THE WRITING LAB
NEWSLETTER

...FROM THE EDITOR...

With this issue, we bring the newsletter to a close for this academic year. But we'll start up again in the fall, beginning with the September issue. In the meantime, before you leave for a summer of relaxing and recharging of energies, please check your address label to see if your subscription expires with this issue. And if you have any announcements for the September issue, please e-mail them to me (harrism@cc.purdue.edu) by August 1, at the latest.

In this issue (page 11) you'll see a preliminary notice for the International Writing Centers Association conference next spring. In case you haven't learned of the name change, the NWCA (National Writing Centers Association) is now the IWCA (International Writing Centers Association), having already welcomed our European group to our midst. Since the newsletter also has subscriptions from writing center folk in Asia, Africa, and South America, we hope to hear that they too have formed "regional" groups and have joined the IWCA.

Have a glorious summer, relax, enjoy—and I look forward to meeting you here again, in September.

• Muriel Harris, editor

Tutoring ESL students: A different kind of session

Most of the suggestions we've read in writing center literature advise us not to change our basic tutoring methodology as we tutor English as a second language students. We're advised to have the same basically non-directive and collaborative methodology and the same "ladder of concerns" as with native speakers (Severino), starting with higher-order concerns (HOCs) and then moving to lower-order concerns (LOCs) (Gillespie and Lerner).

On the other hand, Judith Powers, Muriel Harris and others have offered suggestions about tutors taking on the roles of cultural and linguistic informants for non-native speakers and being aware of rhetorical differences among different language groups. In fact, Powers advises us that "we will increase the effectiveness of ESL conferencing only when we understand, accept, and respond to the differences between the needs of ESL and native-speaking writers" (103).

We began our research by asking what these different needs are or, more specifically, how tutorials with ESL students differ from or are the same as

tutorials with native speakers. Our aim was to figure out how to improve the tutorial for ESL students and to improve the training for our tutors. Our method was to have each tutor tape, transcribe and analyze a session with a non-native speaker.

We discovered in our initial analyses that, unlike the suggestions offered by many tutoring handbooks, tutoring non-native speaking students is significantly different from tutoring native-speaking students, different in strategy, in dynamics, and in outcome. The pur-

pose of our ongoing research project is to identify, analyze, and clarify those differences. Here are a few of our initial findings.

Confusion about the assignment

When reading sample transcripts of sessions with ESL students, we were struck by the difference in how we talk about the assignment. Most native speakers come in and state the assignment in a reasonably concise, clear manner ("I'm writing a memoir/film review/feature article/English paper."), but ESL students often struggle to explain the assignment to the tutor.

In several transcripts of sessions with ESL students, the tutor had to work hard to pin down the assignment, often asking several questions before eliciting a clear explanation of the assignment. In some cases, even after several questions, the tutor did not entirely understand the assignment. At that point, the tutor often asked the ESL student to read the paper, hoping to understand the assignment better afterwards.

In one transcript, an extended discussion of the assignment bled over into the post-reading discussion. The tutor who led this session later analyzed it. He wrote, "The assignment itself was very vague, and I believed right from the start she had probably approached it in the wrong manner." The tutor recognized, as we all do, that understanding the assignment is an important and sometimes problematic issue in setting the agenda and evaluating the paper, particularly with ESL students.

ESL students seem to have a more difficult time articulating the assignment in part because they struggle to find the precise language needed to explain the assignment, and in part, because they often only have a vague idea what the parameters are of the assignment. Also, these students' overriding concern about grammar sometimes pushes every other concern out of the way.

The quick fix (which we have done/ will continue to do) is to get the written assignments from the teachers of our ESL students. That will clarify the assignment for the tutor and will certainly facilitate the session. However, an important part of the writing process for the ESL learner is to be able to articulate the assignment in order to understand and internalize the concepts, to communicate these concepts clearly to a native speaker, and thereby to "own" the understanding. It seems likely that even if the tutor understands the assignment fully, the very process of having the student communicate it clearly will continue to be a time-consuming but essential part of the tutoring process for non-native speakers.

Cultural informing

In 1993 Judith Powers wrote that "ESL writers are asking us to become audiences for their work in a broader way than native speakers are; they view us as cultural informants about American academic expectations" (98). Since then, the term "cultural informing" has been used very broadly to include any discussion of the peculiarities of the English language. Some argue that whenever tutors engage in language-level discussions, such as the explanation of idiomatic expressions or even syntactical conventions, they are acting as cultural informants.

We are harking back to Powers' definition, which seems more interesting and unique to our work with international students. We use the term "cultural informing" for those situations where tutors or students share details about their national background or general culture, not just about language. By this definition, students as well as tutors act as cultural informants.

When tutors and ESL students share information about their respective cultures, it helps students better understand the idiosyncratic cultural expectations of their American audience, which is of central importance in effec-

tive writing. Conversely, when students share information about their cultures with their tutors, it strengthens the rapport between tutor and student, allowing for more confident, constructive criticism on the tutor's part and improved writing on the student's part.

Frequently, the ESL students we see in the Writing Center choose, or are required, to write about aspects of their native culture, society or government, and in these cases discussion about cultural differences is almost inevitable. One tutor found himself in a somewhat sticky situation when a female ESL student wrote, in reference to a feminist Taiwanese political activist, "The beautiful woman made the male politicians inferior and made them expose their shortcomings." Although somewhat embarrassed, the tutor effectively acted as cultural informant, pointing out to the student that, to an American audience, the combination of the words "male," "expose" and "shortcomings," in practically any order, will inevitably carry unintended sexual overtones. In this example, the tutor, acting as cultural informant, focused on language-level, idiomatic issues, but also helped the student better understand the cultural expectations of her American audience.

In the following excerpt from an ESL tutoring session, the native-speaking female graduate student tutor and a Japanese female graduate student exchange cultural information on a more general level.

> C: 'Kay. This is another (paper).
> T: A tofu shop??? (laughs)
> C: You know?
> T: No, but I love the idea.
> C: You know tofu?
> T: I love tofu.
> C: You do? Is it, like, well known in the States?
> T: I think so. . . . Maybe it's just the people I hang out with, because we all eat a lot of tofu and vegetables and rice but . . . it is well known. It's not necessarily well loved by everyone. Some people say, "Tofu? Uuugh! It has no taste." But I love it.

This conversation may only seem like rapport-building, which is very important in its own right, but the student's question, "Is it well known in the States?" shows her desire for cultural information and is also a good indication that she may not know exactly how to approach the assignment. A tutor responding to a question like this helps sharpen the student's approach to her topic and to her audience.

