WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

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

....from the editor...

In articles, conference presen-
tations, and all the cross-talk among
writing lab people, we emphasize the
importance of listening to tutors and
students. But even though we don't
stress it quite as much, faculty voices
are equally important in our
conversations. This month's issue of
the newsletter focuses on those
faculty voices and on the central role
writing labs play in writing-across-
the-curriculum programs.

The table of contents, with all the
multiple author listings, also indicates
the importance of collaboration in
writing lab discussions, Included
among the authors writing together in
this month's articles are tutors,
teachers, writing lab directors,
faculty, and writing-across-the-
curriculum directors. Clearly, our
commitment to collaboration among
student writers extends to our
professional efforts as well,

*Muriel Harris, editor

Empowering a Writing Center: The Faculty Meets the Tutors

I: The Director

To those working in writing
centers, the interdependent
relationship between centers and the
composition programs they serve is
self-evident-a center and a program
should work harmoniously to achieve
the professed goal of both: making
students better writers. Writing
center personnel also know, however,
that the relationships among centers,
pro-grams, and faculty at large have
often been strained. In a 1979 article,
Toni Lopez notes how "an aura of
detention...causes instructors to view
the lab as a place to send only those
students who cannot be adequately
helped through regular class
attendance and brief conferences" (
4). Lopez goes on to detail how
diagnostic testing and faculty use of
referral forms, commonplaces today,
can aid in coordinating the efforts of
center tutors and faculty. As we
know, the struggle for rapport,
coordination, and respect persists
well

after 1979, as is evident in Virginia Downs' 1982 article, "What Do English Teachers Want?" In 1984, the struggle continues with, among others, Steven North's now seminal article, "The Idea of a Writing Center." And though writing centers and writing center scholarship certainly have done much to dispel our image as remedial fix-it-shops, here we are today, still struggling for empowerment.

Two years ago, when I assumed the Directorship of the Indiana State University Writing Center, I found myself thrust into this struggle. One problem I discovered was a lack of communication between the tutors and the faculty. Under the previous director, a diligent, but overworked and unrespected adjunct, information forms sent to faculty members asked if they wanted a progress report on tutees after each session, at the end of each month, or only at the end of the semester. I inherited these forms thinking they were sufficient, but after one semester, I realized most instructors were asking for a report only at the end of the semester. Thus, tutors rarely communicated with then- tutees' instructors, This lack of feedback often left the tutors wondering how much good they were doing. But, worse, it impeded their developing a sense of professionalism and pride in tutoring. As Gary Olson notes, "Staff members, especially undergraduates, cannot be expected to take themselves seriously and strive for professionalism if faculty members themselves shrug off the importance of the writing center" (155-56),

My initial response was to institute a policy requiring tutors to report to each tutor's instructor after each session, as is done in many centers. Instructors would hear about their students whether they wanted to or not. The reports were to be brief (2-3 sentences) synopses of the session, but the form also asked the instructor to respond, In my standard memo to faculty at the beginning of the semester, I mentioned this change, explaining it diplomatically as a way faculty could help the center improve the quality of both the tutorials and the students' writing. This method met with limited success. On the average, maybe 10 to 15% of the instructors responded regularly, and about half responded at least once, usually to praise a tutor, give directions for a future session, or occasionally to criticize.

Though the weekly reports did not solve our problem, additional communication was

reaching me directly horn faculty by word of mouth. Many of those who never returned the forms would approach me in the halls or at lunch, wanting to talk about what certain tutors were doing to help their students. Some would phone me to recommend direction for future tutorials. At first, I asked them to send the forms back to the tutors; most didn't. Puzzled at their failure to respond, I eventually figured out that most faculty members felt more comfortable talking to me because they knew and respected me while the tutors were "just students" and often unknown students at that.

At this point, I decided that the faculty needed to meet the tutors-needed to find out the tutors were more than "just students." At ISU, most of the tutors are undergraduates, some of whom are not English majors. In addition, the Center was then located on the fifth floor of a building across the quad from the English building, so rarely would the faculty and tutors have occasion to meet, let alone discuss a tutee's writing. Yet, in contacting me, many faculty members would mention tutors by name as a result of the tutorial reports. They would complain now and then, but because their comments were mostly positive, I felt they might be receptive to hearing presentation by a panel of tutors. An addition, I felt that having the tutors introduce themselves and discuss the center in a formal presentation would enable

the faculty to recognize the professionalism of the tutorials. Thus, I scheduled the presentation-entitled "The Writing Center Tutors: Who are we? What do we do?"-in the English Department's colloquium series, "Always on Friday."

I then devised a series of questions that I felt would enable the tutors to address the concerns I was hearing from the faculty:

*What kinds of matters do tutors work on
   with tutees?
*How do tutors work with error?
*How do tutors get tutees to do the work?
*How are tutors trained?
*What can faculty expect tutors to know?
   What can't faculty expect them to know?
*How do tutors handle references to the
   instructor and the course?

Five ISU Writing Center tutors formed the panel. Each panel member chose a topic. Tutor-Training, Tutor-Tutee Rapport, Tutorial Content, and Tutorial Strengths and Limita-
tions. In sum, these topics enabled the panel to address the questions that were on the instructors' minds as well as on my own.

