

THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E T T E R

Volume 27, Number 8

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

April, 2003

...FROM THE EDITOR...

As I put each issue of the newsletter together, I try to place articles in the order they came in. But spacing can cause problems as I try to find exactly 15 and 1/2 pages of text. The result is that an article that is too long gets returned to the pile as a shorter article gets moved in. Then, as I look at the whole that results, I need to check that the issue offers a good mix of topics so that if you aren't interested in one essay, the next one might offer you more.

For this issue, though, the backing and forthing resulted in some unity of themes. Angela Laflen and Melissa Ianetta each offer us insights and suggestions for adding business and professional writing tutorials to your services—if you haven't already done so.

And, to assist us with uses of technology in our centers, Doug Enders reports on SMART Board software, and Annie Olson shares her account of hatching an OWLet. To complete the issue, Stacey Brown reviews strategies for tailoring tutorials to different learning styles, and Kristina Santos chronicles a student's search for the ever-illusive "main idea."

Happy reading!

• Muriel Harris, editor

...INSIDE...

Write with Style: Working with Writers' Learning Styles

• Stacey E. Brown 1

"To Whom It May Concern" and Beyond: Equipping Students to Write for Employers

• Angela Laflen 4

Tutors' Column: "Going Long"

• Kristina M. Santos 7

SMART Board: For the Writing Center That Has Everything

• Doug Enders 9

Nobody's Business?: Professional Writing and the Politics of Correctness

• Melissa Ianetta 10

Casting for God in the Writing Center

• Nelda Rachels 12

Conference Calendar 12

LeTourneau University's OwLet—from Hatchling to Flight

• Annie Olson 13

Write with style: Working with writers' learning styles

The frenetic pace of mid-semester had arrived. Students continuously stopped by the Writing Services Help Desk with papers in hand, requesting writing assistance. Anxiously glancing down at the desk, Matt, a freshman, asked if I could help him with his paper. "Sure!" I replied. "I would be happy to help you." We sat at a conference table, discussing his assignment and concerns with the paper. "I know I need to revise my paper, but I am not sure how to begin," Matt admitted. "I think it needs to be reorganized. Writing has never been my thing." He read a portion of his paper aloud, and I asked pertinent questions about his organization and style, encouraging him to think about how his paper could be reorganized. After some dialogue about the direction of his paper, Matt blurted out, "I hate writing. I just don't get it!"

At that moment, Matt's confession sparked an epiphany. I had practiced empathetic listening techniques. I had employed Brooks' nondirective tutor-

ing strategies, but Matt's frustration was not due to his unwillingness to revise his paper or linked to his ability. He simply did not process information in an auditory fashion. Matt's aggravation led me to recognize that multisensory tutoring strategies ought not to be limited to conferences with students who have learning disabilities. They influence students' writing practices and can be used successfully in each writing conference!

The *Writing Lab Newsletter*, published in ten monthly issues from September to June by the Department of English, Purdue University, is a publication of the International Writing Centers Association, an NCTE Assembly, and is a member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement. ISSN 1040-3779. All Rights and Title reserved unless permission is granted by Purdue University. Material will not be reproduced in any form without express written permission.

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Subscriptions: The newsletter has no billing procedures. Yearly payments of \$15 (U.S. \$20 in Canada) are requested, and checks must be received four weeks prior to the month of expiration to ensure that subscribers do not miss an issue. Please make checks payable to Purdue University and send to the Managing Editor. Prepayment is requested for all subscriptions.

Manuscripts: Recommended length for articles is approximately 2500 words, 1500 words for reviews and Tutors' Column essays. If possible, please send as attached files or as cut-and-paste in an e-mail to mjturley@purdue.edu. Otherwise, send a 3 and 1/2 in. disk with the file, along with the paper copy. Please enclose a self-addressed envelope with return postage not pasted to the envelope. The deadline for announcements is 45 days prior to the month of issue (e.g. August 15 for October issue).

Although type distinctions have existed since the time of Hippocrates, much has been written about learning styles theory and its applications in education over the past thirty years. Learning styles refer to characteristic "styles" or dominant preferences for processing information. Three predominant learning styles have been identified: visual, auditory and kinesthetic (or tactile). Visual learners process information by watching. Auditory learners process information by hearing. Kinesthetic or tactile learners process information by doing. Although learners may possess strong preferences, many exhibit preferences for two styles. Using learning styles theory and strategies geared toward writers, writing consultants can greatly enhance sessions by tailoring suggestions toward each writer's style using three simple steps.