Cultural informing, then, serves multiple functions in a tutoring session. It can further the rapport, clarify the student's approach to a topic, and help the student understand the unique expectations of an American audience.

Collaboration and Socratic methodology

In recent years, an intriguing dialogue has developed over the "role" of the tutor in ESL conferences. While most of us probably agree that collaborative methods tend to be the best way to "help the writer, not the writing," some believe that with an ESL writer, the tutor needs to take on the role of a teacher instead of a peer (Powers; Mosher, Granroth, Hicks).

Three questions emerge from this initial study of collaboration in tutorials with international students:

1. How much collaboration occurs in these tutorials?
2. Is collaboration used for higher-order concerns, lower-order concerns, or both?
3. When, chronologically, is collaboration used in a session? That is, is it usually used at the start, the end, or throughout the session?

Our transcripts affirm that tutors did adopt a didactic style quite frequently. However, it was not necessarily any more frequent than we saw in a session with a native-speaking writer. Tutors seem to use Socratic techniques just as much as, if not more than, didactic ones to help ESL writers. And tutors seem to use these methods for higher-order concerns, which is where we usually expect collaborative techniques to work. But tutors also used them with lower-order concerns, such as sentence structure and grammar, areas in which tutors traditionally find themselves turning to more didactic methods.

In this excerpt from a tutoring session between a male native-speaking graduate student tutor and a Turkish female graduate student, the tutor used a combination of collaborative and didactic methods:

> T: "Inside the country that is close to the border. . . ." What country?
> C: Turkey!
> T: Yes. You have to spell it out. People do not know you are talking about the eastern border of Turkey. These other places over here where you mention "my country," you have to say that it is Turkey or at least introduce yourself and your nation of origin at the beginning of the piece.
> C: Okay. (Writes something down.)
> T: It's still not grammatically correct. Where did it happen specifically close to the eastern border of Turkey? Deserted road? Village? Border crossing?
> C: Border crossing.
> T: So how would you write it?
> C: This is a true story that happened at a border crossing close to the eastern border of Turkey.

Notice that the tutor used a combination of both didactic and Socratic methods—leading statements and open-ended questions—to help the writer create a very clear sentence.

In other transcripts we examined, sometimes the tutor and writer worked together to find the right word, as with the following excerpt. In this session, the writer brought in a script for a 2-

minute news feature on juggling. The feature was for her television broadcast class.

> C: "Many people may have seen juggling but not many probably have actually tried playing it." (pause) Practicing, or playing it. I wanted to emphasize that people maybe know about it but many people maybe don't *have* . . . wait . . . *played* juggling.
>
> T: Right.
>
> C: I don't think . . .
>
> T: Right. I think *played* is probably the wrong verb. I think you're right. (pause)
>
> C: Tried?
>
> T: Tried.
>
> C: Tried, um performing it.
>
> T: You might even just say, "tried it."
>
> C: Tried. Tried it. Okay. "Many people may have seen juggling, but not many probably have tried it." No "actually." Um. Because last time my professor told me not to editorialize (laughs), so I said people *have seen* juggling.

Notice that with both examples, the tutor helps the writer find her own way to fix her sentence. When tutors use collaboration, judging by our sample transcripts, it appears to be very effective in helping ESL writers edit their papers while still maintaining authorship.

We observed that some tutors seem to use a more directive approach early in the session and then ease into more collaborative methods as the session

proceeds. Ironically, some tutors may be using a more directive approach to create rapport and build trust, creating credibility for the tutor in the ESL writer's eyes. Or, the directive approach might be used to buy time for the tutor, for it allows her to begin with some quick grammar tips as she assesses the writer's needs.

Conclusion

As we've read through dozens of transcripts of sessions with international students, we've had some of our initial theories challenged and some affirmed. For example, we found more collaboration than we thought we would find—and in intriguing configurations. We're even more firmly convinced about the importance of cultural informing and think that there's a great deal more information about the nature of writing instruction to mine in this particular area. And we were surprised to see how central a role articulating the assignment plays in the success of a tutorial session.

One clear message we've received is that, as we first suspected, the tutorial session with international students is different from the session with native speakers. It is, for one thing, more intensive, and, secondly, far fewer issues get covered within a single session. Sometimes the interchanges between the tutor and the student are both baffling and at the same time shed light on the challenges of tutoring ESL writers, as in this exchange between one of our

graduate student tutors and his Asian student:

> T: Well, what are you concerned with about this paper?
>
> C: The most point I want to concerned it because English is not my native language.
>
> T: Yes.

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(Re)shaping the drop-in writing center: Making the case for long-term instruction

One of the most valuable services a university can offer to students is that which is provided by the writing center. For many students, working one-on-one with a writing consultant is an extremely valuable activity that can lead them to a better understanding of their individual writing processes and how that process "fits" with the kind of academic writing that will be expected of them. While there are many different writing center "models," the one that is most commonly used today is that of a drop-in writing center. In most drop-in writing centers, students can simply show up and work with a writing consultant. Usually, the student brings an assignment sheet from a class—often, though certainly not always, from a freshman composition course—or a draft of a response to an assignment that the student has already completed. For the next forty-five minutes or an hour, the writing consultant and student discuss the draft and look both at specific strengths and at areas that could stand some rethinking/revision. In most drop-in centers, the consultant tries to help the client think about the process of writing and to find ways to look at his or her own work with a perceptive but critical eye in relation to this process.

The scenario just described is a common one. However, most writing center tutors are familiar with other far less positive scenarios, including the very common one that follows: In this scenario, a student comes in without either a written assignment sheet or a draft. Still, the student tries to discuss both the requirements of the assignment and his or her ideas concerning a response to that assignment. Frequently, the writing center consultant will suggest that the student take some time to write a first draft right away or that the student leave and make an appointment for another visit to the writing center when the student can return with a draft. When the student *does* return with the draft, the writing consultant may see a paper that does not appear to be responsive to the assignment the student originally described, that is rambling and disorganized, and that contains any number and combination of logical fallacies and poorly analyzed assertions. In addition, the draft seems to be directed to no particular audience. But this is just the beginning. The draft is also filled with significant syntactic derailments and major grammatical and mechanical errors. To make matters worse, the paper is due in two days. Even experienced, well-trained writing consultants can be forgiven if they experience a sinking feeling as they wonder how to approach the issues presented to them in a scenario like this. At least part of the problem in this scenario is that the student simply might not be ready to make the significant leap to the sometimes-unfamiliar academic writing that college professors often value.