II:The Peer Tutors

Although Dr, Carino gave us the general topics for our panel, each of us had to formulate concrete ideas and personal examples that would be contained in our talks. We were very enthusiastic, though a bit nervous, about giving the presentation and making ourselves available to meet the faculty face-to-face. Although we knew some of the instructors from class, the ISU English Department is very large; including teaching assistants and adjuncts, approxi-mately seventy different instructors teach writing courses. Thus, for most instructors, we tutors were only names on the bottom of progress reports. Having chosen our topics, we each wrote our presentations individually, after some consultation with one another and with our director,

When all of us had completed drafts of our individual presentations, we spent an evening collaborating on our ideas and coordinating our panel. During this stage of preparation, we read our parts to one another and suggested ways to improve them. We discussed ideas that should be added, deleted, or emphasized. Many of our important points were generated during this session. Also, we added

the necessary transitions from panelist to panelist to ensure an organized presentation. In short, we had a mass revision session. As tutors, we all knew about the value of brain-storming and group collaboration, but in this session we discovered further how well collaboration works for us. This collaborative session was essential for us, and we recommend it for any group of tutors planning such a presentation.

Our first panelist spoke on Tutor-Training. Her talk assured the professors that we, the undergraduate peer tutors, are not just pulled out of English classes and thrown into a tutorial session. The discussion of the training program explained our sessions on reviewing common errors, strategies for coordinating grammar instruction between exercises and student writing, helping tutees with prewriting, analyzing the expectations of the tutee, develop-ing rapport, and evaluating tutorial sessions on tape, This part of the presentation empowered us in the eyes of faculty, if not as experts, then as able and concerned peers capable of helping other students.

The next topic, Tutor-Tutee Rapport, proved beneficial in showing the faculty what we as students do to make The tutees feel more comfortable and confident as writers. The panelist discussed the advantages and disadvantages of being a peer tutor while stressing the idea of cooperation between the tutor and the tutee, For instance, it was pointed out how students are less intimidated by coming to the writing center and working with another student than they are by seeking help in the office of the instructor, an authority figure. But the panelist also noted that we are trained to pre-vent students from conning us into doing their work and to handle sensitively students' references about instructors and assignments.

On this last point. the panelist stressed that we are in the Center to help the students and the faculty. Some instructors worry about tutors undermining their authority or question-ing their knowledge of the subject. During the presentation, we assured the instructors that any tutee comments about their personalities or the logic of their assignments are quickly dismissed, and attention is directed to the writing. The panelist explained that if we do hear a continuous pattern of negative comments about the instructor, the assignments, or grades, our policy is to encourage the student to set up an

appointment and talk directly to the instructor. We do not intend to become the go-between in an argument. Once the faculty understood our professional methods for developing and maintaining rapport, they seemed more comfortable about the idea of having their students tutored by other students.

Our third panelist informed the faculty on Tutorial Content-what actually happens in a session. We wanted to completely eliminate any thoughts of us using a session as a proof-reading or "pointing-out-error" help-session. One major point we emphasized concerned how the success of the tutorial often depends on the tutee being prepared for the session. This part of the presentation was a medium for us to let the faculty know what we expect of the tutees (knowing the assignments, having rough drafts, being willing i o work, etc.) and what the tutees can expect from a tutorial session. This discussion also proved a tactful means to tell instructors that they can help us by giving clear assignments on dittos or in textbooks-rather than orally or on the chalkboard-so that we can help tutees having difficulty interpreting assignments.

Our final panelist promoted the strengths and admitted the limitations of our work as tutors. The panelist introduced examples of the tasks we do best, such as brain-storming with tutees, pushing them to be more clear in their descriptions, helping them with organization, probing them to raise possibilities for revision, and reiterating their spoken words to keep the invention process flowing.

The faculty also listened to the limitations the panelist presented. We wanted to stress that as student tutors, we are not experts and may not know all of the current terminology for teaching writing. I do not mean that we shy away from basic terms such as thesis statement or subject-verb agreement, but we may sometimes describe writing actions differently than the faculty, For example, Dr. Carino had been questioned by a faculty member when a tutor wrote on a report that she and her tutee had been working on "creativity" when what she meant was "invention." The panelist pointed out that our terms, though not always "rhetorically current," can be effective because they enable us to explain concepts more effectively informal language that both we and the tutees understand.

The panelist also pointed out that instructors should see improvement in tutees' papers but should not expect perfection. The faculty seemed very receptive to the idea that tutors cannot follow a tutee back to the dorm and keep a watchful eye open for typing errors or comma splices created in the frenzy of a student's last-minute revisions.

III.

After our panelists spoke, we opened the floor for questions. On the night of group collaboration, Dr. Carino prepared us for this part by supplying a list of potentially difficult questions that might be raised. Some of these were raised. as well as others, as this portion of the presents [t] on proved highly beneficial.

Faculty members and tutors spoke to one another on a professional level, opening lines of communication. We gave immediate answers to questions instead of having to use campus mail or the telephone. For example, one instructor asked us how we distinguished the terms "grammar" and " mechanics." An-other asked about our techniques for working with international students, Without having to track each other down, the tutor and instructor could immediately discuss the problems. Many of the questions also enabled our director to identify those areas with which his colleagues are most concerned, giving him the opportunity to improve the writing center.

During the question and answer session, we were also able to show how tut acing benefits us. When one faculty member asked us what we get out of it, we told how tutoring relates to our own writing, our success in our classes, and, for some of us, our future as teachers. In addition, friendly comments from supportive faculty members increased our credibility among the doubters. Several instructors commented on the fine job the center was doing, and the Director of English Education testified that in his methods class to pre-pare students for student teaching, former tutors always excelled because of their practical experience in writing pedagogy Such comments not only inspired us, but perhaps convinced other instructors of our competence and made them think about recommending their own students as writing center tutors.