Ask for feedback.

A wonderful way to establish rapport with a student is to ask about his or her learning preferences. By observing a writer's demeanor and responses, consultants can use this information to further facilitate learning. How does the writer respond to verbal feedback? Does the writer seem genuinely disengaged from the writing process? These could be indicators that the writer has not processed information through his or her preferred channel. Rather than plodding through the conference, a consultant can ask for feedback about the writer's preferred style.

Students respond positively when I ask, "How do you learn best?" This simple, non-threatening question can be used to elicit important information about the writer as well as enhance communication. I always explain that understanding how an individual learns helps me better assist writers. Some writers are not aware of their own preferences, and posing a straightforward question can serve as a springboard to personal discovery. Consultants may wish to ask questions such as "Do you know your learning style?" or "Do

you prefer to learn by visualizing it, hearing it, or by tactile methods? Ultimately, requesting feedback from students about preferences can impact their progress in writing conferences (as well as in the classroom) and serve to enhance attitudes toward the writing process.

Act on it.

Read current research on learning styles and understand its applications in a learning environment. Learnativity.com is an excellent site that offers a plethora of resources on learning styles, andragogy, and pedagogy as well as motivation styles. A learning styles assessment test is available on-line so individuals can determine their own preferences. It also offers a bibliography of learning styles resources for further review and study. By understanding the impact of learning styles on writers and learning key strategies that can help a student work through the writing process, tutors will have equipped themselves with invaluable information that will ultimately enable them to reach students effectively.

Activate it.

To help a student negotiate the writing process, suggest strategies that are tailored to that student's learning preferences. For instance, after Matt revealed his disdain toward writing, I asked him to describe his learning preferences. "How do you learn best?" I asked. "By seeing? Hearing? Doing?" Matt looked at me and said "I like to use my hands. I learn by doing." I knew I had just discovered a key piece of information. "I think I know what will help," I said. I placed colored index cards on the table. "Okay, Matt. Let's start by writing the thesis and topic sentence of each paragraph on the cards." As he wrote on each index card, I noticed a positive change in his demeanor. I then encouraged him to place the cards in the order he thought they belonged and explain how he had categorized his cards. This caused him to rethink his organization strategy. Much to his surprise, he had

reorganized pertinent sections of his paper, and, by explaining it to me, he understood why he had made those choices about his own writing.

Utilizing learning styles theory and practices in writing conferences ultimately fosters a complete immersion in a learning experience that enables the consultant and writer to achieve the conference goals. This knowledge can also aid the writer in assessing his or her progress in the classroom and, possibly, in the workplace. By engaging writers through their preferences, the writing consultant can create a fluid and adaptive learning environment where each writer's needs are acknowledged and valued. Isn't this the optimal learning environment?

Techniques for tailoring the writing conference to writers' preferred learning styles

Consultants may wish to adopt the tutoring techniques listed below to enhance conferences once they have determined the writer's dominant learning style. These techniques can be used at any stage of the writing process and for a variety of purposes. For example, the suggestions for visual learners will aid the writer on a creative writing paper or a critical analysis.

Visual learners

- Suggest that the writer form visual images of the topic, story, or characters in his or her mind. The writer can visualize the characters speaking to one another, the setting and the action that will take place in the story, essay, or poem.
- Encourage the use of photographs or a visit to an inspiring location to stimulate the mind and creative processes.
- When working with the composing process, color code important parts of the essay, e.g., highlight the thesis sentence in yellow and the topic sentences in pink.
- Ask the writer to record key

words or phrases.

- Suggest a web or cluster.
- Encourage the student to develop a working writing portfolio that contains photographs, collages and webs as well as all pre-writing, revisions, and final drafts.

Auditory learners

- Recommend the use of a tape recorder. Advise the student to carry the recorder in order to archive spontaneous thoughts as they occur.
- Interview someone about the topic. The writer may even tape the interview, if it is permissible.
- Encourage dialogue with other individuals about the paper.
- Suggest that the writer play soothing music while writing.
- Advise the student to silently recite each sentence before writing it.
- Read the writing aloud with the writer.