As someone who first worked with students as a peer tutor in the writing lab at a community college in 1985 and then a couple of years later at the University of Iowa, I have experienced this sinking feeling any number of times. How can a writing center consultant begin to think about discussing writing as a process with a student in a situation such as that described above? The temptation to focus on this paper only as product is very strong; wouldn't it be simpler for *me* to simply "fix" the problems and send the student away with *my* revision—*this time*? Or, because I realize the pedagogical and ethical problems with that strategy, would it be more helpful to the student in the long run if I tell him or her there really isn't enough time to do much to address all of the issues we need to address together, but that we'll do the best we can in the fifty minutes remaining in our session? But I know at the end of the session, I will be left, and, more importantly, the student will be left with the question, "*then what*"? Will the student have learned much about writing or his or her own writing process? And, even though writing center consultants tell students that we can't guarantee immediate results that translate into good grades on writing assignments, isn't it likely many of them (and us) will still wonder whether the paper will get an acceptable grade in the course for which it was written? If not, will the student think that working in the writing center was simply a waste of time and energy? All of these questions are legitimate, and most writing center tutors are likely to grapple with these questions, and others, as they work with clients.

For difficult cases like these, many drop-in writing centers have structures in place whereby some students can work with writing consultants on a continuing, long-term basis. In some of these writing centers the methodology for long-term tutoring is well planned and is the subject of a substantial amount of writing consultant training

that takes place during the semester and the academic year. However, there are also many drop-in centers that do not emphasize long-term instruction for clients and provide very little coherent training in this approach for writing consultants. Frequently, long-term instruction is allowed, even encouraged in some cases, but consultants often work with students on an almost *ad hoc* basis, with little practical support or structure to inform the continuing relationship between consultant and student client. In some writing centers where long-term tutoring is not emphasized as a substantial part of consultant training, the student often brings in paper after paper in response to assignment after assignment from outside classes and the consultant and client work on these together.

The problem is, without extensive training in long-term instruction, for even the best writing consultants the focus of such work sometimes tends to shift away from the student's writing process and toward getting the latest paper—the product—ready for submission. This may not be the most effective approach for all of our students, and I would like to suggest that the writing center, while still maintaining its drop-in focus and integrity, can also be a place that focuses on the individual needs of students by incorporating a carefully organized plan of study for some of them, especially those students who have numerous and significant issues in their writing, who will return to the writing center on a continuing basis.

There are many possible approaches writing center staff could take to integrate a useful long-term focus with the more commonplace drop-in focus in place at most writing centers today, and I would like to suggest one possibility. This method could be based upon that which was used by consultants at the University of Iowa's Writing Lab under Lou Kelly in the 1970s and '80s. Back in the mid- to late-1980's, the Writing Lab at Iowa was

not a drop-in center at all; instead, every student who worked in Iowa's Writing Lab was a continuing student who made at least a semester-long commitment to working on his or her writing in the lab. Each student was assigned a writing consultant with whom that student worked for the entire semester. Of course, this approach is not appropriate for every drop-in center today, but there are elements of this methodology that can inform instructional program design to help prepare writing center consultants to work with students on a long-term basis.

When students came to the Writing Lab at Iowa, they were met by a tutor who described the program and what tutors could and could not do with students. This consultant made clear that the lab was not a proofreading service, nor was it a place where students could come to get quick "fixes" for writing problems. Instead, the Writing Lab was a place where students would work, one-on-one, with a writing consultant over an entire semester. Because our work with students was very individualized—we started where the students were "at" as writers and worked with them at their own pace—Lou believed it was important to look at a piece of writing the student did at our first meeting. This writing sample was not something students had composed in response to an assignment for another class; instead, it was a response to an introductory writing "invitation," an assignment that was the same for all students who signed up to work in the lab.

This first invitation was designed to elicit a personal response rather than a piece of academic writing, and suggested a few broad subject areas. Lou strongly believed that students usually write most effectively about topics with which they are familiar, topics for which the student could use his or her own "voice" rather than temporarily adopting what, for many of our students would have been a very unfamiliar academic tone and style. The

student's response to this writing invitation served as a "baseline" writing sample and helped the writing lab consultant to understand the kinds of issues or problems that influenced the student. This baseline sample, together with subsequent writings, also helped the consultant to better see some of the problems that occurred as the student began to respond to invitations that required the kinds of abstract thinking and writing that were required as the student wrote academic essays.

The initial student writing was important since it was the first in a sequence of writings that slowly moved up the abstraction ladder from personal narrative to academic writing. While some students could accomplish this move in one semester, others took longer. Writing consultants carefully analyzed that first writing so they could get a sense of where the student was in terms of fluency, content, organization, tone and style, and grammatical and mechanical correctness. For the last items on this list, consultants did a formal error analysis in which the writing sample was carefully analyzed for lexical issues, syntactic patterns, and specific categories of grammatical and mechanical error. Based on this early analysis of fluency, content, organization, tone and style, and correctness, trained writing consultants could *begin* to understand the student as a writer and could *begin* to develop a coherent plan designed to solidify and maximize those areas in which the student was already strong while focusing on those areas that were problematic. I emphasize the word "begin" because developing a long-term strategy was not something that happened after an analysis of only one writing sample; instead, strategies were developed, modified, and changed on a continuing basis throughout the semester based on the student's writing.

Here is a concrete example: Say a student walks in the first day and writes a response to a writing invitation. After forty-five minutes, the stu-

dent has finished and the consultant reads the response. The text is very correct in terms of grammar and mechanics, and what there is of the response appears to have only minor organizational problems and is fairly coherent. Problem is, there isn't very much on the page, perhaps only one or two very short paragraphs. As the writing consultant reads the response, it becomes clear that the student has really not gotten beyond writing a brief introduction. That's OK; different people work at different speeds. Maybe the student was a bit intimidated at the first session in the writing center. Perhaps things were a bit noisy when he or she was writing, even though the noise level didn't seem to be anything out of the ordinary for the consultant. Or, possibly the student just didn't feel much like writing at that time on that day. On the other hand, maybe that student is someone who has a very difficult time writing unless each sentence he or she produces is grammatically perfect. So, instead of writing for forty-five minutes, that student may have been busy trying to form perfectly correct clauses, sentences, and paragraphs. Of course the writing consultant cannot jump to this conclusion without more information, but it is certainly something that might be discussed with the student at the next session in the writing center.