The faculty response extended further than the question and answer period. Because

our faculty and tutors had met face-to-face, we could recognize one another and discuss our work. At an English honorary society reception, an instructor introduced herself to one tutor and said she had seen the panel discussion. The tutor was tutoring one of her students, and the two discussed the student's progress Another instructor sent a note to the Writing Center, praising us for a job well done. In their classes or in passing, several instructors complimented tutors because the session was helpful and professionally done. These accolades may seem small, but any positive reinforcement shows that our presentation served its purpose-to empower our writing center.

As part of Indiana State University's "Always on Friday" colloquium series, our presentation took place in a large meeting room. Thus, it had an air of formality that contributed to the professionalism we were attempting to convey. However, if a center can not schedule a presentation as part of a colloquium, a panel could be equally effective if conducted in the writing center Itself. in fact, there would be advantages. As many of you know, those not directly involved with a center usually are not aware of its facilities, given that centers, despite the name, are often located in less than central locations. Holding the panel in the center would allow the faculty to famil-iarize themselves with the facilities and to meet the tutors in their working environment. An-other benefit of this location is that members of the audience, once they have seen the place, may suggest ideas for improvements that the director or tutors might not otherwise have considered.

Though the results cannot be quantified, we believe our meeting between the tutor panel and the faculty members fostered a higher level of trust in our writing center's ability to help students. As a result of the panel, the instructors now take us more seriously because, after meeting us and hearing our presentation, they remember faces and thinking people rather than the solitary names they encounter at the bottom of progress reports,

<div align="center">
Peter Carino
and
Lori Floyd and Marcia Lightle, Peer Tutors
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Integrating WAC and Tutoring Services: Advantages to Faculty, Students, and Writing Center Staff

"Writing center" still denotes for most of us a tutoring service focused solely on helping students with their writing skills. Yet, there is a move towards integration of this type of writing center with writing-across-the-curriculum programs. The marriage, if not made in heaven, seems a natural one, Where better to locate faculty resources for writing but in the same center where students of those instructors can receive individual help? After a brief description of The Writing Center at Southwest Missouri State University, we will look at the advantages of the integrated program for faculty, students, tutors, and the director of the WAC program.

The SMSU center, begun in 1988-89, owes its philosophy and much of its structure to The Writing Center at the University of Kansas, where Beth Impson, director of The SMSU Writing Center, worked as a graduate assistant. Although the SMSU center has a campus-wide tutoring program (unlike KU's), its most important function is offering resources to faculty. Writing center stall help faculty members in a variety of ways campus-wide workshops on topics such as how, to use short writing assignments and journals and how to evaluate writing in the content areas; individual consultations with faculty members about using writing in their specific courses; the development of handouts for instructors to use to help their students complete writing assignments successfully; and assistance to faculty members with their own writing. The peer tutoring program is complementary to these faculty services: tutors, while available to help students in any classes, are especially trained to work with students of faculty who consult with The Center because of the director's fan amity with those assignments.

Individual consultations are the heart of SMSU's informal writing-across-the-curriculum program. In Fall 1988, one of the first instructors who requested such a consultation with The Writing Center was Burl Self, professor of geosciences. Convinced of the need for his students to write, and of the value of the research paper for his freshman-level course in world geography, Burl wanted suggestions about helping his students to complete such an assignment successfully, especially since, with a total of more than 200 students, it is impossible for him to give sufficient individual help to all students who need it.

Burl had already determined that his students needed to write more than one draft of a paper to do it well, and that he needed to require at least one early assignment (a. re-search plan or outline) to make sure rapers were begun early in the semester Taping his comments about the draft saved considerable time in evaluation. Suggested reference works were given to the students along with a sample outline. Yet, students still seemed to need more guidance, especially in areas of data organization and report structure.

We decided on a guide to take the students step-by-step through the assignments. The guide outlined the assignment, its format, the process which would be most helpful to follow to complete it, and the content to be contained in each section of the completed paper. The tut ors at The Writing Center were also given copies of this guide and asked to familiarize themselves with it and ask questions about if before Burl's students began coming in. As a result of this service, he draws several conclusions about the integration of WAC and tutoring services.

Benefits to Instructors: Burl Self

I require a research paper in my fresh-man level geography class because I believe that practice in writing is absolutely necessary. If we wish students to be competent writers when they leave the university. As well, geographic ideas and concepts are reinforced through library research. The research assignment also helps students to better understand important geographic issues (such as globalization of the world economy, geostrategic issues of superpower involvement in third world political movements, etc.).

The need for excellence in student writing assignments is an important instructional goal and must not be neglected, To

accomplish that goal, writing centers can be valuable adjuncts to the teacher's review of assignments, especially for large classes. Because students did not always have plentiful writing experiences in high school, tutors can help to reinforce the basic components of writing. Further, they help students consider personal interests in selecting topics, which will help them to design and write better papers.

I believe that no university student truly wants to produce poor work. Often, students are simply untrained (or -undisciplined) in the process of writing. Consequently, instructors must integrate support services into the instructional process. I take my students on a specially designed library tour to emphasize the particular resources they will need for their geography project. Beth or one of her staff members comes in to discuss The Writing Center with my students when I hand old the research paper assignments, so that the students have a name and face to associate with The Center, and I suggest writing center conferences to specific students who seem particularly in need of help. This approach significantly improves student sell-esteem and leads to better final papers.

Instructors must also take responsibility for urging students to follow a process of writing that will help them to complete assignments successfully. I do this by requiring students to turn in typed outlines as well as two drafts of the research paper before accepting the final copy at the semester's end. Though review of the outlines and drafts is time-consuming, it is vital to the students' success. Many students in this 100-level class have never written a research paper and may be taking their first college English course concurrently with geography. The process of instructor evaluation leads to increased refinement of student writing. Requiring students to turn in a cassette tape with their drafts and taping my comments to them helps cut down on time spent responding, without sacrificing the quality of my evaluation.