Kinesthetic learners

- To assist with brainstorming, ask the kinesthetic writer to make a list.
- Make it contextual. Suggest interviewing someone about the topic.
- Counsel the writer to use a pen or pencil and paper (rather than the computer) in the drafting stage.
- Advise the writer to record topics and specific details on colored index cards and move them around as he or she organizes thoughts.
- Suggest listening to soothing music when writing.
- Make it personal. Suggest that the writer think about personal experiences and record them.
- Recommend writing for short periods of time. e.g., brainstorm for 30 minutes and take a break. Then write the first draft.
- Physical environment influences

writers. Suggest that the writer compose in an area that allows for physical movement.

- Teaching concepts to others increases comprehension. Advise the writer to read the essay aloud to classmates or friends.
- Recommend the use of physical objects to demonstrate the story or essay to others.

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Work Cited

Brooks, Jeff. "Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 15.6 (1991): 1-4.

"To whom it may concern"

continued from page 6

- 4) *Cover Letter Workshop*—this hypertext workshop explains the purpose and function of a cover letter as well as how to develop and format one. <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/Coverletter/index.html>>.
- 5) *The Basic Business Letter* <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_basicbusletter.html>.
- 6) *Revision in Business Writing* <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_revisebus.html>.

Additional resources on a variety of business writing related topics are available at: <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/index.html>>.

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Ober, Scott. *Contemporary Business Communication*. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.

Pearsall, Thomas, et al. *How to Write for the World of Work*. 6th ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt, 2000.

“To whom it may concern” and beyond: Equipping students to write for employers

There are periods of time each semester, usually immediately before on-campus career fairs, when the Purdue University Writing Lab is flooded with requests for help on resumes and business letters. Business writing tutorials present writing labs with unique challenges because they require specialized help from tutors. Purdue’s Writing Lab has a program in place to help meet the needs of students working on employment documents and with business writing in general, the Business Writing Consulting Program. It trains and employs undergraduate students to help their peers with business writing. Business Writing Consultants participate in a semester-long practicum in tutoring business writing that focuses on the specific requirements of business writing and tutoring strategies that enable them to tutor material with which they are not personally familiar. Focusing on audience and purpose in application documents enables Business Writing Consultants to effectively tutor students with a wide range of needs.

Students are frequently unsure of what they need help with when they bring business documents to the Lab; often they are unfamiliar with business writing conventions and simply want to get another opinion. Tutors can aid students tremendously by helping them to focus on the higher order concerns of purpose, audience, and development even when students do not come into the lab aware that these are issues they need to address in business writing. Audience and purpose are central to business writing because it is funda-

mentally persuasive writing. One of the greatest challenges that students face in making business writing persuasive is that typically they do not know the person to whom they are writing. Although some students come to the Lab from business writing classes and will therefore likely have some information about their audience, most often students come with actual business documents they will send to members of the business community, applying for jobs, registering complaints, voicing their opinions. In some cases, students will know something about their reader(s) and can perform audience analysis based on “experience, occupation, education, and relationship” to the reader (Pearsall et al. 6). Most often, though, and almost always in the case of resumes, students will not have important information about their readers.

Two types of business readers

In spite of the fact that students will usually not be able to tailor business documents for a specific reader, tutors can still help them tailor their documents for two general types of business readers. Business readers usually fall into one of two categories: skimmers or skeptics. Skimmers are readers who are typically very busy. Pressed for time, they often skim documents in a short period of time. To help students meet the needs of skimmers, tutors can encourage students to state their main point clearly and up front, place the most important information at the beginning or ending of paragraphs, and highlight key dates or figures. Skeptical readers, on the other

hand, are cautious and doubtful; they will tend to read a document carefully, questioning its validity and the writer’s claims. Writers can tailor documents for skeptical readers by supporting their statements with sufficient details and evidence and by providing specific examples, numbers, dates, names, and percentages. It is usually best for writers to tailor documents for both skimmers and skeptics, a task that can be difficult since their needs are so different from one another.