Focusing on writing that students did in response to invitations while in the Writing Lab at Iowa allowed writing consultants to look closely at the student's individual writing process without the additional and sometimes very powerful pressure of due dates and grades that papers for courses outside the writing center usually bring. Starting with brief samples of personal writing allowed consultants to get a handle on where the student was as a writer. After completing a few more written responses during subsequent trips to the writing center, the student could, with the help and advice of a tutor, move further up the abstraction ladder if such a move was warranted. However, it is much more difficult to start at the student's own individual level when that student brings a draft of a response to an outside assignment because then the focus often turns away from the *process* of writing and toward what a particular professor *wants* in terms of a completed academic paper, a completed product.

Of course it may make sense to work on outside assignments in the writing center, but that depends upon the student and where he or she is "at" in terms of his or her writing. For example, does the student have significant problems writing a personal narrative about an experience? If so, it may be extremely difficult to require that student to successfully negotiate the many complicated requirements of an assignment that requires him or her to construct an academic essay. Writing an academic essay may be the ultimate goal for an individual student, and, since these are college students, it is a sensible goal, though it is not something that all of our students are prepared to do as soon as they enter the university or the writing center. For many students, that's precisely why they come to the writing center in the first place. For these students, it likely makes sense to start on a lower rung of the abstraction ladder, and eventually work up to the academic essay.

It probably doesn't make sense to change the focus of all writing centers to a model whereby students respond to writing center-generated assignments that elicit personal writing. Where students can profitably work on outside assignments with writing consultants, that work should definitely continue. On the other hand, because some of our students come to the writing center not yet ready to focus on the production of academic essays, consultants must do something that meets their needs as well. For these students it may be helpful to develop coherent programs of long-term instruction designed to focus on the development of student writing in the kind of safe, stable environment that only continuing one-on-one work with a writing consultant can provide.

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TUTORS' COLUMN

Never say "no"

Last year when I joined a campus improv theatre troupe—becoming one of the Studio 013 Refugees—I saw right away how much group improv paralleled and fueled my process of writing. For one thing, it taught me how to push ideas one step further, to take chances and experiment, and to laugh and discard them—respecting the journey of the process—if they didn't work. Improv requires a suspension of disbelief, clothes you don't mind getting dirty, and a bit of light-heartedness—just like writing. The process of creativity that is crucial to improv is the same that I try to tap into when I write; however, I never realized until later this semester how many of the same ideas—especially about collaboration—also resemble and can contribute to the tutoring process.

Improv theatre only requires a group of ready players and one single topic to begin. Generally, the topic is found by asking the audience for a suggestion, thereby demonstrating that from any idea—a feeling, a location, an object—there are limitless spin-off possibilities for the players. A short skit then ensues; but since the players know no more than the audience where it will lead, it generally seems more like a raucous, countryside-ride than destination-bound journey. In the same way, when one willing tutor and one earnest writer sit down, it doesn't so much matter what the topic is or what the scenario; there are always possibilities, avenues to try out, and thoughts to spin, and it's not necessary to begin by knowing where it will lead. Most important, just like in improv theatre, we must focus only on the process and try to suspend all worries about the product. If we get distracted too much by trying to produce the perfect paper or

grade, we'll lose sight of the writer and the writing process. Only by focussing on the process—the conversation, the questioning, the individual points of the session—will we help the writer get where she wants to go. In improv, if we begin a scene overly concerned if it will be funny enough, or if our audience will like it, the scene generally belly flops. If we concentrate, however, on the moment and the immediate focus of the scene—who are we, what are we doing, where are we going next—the ending and the laughs follow in their own time.

For the Refugees, every practice, scene, and game we play requires committed collaboration. I'm always surprised, given the independent streaks of every member of our group and also our individual tendencies towards wanting to be "the ham," at how well we do this. In part, we are able to do so by our strict adherence to our main rule: "Never say 'no.'" This is crucial in our process of collaboration to keep scenes going forward. In a scene, if a character first enters the stage and says "It's so dark in this barn!" then the stage is immediately a dark barn; the other characters had better enter stumbling, or bring a candle. We know we collaborate best by building upon and trusting one another, not trying to direct each other or single-handedly control the whole scene. This is also true in the tutoring process—not that I would suggest that we "never say no" ever, but that *in spirit* we never say no to a writer. We should never deny the validity of a writer's idea, process, or goals; it's the writer's scene and we're the supporting cast. We can open possibilities, question, and move furniture out of the way, but ultimately it's not our show.

There is one game we play in practice that specifically reminds me of tutoring: "Heighten and Explore." It requires a moderator outside the scene to guide and challenge the players, thus providing the structure of the scene and the handlebars of a format; it's very similar to the job of the tutor. In "Heighten and Explore," the scene begins with an audience-generated topic, with which the players will proceed to enact some sort of conflict. Intermittently, the moderator will pause the scene and yell out either "heighten" or "explore." "Heighten" means that the players are to take whichever emotion or characteristic they are projecting at that moment and double its intensity; "explore" means similarly to take the current idea or nearby object and investigate every possible direction for it to go. For example, one scene took place in a jewelry store where thieves were in the process of removing a diamond from a case. This could have merely progressed into the next moment of putting the diamond into their bag or stealing something else, and the scene would have continued along that line. The moderator, however, yelled out "explore," and the thieves, holding the diamond, ended up twisting the plot of the scene into the idea that they could build a laser out of the diamond and take over the world. This same idea translates well into tutoring (not the idea of taking over the world but of exploring!). Although I realize that I must articulate myself a little more clearly while tutoring, there are many times when I feel that I am merely pointing to a spot in a writer's paper and yelling, "explore!" or "heighten!" By merely indicating to writers that there are countless angles of approach for any subject, and questioning them to encourage that consideration, I am

able to send them off running with what was originally their idea anyway.

One of the most crucial skills that I am still working on in the Refugees and in tutoring is listening closely; in both scenarios, the action can sometimes move pretty fast. On stage, we have to practice constantly to balance ourselves—not talking over one another but communicating who or what is the focus. Sometimes—like the boom of a sailboat—the focus will suddenly and forcefully shift. When it does so, we have to be ready to duck, pull the sail in, and adjust the course—all of which we can only do if we're listening to each other and for the pace of the scene. In tutoring, we need to listen to the writers and watch for the changes; what they are saying in their papers and what they may be trying to tell us might be ready to shift suddenly or "come about" at any minute. A few times, I was nearly halfway through a

tutoring session before I realized what the writers had subtly been trying to tell me. In one case, it was that the writer had been perfectly happy with her paper until students in her peer-reading group questioned what to their minds was a "non-academic" tone. Another time, what was blocking a student was her feeling that her professor hated her. I'm not trying to suggest that the focus in either of these sessions shifted, or should have shifted, into a function more appropriate to a counseling center, but that in both I had to listen to more than what the students said in order to hear what they really needed from the session: validation of their writing and encouragement to continue.