In my experience, clear and highly structured directions are always required in order for students to understand a hat I expect of their writing products. Besides a written schedule of due dates and a description of library sources and locations, the guide developed by Beth and myself gives del ailed instructions on both the process and the product

expected of students. An evaluation criteria sheet lets students know what is expected of them before they even begin the project, as well as giving me a form on which to show what areas are strong and weak in the final draft. And all research papers from the previous semester are on closed reserve in the library for student inspection.

Benefits to Students: Beth Impson

The first semester the research paper guide was used ut Burrs course, his two classes provided an interesting contrast: one seemed to have no idea that a guide (or The Writing Center) even existed and the other made extensive use of both the guide and the tutoring service. The c l a s s shier, used those services made much better grades on the papers than the one which relied on the oral instructions and their own (unfortunately limited, in most eases) abilities to write such a paper. While other factors undoubtedly played a part, we believe the paper grades did accurately reflect student attitudes towards the various kinds of help offered them to complete the paper assignment.

Besides the potential for improved grades, the integration of tutoring and WAC services described by Burl offers numerous other benefits to student writers. For example, students who have a comprehensive guide to their writing project usually come into a tutoring session prepared to ask specific questions about their assignments and their particular paper. Conferences can get off to a quick start, so the students get the full benefit of their time. Those who come in and seem to be unaware of the guide or its purpose can be quickly directed to it by the tutor, and it then provides a means of focusing the conference.

Students who come into The Center are often unsure about their ability to write, and our tutors are excellent at instilling confidence. It is notably easier for them to do so with students whose teachers have made use of WAC resources because those teachers have promoted The Center through personal experience with its staff. The students come in knowing the tutors are able to help them in very specific ways, and thus are sometimes more open to actively working with the tutors to improve their papers,

The integration of WAC and tutoring

services can also help students in understand-ing their assignments. Students who articulate the assignment for themselves understand their task far better than if it is interpreted for them by someone else. When tutors know the assignment, they can easily ask directed questions of the students, The students are thus forced to think carefully about the instruction and information they have received in class as it relates to the assignment. They can be constantly referred to the guide: "Is that what this says?" "Do you know what this means'?" "Have you done this?"

Benefits to Tutors: Susan Dorsey, Lucinda Hudson, and Laura Johnson

Tutors, as well as students. benefit from conferences beginning quickly. Without already knowing a student's assignment. tutors might have to use conference time searching for the reading assignment sheets, calling the teacher for clarification, or perhaps even misguiding students based on incorrect interpretations of the assignment, A WAC guide, how-ever, not only starts conferences quickly but also gives students and tutors a means of deciding what questions need to be referred to the instructor rather than attempting to deal with them in the conference. Tutors know the assignment fairly well but not necessarily anything about the class itself and the kind of information students are receiving in class. Thus, any question the student has which the guide doesn't seem to answer is automatically referred to the teacher.

Access to the WAC guides gives tutors a chance to prepare for the conference before-hand, resulting in more successful conferences. Long before students get their writing assignments, The Writing Center tutors have read, the guides and asked questions about any points we might not understand. When we see a student with a particular assignment only once, we can easily wonder if we have interpreted the instructor's directions and preferences effectively. But because the teachers who have worked with the WAC program send many students to us over the course of sive semesters, we become increasingly aware of what the teacher expects, therefore tutoring more effectively. Every successful conference raises our confidence not only in our tutoring and our writing, but also in ourselves.

If the first fifteen minutes of the hour is

spent trying to find the context for a student's paper, the tutors often feel pressured to hurry through the session, As a result, we may do more prescribing than coaching to help the student discover the paper's strengths and weaknesses. Obviously the student learns more from a less-prescriptive conference, but tutors certainly benefit from this method as well. We learn more about tutoring by doing it in a relaxed manner, and the students' responsibility for making their own choices about their work protects The Writing Center's reputation on campus.

The WAC/writing center partnership also gives tutors the opportunity to leant from student writers in disciplines other than our own. As tutors, we may be comfortable with the composing process. but often aren't well versed in topics from disciplines other than our own; thus, we learn valuable information from the WAC students we work with and gain subject knowledge. Also, in order to better assist the students, we ourselves must learn writing techniques and conventions to which we otherwise Wright not have been exposed, such as those common to scientific and business reports or even new creative writing methods.

Perhaps most importantly, tutors working in a writing center using the WAC program learn that certain universals exist in writing. that whatever the format, each discipline requires the same basic writing elements. Clarity and organization are essential no matter what the topic, and writers mast keep their audience in mind as well as the paper's aim. Once tutors realize that these constants apply across the curriculum, we can use writing as a tool to piece disciplines together, achieving a more holistic view of our own education.

Benefits to the WAC Director: Beth Impson

In working with instructors to disciplines other than English, I find that one concern is the amount of time it takes to give individual help to students with writing problems. Because the tutoring services are a part of my program, I can easily assure them of our ability to address writing concerns with the context of their own disciplines. They are more comfortable when they know that my ut ors understand their concerns and that we will not hesitate to call if questions come up, rather than risk misleading a student.

Tutors' Column
Achieving Rapport with Quiet Students

I guess I should have felt suspicious, I had been hanging around the Golden Bear Student Learning Center tutoring the tutees and enjoying a strange sense of harmony considering it was my first week on the new job. Strange indeed, since I have not seen Harmony's smug mug in my vicinity since back in Ohio, right before the Great Flood of '68; rarely do we part company in the gentlest of circumstances. Perhaps my guard was down the first week. Except for the never-ending pile of xeroxed reading, everything seemed cool and easy. My first three tutees all brought drafts to work on, and they even smiled occasionally. In each session we quickly established a friendly rapport before starting to a work on writing, and they all had clear ideas of what they needed to work on, Most importantly, they all communicated these ideas to me so I felt involved with their struggles to write more clearly. Each evening I left the Golden Bear, with another pound of tutoring handouts under my arm, feeling a sense of oneness with humanity as I strolled home in the warm September air. "I am needed. I belong," my spirit sang.

