- especially those on the high school level- must be trained in appropriate methods of response to writers. It is important, first of all, to make explicit their

already intuitive knowledge of the writing process. For example I had Betsy write an essay in which she explained exactly how she did her writing, and then I taught variations of the process of which she was unaware. It is also important to sensitize potential tutors to the feelings of the writers with whom they will be working, and this can be accomplished through extensive role-playing of conferences. Especially effective is to label the problem-students tutors may encounter, such as "the resister," "the blamer," etc. I did a lot of talking about "higher-order" and "lower-order" concerns so that we established the priorities to be dealt with in the conference. We looked at sample essays, culled from my own students' work, and decided what we would concentrate on and how we would do it. I taught techniques for invention such as "cubing," Burke's dramatist Pentad, etc. I checked to make sure that Betsy's knowledge of punctuation and other writing conventions was sound and that she knew where to look when it was shaky. I talked about how to write the thesis statement and made her write many of her own before I was really satisfied that she knew how. I taught specific conferencing techniques: start with a positive comment; ask the writer what he/she wants you to do; work on one or two higher-order concerns, and then stop, for heaven's sake, before you do all the to!

The focus of English scholarship will probably shift away from composition in the years to come, but the idea that oral strategies undergird successful writing will remain current, for through verbalizing people explore and make sense of their world, and peer tutors give a wide range of linguistic responses for student writers to consider. When students experience language as a social construct, groups become essential to learning. What better "group" than two students close in age engaged in the same writing process! This is really the making of meaning.

Gloria Nordin
York High School
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A reader asks....

I'm currently trying to conduct a re-search project with my fellow tutors in the Writing Center on the special problems encountered whenever a conferencing session takes place in front of the CRT. I would be very

grateful for any information or references to articles as my own efforts to discover what has been written haven't met with much success.

Mary Broglie
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(cont. from page 6)

future of the liberal arts, this yearning for a return to cultural literacy is a "yearning for a time when men were men, and men were white, when scholars were white men, and when women and persons of color were voiceless, faceless servants and laborers, pouring tea and filling brandy snifters in the boardrooms of old boys' clubs." I see our challenge as holding fast to our gains and remaining true to our mission. By all means we should resist the notion that the democratization of American education has resulted in a cultural illiteracy; furthermore, we must attack the notion of cultural literacy as long as cultural literacy is defined as information- information reflecting what have traditionally been thought of as the high points of Western science, culture, and history. By remaining true to our national multicultural heritage, to our process-oriented approach, to our commitment to tutoring/ counseling, we keep learning about our students and use what we have learned to inform our practice. By beginning with who the student is we help the student uncover who she can be. And we continue to learn a good deal about ourselves in the process.

Closeness, trust, intimacy, are all critical to learning, and while traditional educators are waffling back and forth on the issue of how flexible old traditions should be, those of us in tutoring have long ago committed ourselves to students' presently felt needs. Despite the cry for fixed values, for standards, for information, we must continue to stand for openness, for flexibility, and, above all, for commitment to learning as a process, learning as a human interaction, learning as a right and not a privilege. That is the legacy of the past two decades and the challenge of the years to come.

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"This paper is based on a keynote address I delivered at the Pennsylvania Association of Tutoring's First Annual Nationwide Conference. October 13, 1988.

National Writing Centers Association Awards

Each spring the National Writing Centers Association awards a prize for the best article and best longer work about writing centers published during the previous year. Two articles chosen as best articles for 1989 are:

Behm, Richard, "Ethical Issues in Peer Tutoring: A Defense of Collaborative Learning." *Writing Center Journal* (Fall/ Winter 1989).

Ede, Lisa. *Writing as a Social Process: A Theoretical Foundation for Writing Centers.* *Writing Center Journal* (Spring/Summer 1989).

The best longer work was:

Farrell, Pam. *The High School Writing Center: Establishing and Maintaining One.* Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1989.

Willing to share WAC assignments?

Several members of our newsletter group are compiling a collection of both good and bad WAC paper assignments given to students who come into our writing centers. Are you willing to share some of the ones you've seen? We are looking both for assignments that are effective and can serve as useful examples for faculty asking for help in structuring assignments or as examples of horrors to avoid (we are tentatively calling these monsters AFHs, Assignments From Hell). We'd appreciate any that you'd care to share with us, plus some indications of why these are either good or darlingly bad assignments. Feel free to change the subject matter to protect the inept. Eventually, we'll share our findings with you so that when you hold faculty workshops, you can have a pool of examples to work with. Of course, saying that the AFHs are from other institutions will ease the potential uneasiness as faculty gasp in horror at such prime examples as this one already in our collection: "Prove Hitler was a maniac." Please send your examples to Muriel Harris, Dept. of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907.

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