Ultimately, our best scenes work on stage when we relax and trust one another. Some of our best moments have been when, by merely meeting eyes across the stage, the two or three of us

in the scene already knew we were leading to a really cohesive, funny moment. Sometimes, the hardest part in this is also remembering to keep the focus, even in our excitement, and to step out of the way if our character is not supposed to be a part of the final moment. It's about the scene, not about us. Moments of this kind of recognition follow me from the stage into the writing center; I'll catch myself, caught up in the excitement of a student's sudden realization or new idea, wanting to jump in and say: "AND then you can do THIS. . . ." and I'd be off and running. I've learned to sit on my hands and bite my lip. After all, the scene will find its natural closure, and the writer—if we've done our job well together—can certainly speak for herself.

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Listening more carefully: Working with a person with perception impairment

Calm Wednesday afternoons are fairly standard at the Drew University Writing Center in early October, so it was a bit of a shock when a first-year student came barreling into our office, looked around, and then demanded to know with which writing consultant he would be meeting for his 4 p.m. appointment. I volunteered that it was me, and upon noticing that I was an unfamiliar consultant, he irately asked, "How many people do you have working here? Twenty?" Although taken aback by the sarcasm, I also noted the frustration in his voice. Obviously, this student was concerned about more than the number of employees at the Writing Center. He began to talk rapidly about a paper he was working on, and how he would appreciate some continuity with the help he was receiving.

"David," as I shall call him, had already seen several people at the Writ-

ing Center. His file had few notes in it, and, in glancing them over, I could not find any reason for his irateness or his overwhelming impatience, and I decided there was a larger problem. As I asked David what he wanted to do during the session, he kept repeating "just write this down, just write this down." Grabbing a pencil and paper, I wrote as David spoke the entire text of his paper. He had no interest in either writing things down himself or in dealing with the indicted text, but he was completely capable of revising his (spoken) prose as we went through the session. I was listening not only to his paper, but also a specific trouble with the writing process.

At this point, I felt trapped: I knew I was working with an intelligent person, but I also knew that David had trouble communicating the ideas, sentences, and entire papers in his head to

his fingers. Since New Jersey law and Writing Center protocol do not allow writing consultants to directly ask students whether or not they have learning differences, I wanted him to tell me if he did. I told him that I would speak with my director and see if she would approve a weekly meeting time for David and the consultant of his choice, and then I asked if I could do anything more, hoping to uncover his underlying problem. David, although still a bit irate, told me that he had perception impairment (PI), which had been diagnosed in high school. At this point, I was able to change the focus of what we perceived as the underlying problem; instead of being dissatisfied with the availability of any one given consultant, David really needed extra support from both our center and the college's administration. I asked him if I could tell my director about his impairment and if she could discuss it

with him further. David reluctantly agreed, perhaps not wanting to be labeled LD again, but thus enabling himself to receive further help.

What we found was that David's PI kept him from physically writing his papers; however, the verbally articulated expression of his ideas was in the form of a paper. Furthermore, PI kept him from knowing precisely how much to write about any one part of the assignment in relation to its other parts. So, after that week, David came in regularly on Wednesdays with me, and had an appointment with my director on Mondays to complete the task of transferring his essay-like thoughts to physical paper. Over the course of the semester, he began to trust me more and became more comfortable in the Writing Center. Our appointments became standard: David would come in, I would have a pile of paper and a sharpened pencil, and he would begin dictating. David had no trouble composing and remembering his points; even speaking his paper and remembering where to fit in quotes came easily to him. Rather than copying quotes and losing the thread of his essay-narrative, I wrote down its first few words and its page number so he could insert it when typing and editing his essay. By consistently writing down his words, his precise words, I attempted to show him the bridge between what he was saying and what I was writing. The process of transcribing his words helped him recognize his work; additionally, had he any qualms about his thoughts being college-level work, they were resolved by my continual affirmation of writing them down.

I quickly learned that he wanted to divide each idea or paragraph onto separate sheets of paper. Numbering the pages as we went along, David usually left the Writing Center with seven or eight sheets of writing. Because his habit of mass-revising his prose—even as he said it—meant that we often ran out of space on each page,

we also modified the way I wrote down his words: I left spaces between the lines like a regular double- or triple-spaced essay. Helping me to catch his thoughts exactly, this spacing system also helped David when he typed his now-written paper into his computer. It also functioned as a good psychological space: at any time, we could revise a given sentence, idea, or paragraph without worrying about adding sheets of paper. More often than not, we used it as he wrote and rewrote individually expressed ideas, whole sentences, and occasionally rewriting entire paragraphs. This also meant that David did not want to try voice-activated software; because everything he said was revised by the end of the session, he felt that trying to decipher his final thoughts from a tape would be too difficult.

The first problem we encountered was that we generally spent the entire hour writing down the essay and had little time to examine the work in its entirety. Although the essay had undergone extensive line editing during the writing process, there was little time to evaluate its parts in relation to one another. Since David also wanted to explore every tangent he encountered, his papers became large in both breadth and depth, making it even more difficult to look at his paper as a whole. Working on transitions between ideas as we encountered them was crucial; otherwise, the paper's unity might be compromised.

By virtue of being in college, David had another inherent problem: several classes, which meant several papers and projects that had to be tackled simultaneously. As they were assigned, he brought in diverse projects, all with their individual due date and workload, thus dividing the already-precious hour into smaller bits of time. Designating fifteen minutes for his political science class work meant reducing the time spent on his essay for writing class. Since the hour always dissipated

quickly, the ability to focus was essential; David began to come in with a detailed list of things that he either needed or wanted to accomplish in the session. In this way we could evaluate the projects before starting them and estimate how much time each would take. Although we were rarely right on the estimated time, we addressed the most important projects before the hour was over, and were able to start the others so that he could more easily finish them at home.

Fortunately, toward the end of the semester, David had a large breakthrough: he was able to physically write his own drafts. The day he came in and sat down with something already on paper was a fantastic moment; David was becoming, with the introduction of his own written draft, a more independent writer. Having already-written text enabled him to physically view his words as he was revising them, something difficult to do when they had come straight from my pencil. David could be in charge of marking up the drafts, rather than merely watching me put his ideas to work. Consistently listening, writing, and interacting with David, I tried to help the writer and address his problem. Personally, this approach has developed me as a writing consultant: I learned to listen to English as a Second or Other Language students as I did for David—sometimes all I needed to do was write down their spoken thoughts. For ESOL students, this is more important; in my experience, they are often insecure about their English writing skills, and to see that their spoken thoughts can also be their written thoughts is an immense help to their growth as writers.