But I should have felt suspicious. I should have known that everything could change, as it did the following week when I met my fourth tutee: the young woman I will refer to as... the Quiet One.

It must have rained that morning. I can still see her peering at me through a pair of fogged lenses as thick as hamhocks. I held out my hand, "l'm Mark, " I said,

"I'm the Quiet One," she returned with an icy handshake, As she sat down and began, staring off at a land she alone inhabited, my skin began to crawl like a Gila monster infested with army ants. I hoped that the goal-setting worksheet might loosen up our conversation. As instructed, I started out by trying to focus on her strengths as a writer. "Are there any aspects of your writing that you feel particularly good about?"

Silence.

"Any times when you feel yourself enjoying writing?"

More silence.

"Maybe something about writing that you don't completely hate?"

After awhile she looked up at me as though she had just realized that she was not sitting at the table alone. "No," she answered. "I hate writ lug."

I appreciate directness. "Okay," I said. " What do you hate about it?"

"You never get a clear answer. In math you know if something is right or wrong. In writing everything seems wrong."

"Sure," I said, relieved that we were talking. " Even the greatest writers feel constantly dissatisfied with. what they've written. They're always trying to express their ideas perfectly, but there can always be a better way to say something. But that's also what makes writing interesting. It forces you to confront some of your deeper thoughts and communicate them to others." She looked unmoved. and I felt like I was talking too much. I like to talk. "Are there any aspects of your writing that you feel you need to work on? The goal-setting worksheet here is divided between grammar and sentence structure, essay structure, and writing process.... What type of writing problems are you having that we should work on?"

"Everything I guess," she mumbled. She is an expert mumbler. If I wanted to make progress with the Quiet One, I would have to slow down and get my ears cleaned.

I am an (introvert from a family of introverts. At some point, I learned that it was easier for me to talk out the problems I was having rather than keeping them stored up inside, Once I started expressing myself I never stopped. Often, I wonder if I go too far.

Sometimes I feel that a real strength resides In silence. that one who is quiet is perhaps more in touch with himself. But there is also an-other form of silence, one that relates to various fears: the fear that one's ideas are not intelligent or interesting enough to be communicated, the fear of becoming vulnerable by expressing feelings that are deeply personal, or even the fear of delving into such feelings in the first place. As the Quiet One's tutor, I needed to determine the nature of her silence, so that I could help her overcome it if it were caused by fear, or so I could learn to be comfortable with it if it were not.

As weeks passed though, she engaged more openly in light conversation before and after the sessions, so I concluded that one source of her silence was shyness. Instinctively, I felt it, was important to tone down my own expressiveness so that she would feel more comfortable expressing herself and so the rapport between us would feel more balanced, This sense of balance is essential in a tutorial relationship, To achieve it, a tutor must learn to listen- not only to the tutee, but also to himself. Slowly I learned that listening is indeed a skill and that its usefulness definitely extends beyond tutoring,

At first, the long stretches of silence unnerved me, and I would attempt to break them by asking different questions or filling them with my own comments. Not only did these methods fail to draw the Quiet One out, they seemed to cause her to withdraw even more. Clearly, I had to change my tactics or our peer tutoring sessions would turn into lectures.

One afternoon, she brought a watch advertisement picturing an Olympic runner next to a giant watch, When I asked her why she thought i he advertisers juxtaposed the two images, she grew tense and quiet. I felt it was important that she answer this question her-self, though, so I settled back in my seat, and I waited. (I noticed in my videotaped session with the Quiet One that she seemed more at ease when I sat back from her, thereby conveying patience by diving her more physical space.) She began fidgeting, looking at me as though she expected an answer,

"Take your time," I reassured her. She continued to fidget, and I continued to listen for an answer, Finally she said, "They're I aking

something really small and trying to make it seem really big." We both burst out laughing, probably due to a sense of comic relief,

"Sure," I said. "Any other reasons you can think of?" From there, the session took off. Once the Quiet One felt her ideas were valid, she expressed them much more freely. I learned that it was important to pace our sessions according to her speed, and to center our discussions around her ideas.

I noticed that her periods of silence usually began when I asked questions that led her into areas of abstraction, If I asked her a question regarding the text she had read, she would start slowly thumbing through it, looking for an answer, If I asked her to come up with something off the top of her head, she only stared at me blankly. I found that asking open-ended questions proved helpful in this regard, Flow did she feel about the author's opinions? Did she like the essay? What stood out in her mind most from the reading? Initially, such questions clearly intimidated her, but as the semester progressed she began answering them with greater ease and depth. Also, examining her feelings on what she read enabled her to get more involved and interested in the author's ideas. Needless to say, learning is much easier when one is interested in the subject matter.

The success of peer tutoring depends upon the tutor's sensitivity to the student's needs. I doubt if I would have learned this lesson so concretely if I had only tutored the other, more expressive students. The Quiet One's silence forced me to listen more patiently and ask the kinds of questions that could draw her out. As a result, my ears are a little keener and the Quiet One is not such a quiet one.

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This essay also appears in When Tutor Meets Student: Experiences in Collaborative Learning, selected by Mart ha Maxwell, pub. in 1990 by MM Assoc., Box 2857, Kensington, MD 20891. (Used by permission of Martha Maxwell.)