Claims are key

Skimmers, then, will glance at business messages quickly while skeptics will read to see if what the writer is saying makes sense and has been proven in the document. The secret to addressing both of these readers’ needs is the document’s claim, and perhaps the best way that tutors can help writers with business documents is in helping them to state their claim clearly. Even documents that do not clearly spell out their claim will make one. It is best, though, if writers state their claim clearly and early in the document so that readers will understand the writer’s purpose and so that the writer can make certain that the claim is well supported in the document. In business letters, the claim is usually written as one or two sentences toward the end of the first paragraph. It should summarize the writer’s purpose in writing and briefly forecast what will be discussed in the rest of the letter. Consider the opening paragraph from a cover letter presented here:

As a sophomore majoring in Aviation Administration, I recently

came across your posting for aviation interns on the employment opportunities board. My organizational, leadership, and problem-solving skills uniquely qualify me for the position of planning and development intern at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

The writer claims that she has organizational, leadership, and problem-solving skills that qualifies her for a specific position. It would be relatively easy to see whether the writer proves that she has the skills she claims to have, and a skimmer would be able to determine quickly what was most important about the writer. The following demonstrates a cover letter that has a claim that needs more work:

Effective time management is important for success in the position of receiving and delivering. You need look no further for someone to fill the position you advertised in the Feb. 28, 2002 edition of the *Journal and Courier*.

This writer claims to be the best applicant for a job. The second claim would obviously be much more difficult to prove in a business letter and would not help a skimmer to quickly identify what makes this writer unique.

For resumes, the writer's claim usually comes in the objective statement. This is a 1-3 sentence summary of the writer's qualifications for a specific position. It is sometimes helpful to suggest to writers that their objective statement is the thesis statement for the resume. Everything contained in the resume should work to prove that what the writer has said in the objective statement is true and that the writer is qualified for the position he or she wants. Although objective statements are not technically required elements of the resume, they are essential for meeting the needs of busy and skeptical readers because they help both types of readers to understand what position the writer wants and the nature of his or her qualifications. A good

objective statement answers the questions: 1) What position(s) is the writer applying for? 2) What are the writer's main qualifications? and 3) What are the writer's career goals? It is possible to write an objective statement that does not answer these questions and is therefore too vague to really provide concrete information for the skimmer or the skeptic. Tutors can often help writers to develop objective statements or help them to make their objective statements more effective.

Sentences A and B demonstrate the difference between a clear and unclear objective statement:

Sentence A

Objective: To obtain employment within your company with the possibility of future advancement.

Sentence B

Objective: A summer internship that will allow me to apply my interpersonal and written communication skills to public policy projects in a legal environment

Sentence B, obviously makes the clearer claim. The objective statement presented in Sentence A, is probably true of all applicants and doesn't give any sense of what makes the applicant unique. It simply claims that the applicant wants a job. The objective statement in sentence B is very clear and concise, and the skeptical reader could look through the resume to find evidence that it is true. It claims that the applicant has interpersonal and written communication skills, qualifications that should be borne out through the resume.

The nature of evidence in business writing

However, helping the student to make a claim, although an important first step, is not enough by itself. Writers also need to support their claims and prove they are true. What constitutes proof varies in business writing depending on the type of document. For

employment documents, personal experience serves as proof of qualification. Other business documents, such as reports, will only be persuasive if the information presented has been thoroughly researched and analyzed.

Each piece of information included in a resume should prove the writer has the qualifications that he or she claims to have in the objective statement. The writer of Sentence B used the experience section of her resume to support her claim. She needed to prove she had the interpersonal and written communication skills that she claimed to have. Each work experience she included relates in some way to writing and/or working with people. If a writer's qualifications do not seem to match up with the objective statement, the tutor can help the writer to revise the objective statement so that it accurately represents his or her qualifications or revise the descriptions the writer included so that they focus more on transferable skills that the writer developed and can offer to the employer.

The key to successfully developing the claim of a business letter is to provide specific examples that support the claim. It is also important to keep in mind that in business writing, "a single paragraph should never discuss more than one major topic" (Ober 79). This principle can help writers see where they need to include more information to develop a major idea or which paragraphs need to be revised to include only one main idea. Tutors can help students restrict paragraphs to one major idea or example and thoroughly develop each idea by asking questions and suggesting where more or less information is needed. Either of these issues can compromise a letter's persuasiveness. The following sample paragraph, for instance, begins to support the letter's claim but falls short of offering evidence that the writer has the experience with international customers that he claims to have:

I am applying for the position of

consultant as advertised in the Oracle corporation home page. I believe that my experience with international customers as a Technical Service Engineer and my coursework using Oracle 7.3 would be an asset to Oracle.

As a Technical Service Engineer, I learned and understood the effect of different cultures and the role this plays in business development. Success in international business does not always depend on the best product but largely on adjustment to the customer's cultural background. This is expertise I can bring to Oracle as a consultant.