Working with David has been both challenging and rewarding. From his first session, in which I had to decide whether the LD characteristics he displayed constituted an actual impairment, to our most recent, when we talked about the most effective way to

phrase a flyer selling trees, both of us have come a long way. David writes and edits drafts autonomously and still chooses to use the Writing Center. He has learned, through consistent observation and practice, to effectively communicate through writing. I have learned that a writing consultant needs to listen to the paper in front of her, and that she must also listen carefully to the student next to her. The paper a writer is capable of producing may not be the one brought to the table, and it is the Writing Center's job to help it arrive. Making lists and outlines are the tangible parts of being a writing consultant; shaping a writer is more difficult, but just as important. David needed both—and has made me a better listener for it.

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Do we have your OK?

Mary Jo Turley, the Managing Editor of the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, is working diligently to put the earlier volumes of *WLN* online. But to do so, we have been informed by our legal beagles that authors have to give their permission for their articles to appear online. (Giving permission for this does not prevent authors from having their own essays reprinted elsewhere, but for-profit publishers must pay the author and the newsletter a fee.)

Many of you who have authored articles that appeared in recent years have already signed copyright forms when your articles were accepted, and that's sufficient. However, Mary Jo needs to hear from authors whose work appeared during the first twenty years or so in the *WLN*. If you haven't already sent in your permission, please do so. Let Mary Jo know the title of your essay plus the volume and issue number in which it appeared. A brief note agreeing to having the article appear online is fine. Send to Mary Jo Turley: mjturley@purdue.edu

Call for proposals (Deadline Extended)

On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring will explore various approaches to classroom-based writing tutorials. We seek theory-grounded manuscripts that discuss various features of classroom-based tutoring. Topics might include successful and /or unsuccessful approaches; institutional and/or classroom power relations; assessment; distribution of labor (between teachers and students, between disciplines, etc.); the dynamics of race, gender, and/or class in tutoring relationships; peer writing groups; electronic environments; Writing Across the Curriculum; and basic writing. Please send 2-3 page proposals or completed manuscripts by July 1, 2001 to Candace Spigelman (cxs11@psu.edu) or Laurie Grobman (leg8@psu.edu), Penn State University, Berks-Lehigh Valley College, P.O. Box 7009, Tulpehocken Road, Reading, PA 19610-6009.

International Writing Centers Association Conference

Details are now being worked out for the 2002 International Writing Centers Association conference, being sponsored by the Southeastern Writing Center Association. The conference will be held at the Savannah Marriott Riverfront Hotel, Thurs., April 11-Sat., April 13th. More information will be available in a fall issue of the *Writing Lab Newsletter.*

Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

June 18-20, 2001: European Writing Center Association, in Groningen, The Netherlands **Contact**: e-mail: eataw.conference@let.rug.nl; fax: ++31.503636855. Conference website: <http://www.hum.ku.dk/formidling/eataw/>

Sept. 14-15, 2001: Midwest Writing Center Association, in Iowa City, IA **Contact**: SuEllen Shaw, shaws@mnstate.edu, or Cinda Coggins, CCoggins66@aol.com. Conference website: <www.ku.edu/~MWCA>.

April 11-13, 2002: International Writing Centers Association, in Savannah, GA

Pitching a tent, welcoming a traveler, and moving on: Toward a nomadic view of the writing center

"To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour."
(*from* "El Dorado," by Robert Louis Stevenson)

I was traveling across campus to my office when an administrator, going in the opposite direction, paused long enough to offer a greeting, pose a question, and present a surprising tidbit of news. "Are you ready to move?" he asked with a grin. I must have looked somewhat bewildered, so he continued on, "You probably know that we've already started to implement the College's five initiatives for the New Century Challenge." I shook my head affirmatively, aware that the initiatives he referred to were part of a fundraising campaign to enhance Wheaton College's educational effectiveness with regard to faculty, technology, library services, community, and student life. "The plan at this point is to link the writing center with the new computer research and instructional center," he went on. "That means that you will be moving from the basement of the library to the first floor, near the main entrance." Rushing on to a meeting, he shouted that he would get back to me to clarify the details, and he assured me that the move wouldn't happen until sometime during the semester break. I thanked him for the good news, began walking again, and then thought to myself, "The semester break?"

Quickly I became overwhelmed by concurrent feelings of elation and anxiety. On the one hand, I *did* write a proposal requesting that the administration

consider my ideas on how a new writing center could promote the New Century Challenge initiatives. Obviously they had reviewed my proposal and were ready to act on it. So, I couldn't help but be pleased. Yet on the other hand, it seemed that I had recently finished the arduous task of getting the writing center up and running again after moving it from its previous quarters on the second floor of a building halfway across campus. The thought of packing up books, computers, equipment, and supplies, only to unpack them again and set up a new site, led me to view myself, my tutors, our work, and the writing center as downright *nomadic*.

As I continued the walk to my office, I recounted momentous events from our nomadic existence. My predecessor, now the chair of English and my boss, first put things in motion thirteen years ago with the help of a one-time grant. The early days were not easy: a case for institutional support had to be made and won, tutors had to be hired and given basic training, and some sort of space had to be found for our regular use. Wheaton's center, like so many writing centers that start up at small liberal arts colleges, began on a meager budget in an unused classroom, where unseasoned tutors met with guinea-pig student writers during limited evening hours.

After our center became established, the main administrative building on campus underwent renovation, resulting in a spare office; it was offered to us for exclusive writing center use. Cramped but functional, the office became home, a place where tutors didn't

have to box everything up at the end of each long night, as they did in the classroom. And given its strategic location—near the main computer lab—we happily siphoned off a fair amount of daily, overflow business, which increased our numbers and lengthened our hours. We also purchased a computer and hooked up a printer, going from handwritten record keeping to an electronic database. My staff and I camped there comfortably, working contentedly and welcoming visitors to our congenial surroundings. Regularly we received compliments for the shaded blue lamps and the Monet reproductions on the walls, which had a calming effect on students. It was an easy place to tutor, and to learn, and to grow. But then, after several semesters, we were unexpectedly asked to move on to another area. Our space was needed for a new administrative office.

With the promise of a larger site to pitch our tent on, we trekked across campus to our present location, the lower level of the library. It was a secluded place, and less visible and accessible to students, but it proved to be almost three times bigger. To enhance our new locale, we asked the College to outfit us with four additional computers (for student use), another printer, some furniture (including a sizable bookshelf and a comfortable chair), and some plants. We got what we asked for. Word got around about our "new and improved" writing center, and students came in greater numbers than before. All that took place less than three years ago.