(cont. from p. 8)

Because I spend much of my time in The Center and observe conferences and talk with the tutors regularly, I am quickly aware of how assignments are working from the students' point of view. I can quickly find weaknesses in the guides we use when I consider the questions that students are asking of the tutors and they, in turn, refer to me. We have, for example, been guilty of leaving out vital information about an instructor's preference in documentation style or creating a section in a guide that is confusing to the students.

I am also able to be a "mediator' between both the tutors and students and the instructors I work with. Often, students come in upset with an instructor, when the problem really is that the student hasn't yet understood the rationale of an assignment or approach. If I have consulted with the instructor and helped to articulate the assignment, I can often help the students to understand it as well. And occasionally the tutors are mystified by or concerned about an assignment. and are helped in their conferencing by a clear explanation of its rationale. Then they tend to feel that the instructor is human and approachable and will even ask questions of him or her directly because they have already observed a relation-ship of professional respect between the instructor and me.

The personal benefits I receive from the integration of WAC and The Writing Center are the greatest, however. As much as T enjoy working with other faculty, it isn't quite the same as the excitement of constant interaction with students, especially those whom I do not have to "grade" for class performance. Over the past several years of working with tutors I have watched them grow and learn in ways some-times surprising to all of us. They have made decisions to become teachers, they have gained confidence in their tutoring skills, they have become better writers themselves. These tutors don't just tutor students (and each other); they tutor me at the same time-in the art and act of writing, in compassion, in the excitement of making a difference in people's lives.

Beth Impson and Burl Self
    and
Susan Dorsey, Lucinda Hudson, and
Laura Johnson, Peer Tutors
Southwest Missouri State University
Springfield, MO

Calendar for Writing Center Associations (WCAs)

Oct. 4-5: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in Garden City, KS
Contact: Steve Kucharik, Dept. of English, Garden City C.C., 801 Campus Drive, Garden City, KS 67846

Oct. 12: Pacific Coast Writing Centers Association, in Belmont, CA
Contact: Marc Wolterbeek, English Dept., College of Notre Dame, 1500 Ralston Ave., Belmont, CA 94002

Oct. 17-19: Rocky Mountain Writing Center Association, in Tempe, AZ
Contact: M. Clare Sweeney, 2625 College Ave. South, Tempe, AZ 85282-2344

Oct. 31-Nov.2: South Central Writing Centers Association, in Fort Worth, TX
Contact: Christina Murphy, Box 32875, Texas Christian U., Fort Worth, TX 76129.

Feb. 14: CUNY Writing Centers Association, in Flushing, NY
Contact: John Troynaski, Writing Skills Workshop, 232 Kiely Hally, Queens College/CUNY, 65-30 Kissena Blvd., Flushing, NY 11367-0904.

April 11: Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, in Emmitsburg, MD
Contact: Carl Glover, Writing and Communications Program, Mount St. Mary's College, Emmitsburg, MD 21727.

April 11: New England Writing Centers Association, in Fall River, MA
Contact: Ron Weisberger, Bristol Community College, 777 Elsbree St., Fall River, MA 02720

Raising Consciousness Across the Curriculum:
How Faculty Can Own Responsibility for Student Writing

Wittenberg University is a small liberal arts college whose writing center has grown in the past ten years into a comprehensive writing-across-the-curriculum program involving the whole faculty In teaching writing-intensive courses. It all started in the "Writers' Work-shop," which began with one English teacher tutoring part-time and now employs thirty peer tutors and a full-time director.

Anyone who has set up a cross-curricular program knows the problem: it is easy enough to devise on paper, even to convince the faculty to approve it and the administration to support it. But a strong WAC program will never emerge unless there is a real under-standing among faculty, a consensus about writing and its deep connections to learning. In 1978, we had such a paper program man-dating a writing center, a Junior year writing proficiency exam. and a commitment by the faculty to include writing in every course and to assess that writing with a final grade of S or U.

As sensible and coherent as this sounded on paper, it soon became apparent that wishing for better student writers and actually teaching students to be better writers were two very different kinds of commitments. There were several early indications that we would have problems. We soon discovered that students outside of English classes were not bringing papers into the Workshop because they simply were not writing them, We began hearing about the biology or psychology professor who gave an ungraded in-class quiz early in the course as a " proficiency paper" to see "who would have to be sent to the Writers' Work-shop," Thus we learned that faculty not only found it difficult to live up to their own good intentions, but that many, perhaps quite innocently, were working against us, giving students the idea that writing is peripheral to learning and that the writing center is remedial, a form of failure, if not punishment. Faculty were thus reinforcing the students' (perhaps their own) longstanding fears of writing, fears that our center had been care-fully designed to combat. In addition, we found many referrals to the Workshop were for problems of mechanics or spelling-even in one

case handwriting-which suggested a trivialization of writing.

It soon became clear, therefore, that our success even within the writing center depended on attitudes outside-student attitudes, of course, but even more important, faculty attitudes. Based in the Writers' Work-shop, we found ourselves in a good position to influence those attitudes. Our method as it evolved was improvisational, indirect, and multi-faceted. Without a grant or other significant funding, we initiated many small pro-grams, we perceived that we needed to work in many directions at once, that our program had to be comprehensive, because classroom, writing center, faculty development, and curriculum were all interconnected. And although we improvised, we kept in mind one basic principle: that everything we did should be aimed ultimately at educating the whole faculty about writing and their role in improving it. Our "hidden agenda," in other words, was to raise the faculty's consciousness about writing.