Now, once again, the writing center needed to move, and I needed to start

making plans to travel. As I arrived back at my office, in checklist fashion my mind was reviewing the sorts of things that I would soon have to do. Then, while reaching for the keys to open my door, something dawned on me: my reflections on the writing center's nomadic existence had greater significance than I first realized. "What," I wondered, "are some of the theoretical implications of a nomadic writing center?" Sitting at my desk, I let my thoughts wander from my head to the page in front of me.

One of my perennial challenges—as is the case for most directors—involves communicating to students, faculty, and administrators what the writing center *is*, and what it *does*. Many mispeceptions abound. Consequently, I sometimes have struggled to know where to begin in providing an accurate explanation to others. Bonnie S. Sunstein offers helpful insight, here, recognizing that there is an inherent difficulty in coming up with a stable definition for "writing center":

> Writing centers exist in an often uncertain present—but they work with a past brought in by writers thinking about a future. For years, writing center staffs have tried to define our place to ourselves, our administrators, and to our profession. We've attempted to create a definition that reflects our realities—our struggles as well as our successes—what we've been and what we may yet become. But definition eludes us. (7)

In my quandary to come up with a clear and honest definition, one thing I have come to believe is that a writing center *must not* be understood, first and foremost, as a place.

In reality, what has defined the writing center at our college has not been an area or region understood largely in spatial terms—*a center*. As Sunstein

poignantly observes, "A writing center cannot define itself as a space—we're often kicked out of our spaces" (8). Being "kicked out" of an old space may not be all bad, as I have discovered at Wheaton, especially if it is a kick in the right direction. Writing centers at colleges and universities—relatively recent on the academic landscape—tend to be unstable phenomena, spatially speaking; they follow a sort of archetypal path, journeying from one location to another, as they gain credibility and worth. For that reason, and others, what best characterizes our writing center is not a *place*—though place certainly has some significance—but *praxis*.

Praxis, simply put, is theory put into action. "Travel" represents a nomadic understanding of praxis. In one sense, travel can be understood as actual physical movement, the common understanding of the word; but it can also represent the intellectual process of attaining knowledge and consciously applying it to particular skills, like writing, in order to extend those skills. Travel, in this sense, rarely happens quickly, easily, or directly; yet, for the committed traveler, it ultimately becomes a meaningful and gratifying activity.

Knowledge is vital to travel. When students from diverse backgrounds and disciplinary interests sojourn to our tent, we first welcome them to *our* ground, briefly offering knowledge about our writing center's approach and methods. Then we attempt to meet students on *their* own ground, asking questions to help us get to know them a little better and to understand what they are working on and how they think we might be able to help them. This preliminary interchange of knowledge is essential if we are going to travel well together; we have to know what to expect from each other. As tutors and writers speak and listen to

each other, paying attention to their respective realms of discourse, they draw upon mutually disclosed knowledge. Often unpredictable and fascinating, the interaction is never static. Travel depends upon collaborative, sincere, energetic engagement.

With the foregoing views in mind, what, then, constitutes an honest description of our writing center? As the director of a writing center on the move, when I describe what our writing center *is* and what it *does*, I realize that I must attempt to represent the reality of tutors as they interact with writers. It starts with a fundamental narration. The action—the plot—which develops between these two people—the characters—must lead somewhere, as in any good narrative. Usually, however, this "somewhere" is an "unknown" for both characters, who, though they may have a sense of purpose and direction, seldom are sure exactly where they will travel; this is because, in part, the tutoring session cannot be reduced to a rigid set of interpersonal rules, followed to calculated ends. There is no universal map that consistently guides every tutor and every student writer as they attempt to move forward. In light of this truth, Joan Hawthorne explains the importance of "directive tutoring":

> Writing center conferences are negotiated events between the student and the consultant. There is no "right answer" or "best conference" to use as a guide. If students leave the conference (a) with a slightly better paper, (b) as a slightly better writer, and (c) feeling comfortable with the center and likely to return so you can continue the work that was begun, you've had a "good enough" conference. (5)

Thus, the work of praxis depends upon negotiation. The tutors' training—their theoretical knowledge gained through workshops, weekly memos, meetings,

and required readings—finds expression in dialog, often intuitively and spontaneously generated, during the fleeting moments that make up a session.

Praxis depends upon writing-center dialog, which transports both tutor and student writer from one insight to another, leading to a clearer vision of the writer's work and, ultimately, to a sensible strategy for revision. "Writing centers, then," as Peter Carino states, "are social as well as linguistic, social in the sense of the praxis that goes on there, linguistic in the sense that all of that praxis is mediated by language both as it occurs and in any attempts we make to document it. As language, our documentation, our discourse, is always already interpretive" (32). Given that the language we use interprets what we do, the best linguistic descriptor to convey the kind of praxis that occurs in our writing center at Wheaton, naturally, is *nomadic*. Travel not only typifies our past and our future, with regard to physical movement from place to place, but it also characterizes the daily theoretical application that results from tutor-writer interaction. Tutors and writers are always coming and going, moving in a multitude of directions—bodily, verbally, textually. A nomadic view of the writing center not only accounts for this flux, but emphasizes that such action—such travel—is central to its identity and function.

Ironically, our writing center's wandering in the wilderness has been due, in part, to our successful praxis: students have sought us out to dialog and seek direction, and we have grown. Despite the center's precarious presence during the past decade—pitching a tent in one place, only to take it down and pitch it in another—students have continued to wander, as nomads, across campus to find us, coming in ever-increasing numbers. This is best illustrated by the fact that last year we provided more than four times as many tutorials as we did in our first year.

The steadily increasing student influx has factored into our need to be nomadic, moving to an ever more accommodating place of praxis—a larger tent.

In thinking about students' regular excursions to our tent, wherever it has been pitched, I sense that in several ways they see Wheaton's Writing Center as a sort of oasis in the midst of their own nomadic lives. From semester to semester, they move from one set of courses to another, from one classroom to the next, from one professor and disciplinary discourse to another, from one writing assignment to the one after. Exciting as these academic endeavors can be, they are rarely easy. As David Bartholomae argues, "Since students assume privilege by *locating themselves* [my emphasis], within the discourse of a particular community—within a set of specifically acceptable gestures and commonplaces—learning, at least as it is defined in the liberal arts curriculum, becomes more a matter of imitation or parody than a matter of invention and discovery" (278). This nomadic activity of "locating" oneself in discourse communities across the disciplines, of writing papers using "acceptable gestures and commonplaces"—a highly complex kind of travel—can tire even the most seasoned of student travelers. Thus, from time to time students long for a place where they can find refreshment and encouragement for their academic journey.