What do we mean by "raising con-sciousness"? From the beginning eve sensed that we had to bring the faculty through four stages of awareness:

1) To recognize the magnitude of the prob-lem and articulate it.
   Back in 1980, in the heat of the writing crisis, it was easy to provoke groans about writing, but it was also clear from the way teachers articulated the problem that they saw it superficially and expected someone else to fix it.

2) To redefine writing for the whole commu-nity in the broadest possible terms-as thinking.
   Once we brought faculty together to talk, it was merely a matter of pointing out from their own comments that they already understood writing in these broad terms.

3) To accept the responsibility for writing in every course and discipline.
   This step was an inevitable consequence of #2, seeing the connections

between writing and thinking and learning, For a liberal arts faculty, such a conclusion is inescapable.

4) To begin to think practically about how to use writing, and how to design and evaluate assignments effectively. At this stage faculty ask urgent and sophisticationed questions-and actually hear the answers. At this stage, communal effort and support from the writing center become important.

To transform the view of writing within the academic community, we reached out from the writing center in a variety of ways. The following are several examples of our efforts.

Writing Center

From its inception in 1980, the Writers' Workshop has been intended as a focus for all writing on campus, never as merely a remedial service, and it has, indeed, played a pivotal role within the writing program.

The acceptance of the Workshop as central to the writing program can be attributed to several factors, Foremost is the philosophy behind the center: writing is considered in its broadest context-not as a narrow skill to be sharpened by drill and exercises, but as an act of thinking, discovering, learning, and communicating. Dialogue between writer and reader is essential to such exploration. To this end, peer tutors are trained to be perceptive, experienced readers rather than teachers of skills, and students are urged to visit the Workshop while taking the required first year composition and Common Learning courses and to continue to use its resources while planning, revising, and editing papers through-out their years at Wittenberg. To encourage students further, the Workshop fosters a positive, supportive environment in which writers feel free to take risks and explore their thinking and writing processes.

The Workshop's wide variety of pro-grams and services enables students to better see writing in its many manifestations. In addition to papers for courses, students can receive help with study skills, reading, English as a second language, resumes, graduate school applications, and application essays for prestigious awards. Special presentations include a hi-monthly creative writing seminar; a

mini-course in teaching English as a second language; workshops on resumes, research papers, and the teaching of writing to elementary school students; sessions on studying for the Graduate Record Examination. These and other outreach programs allow the Workshop to remain highly visible as a service for all writers.

This visibility alone makes the faculty very aware of the Workshop's presence and role. One faculty member from Education expressed his view of the Workshop's importance to a community understanding of what writing is all about: 'The writing intensive courses require support, and the major support provided by the Workshop is the influence of students on other students. Working with a tutor helps students see that writing is a long-term process, always ongoing. It helps students to overcome their skewed sense of audience (always writing for the professor) and face their own thoughts and articulate them."

We have made deliberate attempts as well to directly affect the attitude of facility toward the Workshop and toward writing The Workshop director works closely with professors and their classes, providing classroom instruction and workshops in writing. The English Department meets occasionally in the Workshop to discuss tutor training and writing in general. The Workshop publishes a journal of expository writing by Wittenberg students; the editorial and publishing staff is composed exclusively of Workshop tutors. The staff asks professors to recommend student papers for publication (or to ask their outstanding students to submit their cork). In addition, each professor receives a complimentary copy of the journal when it is published. Three years ago, the Provost removed the Workshop from under English Department jurisdiction and placed it under academic programs, with the director accountable to his office, This deliberate separation from the English Department emphasized the importance of the Workshop to writing in. all fields and subtly suggested that teaching students to write better is the respon-sibility of oil faculty. Finally the Workshop director serves on the university's Writing Committee, which advises and sets policy for the college-wide writing program. The Work-shop, then, truly acts as an independent, cross-disciplinary support for students who write and faculty who assign writing through-out the university. ln general, faculty members

consider the Workshop a partner in the enter-prise: professor, student, and t utor work together to improve writing at Wittenberg.

Outreach Programs

From the very beginning, the writing center initiated outreach programs to increase students' use of our resources, But in doing so, we had an ulterior motive: to increase teachers' awareness of the writing process. We offered, for example, to supervise peer editing groups from selected classes in the Workshop. Teachers were asked to divide the class into groups which would meet In the writing center, and to themselves attend at least one of these sessions. We also offered to run single classes on writ ing in the instructor's classroom. Rather than advertise standard lectures or workshops. we met with teachers to talk about what they were doing, what they had trouble with, and how we could be most useful. We usually ended up with a class session that used course materials and focused on the specific assignment. We have devised many such sessions over the years, from a several-day seminar for student teachers and the whole Education faculty, to classes on the writing process (including a discussion of the process of writing in a foreign language), re-searching, quotation and documentation, and revising. In each we convey information to teachers as well as students; even more, we serve as models for talking about writing and for working with peer editors.

Junior Exam

Of the projects that raise the consciousness of professors about writing, the oldest and perhaps most effective is the junior writing exam. When the faculty mandated the exam, they allowed the Workshop director freedom to choose the kind of exam and method of administration. Despite suggestions that outside graders (such as ETS) be used and that there be objective testing of grammar and mechanics, the director decided upon a 90-minute essay graded by 15 faculty volunteers because this format would both test students' proficiency and create an atmosphere for educating the faculty about writing. In choosing from among the volunteers, the director attempts to hat a variety of departments represented and an even mix of experienced and new graders. The graders attend a half-day seminar on holistic grading (run by the Workshop director), where

they discuss not only the practical aspects of grading the exam, but also pedagogical theory, writing as learning (as one economics professor put it, "I now see the importance of teaching writing as thinking as well as expressing"), the deficiencies they see in student writing, and their own anxieties about evaluating writing. This experience gives faculty the opportunity to see a broad spectrum of student writing, to share their concerns about teaching and grading writing, and to discuss how to incorporate more writing into their courses. Appalled at the weaknesses in some of the essays, they see the need for more attention t o writing in all courses. Most leave the grading session recog-nizing that their view of what constitutes good writing is shared by others and that they can, indeed, successfully and confidently evaluate it. Thus, while the overt purpose of the exam is to test the juniors' writing proficiency. it serves as well as an excellently subtle vehicle for educating the faculty about writing

Writing Fellows

Three years ago, the Workshop introduced a new program, Writing Fellows, to further assist professors assigning writing in their courses. As fellows, tutors from the Workshop work with a professor and course for a term to help students in the class with their writing assignments Tutors volunteer to be fellows, and most choose courses they have taken themselves or courses in their major. The fellows meet with the professor early in the term to discuss the writing assignments, the professor's expectations, any concerns about the nature and number of assignments, and, often, some sample papers from earlier courses. Students from the course then work with these particular, tutors in the Workshop.

This program is designed to both assist students with their writing and indirectly importance professors' attitudes toward writing. For example, discussions between professor and fellows often result in a clearer writing assigument better geared to the students' abilities and needs. and fellows often suggest innovative ways to include more writing in the classroom. Also, professors recognize that these excellent students, many of whom they have taught, value writing as a way of learning and realize that the process is as important as the final product. Because the fellows remove some of the burden of working with writing in its messy early stages, professors are more willing to

assign writing and focus on the writing process. And since these professors usually schedule drafts to be discussed with the fellows, students generally begin assignments earlier and write multiple drafts. Professors who would like to work with writing fellow:, are given a handout that explains how the program seems to work best and describes the most effective uses of writing and the Workshop. Most important, the program creates an ongoing dialogue between students and faculty about writing and provides a support for those faculty using writing in the classroom. One professor remarked, "I have always had an interest in writing, so the notion of writing intensive courses and limit ing across 'he curriculum appealed to me. When I saw how wilting fellows could help in my Industrial Organization class, I built the course around a major argumentative paper because I knew I had support from the Workshop."

Writing-Intensive Programs

Recently, Wittenberg has institutionalized this new communal awareness about writing by requiring that one quarter of each student's courses he "writing-intensive," A writing-intensive course is one which, in addition to requiring at least 4000 words of writing, must integrate that writing into learning; teachers are committed to helping students through the writing process, designing careful assignments, and using such techniques as revision, conferencing, and class discussions of writing. The requirement was instituted three years ago in the midst of a major curricular review, but it happened only because the faculty had been thoroughly prepared,

This new program, of course has increased awareness even more. It has necessitated the creation of writing-intensive courses in every major at every level and given our efforts at faculty development a focus. We have run workshops on designing a writing-intensive courses, visited each department to talk about wilting and learning and are currently in the process of writing a booklet for teachers on designing and evaluating writing assignmrents and a handbook to introduce: students to writing across the curriculum. Now that teachers are committed to teaching such courses, they are eager for advice and help.

Perhaps the best illustration of how we exploit opportunities can be found in an inter-disciplinary "Common Learning" course taken by all new students in their first term in college, This course is taught each year by 25-30 teachers from all departments, so over the years most of the faculty will participate. Designed as an introduction to critical thinking as well as to readings on a common theme, Common Learning was logically designated writing-intensive. Teachers are still responsible for their own writing assignments and tests, but they must meet the basic requirements of a writing-intensive course. The faculty attend intensive workshops in the winter and spring terms to prepare for the course in the fall in these workshops, they decide on specific readings and discuss techniques for teaching them. Each year after workshops on journal theory and techniques, the faculty has decided to use journals as the primary form of writing Once teachers decide to use journals-a technique many have never tried-they are anxious for detailed practical information about methods. We work with facility in the spring, in the fall before classes begin, and in weekly meetings during fall term. Many have now taken journals back to their classes in biology, geography, history, or religion. We have found this course an invaluable opportunity because teachers, who are all trying something new, are open to experimentation and eager for help,

In recent years. we have seen the level of discourse about pedagogy and writing at the college rise almost universally. Teachers who were always interested in using writing now say they have gained a language for thinking and talking about writing, Colleagues revise and improve assignments and talk about them in the halls. New teachers entering the Witten-berg community soon learn that they are expected to take on the responsibility for assigning and assessing writing whatever their discipline. Students more often struggle with writing three journals in one term than with not writing at all, Our hidden agenda has indeed prevailed,

Mimi Still Dixon, Director of Cross-Curricular Writing and Maureen S. Fry, Director of the Writers' Workshop
Wittenberg University
Springfield, OH

Call for Papers

CUNY Writing Centers
Association Conference

Feb. 14, 1992
Flushing, NY

"Working Together: A Colloquium on Collaboration"

A Dialogue with Kenneth Bruffee, Sondra Perl, and Janice Haney-Peritz

Please send three copies of 250-word proposals with a 25-word abstract, by November 15, 1991, to John Troynaski, Writing Skills Workshop, 232 Kiely Hall, Queens College/CUNY, 65-30 Kissena Blvd., Flushing, NY 11367-0904 (718-997-5676).

Call for Papers

Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers
Association Conference

April 11, 1992
Emmitsburg, MD

"Converging Voices: Writing Centers in the 1990's"

One-page proposals should be sent by Jan. 15, 1992, to Carl Glover, Writing and Communications Program, Mount St. Mary's College, Emmitsburg, MD 21727 (301-447-6122, ext. 4884).

WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER
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Address correction requested