When a writing center serves as an oasis, it represents a safe environment where students can temporarily stop off to discuss their writing, tell tales of grief and triumph in learning, confide in another with their fears and frustrations, and attain a clearer sense of their own process of composing. An oasis, as it is commonly understood, functions as a refuge. In that sense, nomadic learners regularly come to us wanting to pull up a chair, slow down for a while, and share a bit of their written reflections with a fellow traveler—a tutor. Sadly, this sort of dynamic exchange of talk, tales, and text between travelers happens too seldom.

Besides being a refuge, a writing center that operates as an oasis becomes known as a fertile spot in the midst of an arid region. Simply put, green things grow here despite adverse conditions. When students drop by our writing center feeling lost in their thoughts, meandering hopelessly, lacking confidence in their ability to create something lively and worth a reader's time, only to leave thirty minutes later with a sprout, something green and full of possibility, then our center has accomplished something significant. Growth in writing results, in part, from three essential tutoring activities: watering, fertilizing, and pruning. When watering, the tutor provides a steady stream of verbal and non-verbal support to encourage and motivate the visiting writer. Fertilizing entails the tutor making suggestions for added nutrients that would enhance the growth of a given piece. And pruning involves the thorny work of the tutor offering advice on what to eliminate—unnecessary branches of discourse that may be twisted or broken, and therefore unfruitful. These skillful activities have the potential to develop vital habits of thought and practice for any nomad who desires to perform an amazing feat—make something grow in the desert.

Most importantly, those who support a nomadic view of the writing center accept the responsibility of guiding students, of showing them how to "travel hopefully." Hope emerges, for the traveling student writer, with the knowledge that certain debilitating frames of mind and habits can be consciously avoided, and other more healthy ones adopted. Clearly, tutors serve as vital catalyzing agents in the process of promoting favorable writing behavior. To promote hope and health within students as they write, staff members must adopt an ethic, one that helps them recognize and challenge

counterproductive tendencies, one that directs their words and their actions. A nomadic writing center ethic signifies *an ought*, a better way to think about and practice writing. Such an ethic principally challenges two unhealthy motivations: complacency and undeserved gratification.

More than ever before, students feel pressured by subtle and overt forces, both societal and personal, tempting them to want success without its substance. Many succumb to "*just* getting the paper done" and then "*just* wanting the good grade"; critically speaking, I describe this as "the drive to arrive," a tendency to desire—even demand—the results of effective writing without the requisite process of travel. This attitude, needless to say, militates against learning to write well and represents a state of mind that the nomadic writing center attempts to change.

Based upon his research on brain-compatible learning, published recently in the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, James Upton discusses the need to help writers move toward better states of mind, particularly while being tutored at the writing center. "Brain-compatible learning strategies, the attempt to make formal school experiences reflect and utilize the brain's natural 'learning operations,'" Upton explains, "are the true keys to any meaningful educational change" (11). Upton reminds us that students bring emotions with them into writing center sessions, emotions reflecting their current struggles:

> "Writing center personnel are often in a 'reactive' mode to the actions and attitudes of others, and . . . we may find ourselves with less than receptive writers who are angry, frustrated, belligerent, and/or apathetic." (11)

To facilitate change within writers, moving them into states of mind which are conducive to maximal learning, Upton provides several ideas. Among them, he suggests that tutors debrief with a writer before a session, help writers reduce unhealthy stress and

fear, encourage writers to make time for reflection during learning, and provide honest feedback in a positive manner (11-12). Upton believes that these approaches, and others, appropriated from brain research for instruction purposes, "will create a positive change in school structures and education practices" (12).

Upton's insights, besides being rooted in research, implicitly reveal ethical conviction: they advocate *better* ways for tutors to influence writers which prove to be in sync with a holistic understanding of the human body. Because these ways promote elevated states of conscious learning, which have many long-term returns for the writer, they are superior to less conscious learning behaviors. To change the inferior "drive to arrive" state of mind and its negative effects on writers, workers at a nomadic writing center try to implement ethically oriented tutoring, like Upton's, to encourage writers to travel a better route as they compose and learn. Gently and consistently, tutors remind writers *to see their work as an extension of themselves* and *to embrace the experience of learning as they go through the various steps of writing*. These positive "state changes," once accepted and embodied by students, facilitate healthy composing behaviors and enrich the writing experience.

The notion of tutors becoming "state change facilitators" in the writing center may, to some in our success-crazed culture, seem radical . . . and it is. But for the writer who adopts these sorts of attitude alterations, with the tutor's help, "true success" in writing will no longer simply be measured by the end product alone or the final grade it receives, but *also* by the quality of the "labor" put forth to produce a paper. Appropriately, then, the process of writing itself becomes worthwhile, and the knowledge from writing satisfying. When the writer rejects "the drive to arrive" and adopts "the will to travel," writing can become liberating, trans-

forming, even exciting. The nomadic writing center empowers student writers to value and pursue travel benefits such as these, and ultimately, to discover, in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, "a better thing than to arrive."

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Back Volumes of *WLN* Available

The archives of old volumes of the *Writing Lab Newsletter* are taking up too much space in our Writing Lab, and so we're offering them at "fire sale" prices. (By next fall, we hope to have these volumes available online.) So, if you'd like paper copies of any or all of the first twenty volumes of the newsletter, the price is $5/volume for the earliest volumes and $15/volume for the three most recent volumes (current and two preceding years).

Back issues will be 50¢/each for the earlier volumes plus postage when buying less than ten. Faxed versions of articles are 50¢/page, and the index is still $12. Please e-mail me on those requests: mjturley@purdue.edu.

Mary Jo Turley, Managing Editor
Writing Lab Newsletter

Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar

The 12th annual conference of the Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar will be held on July 13 and 14, at Park University in Parkville, Missouri. Prior to the conference, on July 11 and 12, is the minicourse, Grammar in the Writing Classroom, taught this year by Martha Kolln, Amy Benjamin, Brock Haussamen, and the conference co-hosts, Jeff Glauner and Bob Yates. The course, for teachers from middle school on up, will focus on teachers' grammar issues and practical ways to meet those needs in the classroom.

Students may take the course for one credit of Park University graduate education credit ($219) or without credit ($70). See the ATEG website at <www.ateg.org> for details and registration materials.

To join ATEG and to receive its quarterly journal, *Syntax in the Schools*, send annual dues of $12 ($20 for two years) by check payable to ATEG to Prof. Dave Sawyer, Dept. of English, North Hennepin Community College, 7411 85th Ave. North, Brooklyn Park, MN 55445.

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