In order to prove he has experience working with international customers, this writer tells readers in the second paragraph how important such experience is and that he has some, but he does not actually show readers what that experience looked like; questions such as what kinds of international customers did he deal with? what specific experiences did he have? was he successful in dealing with these customers? are left unanswered. One concrete example of a business interaction with an international customer would be more convincing. His claim, although present, is not particularly persuasive because it is not well-supported by the text that follows.

Evaluating the effectiveness of business writing

Tutors can also help business writers to evaluate whether they have effectively addressed the needs of skimmers and skeptics and persuasively developed their documents. Two strategies that Purdue's Business Writing Consultants rely on frequently are the 35-second test and testing the writer's assertions. The 35-second test is based on the idea that busy business readers often spend 35 seconds or less skimming a document, especially an em-

ployment document, to decide whether or not to read it more closely (Ober 540). When a writer brings the draft of a business document into the lab, it can be very useful to spend 35 seconds "skimming" the document with the writer, marking everything that stands out in that amount of time. After 35 seconds, the tutor and writer look at what was marked to see if the message was clearly conveyed in that amount of time.

Testing the writer's assertions is designed to see whether the writer has made clear assertions and whether he or she has adequately developed major assertions. With this strategy, the tutor and writer read through the document, identifying major assertions together. After each assertion has been underlined, the tutor and writer ask: Is each assertion clearly stated? Are enough details and examples included to support the assertion? Is it clear what the reader should do or know? Is there enough context for the assertion or is more background information needed? Both the 35-second test and testing the document's assertions are valuable strategies because they are effective at addressing the needs of skimmers and skeptics, and with them the tutor can help teach strategies to the writer that the writer can then apply to other business writing situations.

Conclusion

Although tutoring business writing documents is different in some ways from tutoring academic documents, many of the same tutoring strategies are useful in both cases. Asking students "how will this be perceived by your reader?" "will your main point be clear to a busy reader?" and "how do you prove this claim?" helps students to retain control over their documents and shows them where to improve on their writing. Additional strategies such as the 35-second test and testing the writer's assertions are also valuable in helping to structure business writing

tutorials and equipping students to write and proofread their documents for a business audience. All of these strategies are intended to address the fact that business writing is persuasive and consequently must prioritize the needs of the reader, and they have been invaluable for helping Business Writing Consultants at the Purdue University Writing Lab to meet the needs of students from a wide range of majors in a variety of writing situations.

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Business Writing Resources Available Online

The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) provides a variety of resources designed to help tutors and students during business writing tutorials and outside the lab. Some of the handouts and workshops most relevant to the topics discussed in this article are:

- 1) *Higher Order Concerns and Later Order Concerns for Business Writing* <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_hocloc.html>.
- 2) *Writing Business Messages*—This 41-slide PowerPoint presentation is designed to help writers analyze their audience and organize information effectively in business messages. It can be downloaded from: <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/pp/index.html>>.
- 3) *Resume Workshop*—this hypertext workshop guides users through the steps of creating a personalized resume for a specific position or field. <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResumeW/index.html>>.

(continued on page 3)

TUTORS' COLUMN

Going long

Jeff lowers himself—gently so he won't bump his knees under the table—into the chair beside Wendy, his tutor. He feels really unlucky to have to be in this college writing center at all. And it's not because the tables are too low—ever since he shot up to 6' 3" in his junior year of high school, he has this problem everywhere. And it's nothing against Wendy—she's a nice person and seems to really like writing—which he doesn't hold against her at all. It's just . . . well, if only he'd tried harder on the English Placement test. And if only he hadn't had that idiot Mr. Junkin for English in both his junior and senior years of high school. They'd spent most of the time reading Shakespeare, memorizing passages, and doing group projects. He and his buddies made a video on *Macbeth*. They'd been the “moving” Birnam Woods—running through an orchard holding branches above their heads. It had been a good physical workout, but no help at all for his writing. That's why he's stuck in a remedial writing class in his first semester of college.

He pulls his essay out of his backpack. “Here it is. . . . I think it's pretty decent. Worked on it all weekend.”

“Wonderful,” Wendy says. She smiles and he notices how perfect and white her teeth are, and how they're surrounded by a shiny pink lipstick with a line of darker pink, almost purple, outlining the outside edge of her lips. “I can't wait to see what you've done,” she says.

Her voice sounds so sincere and interested that Jeff has sudden second

thoughts about the little white lie he just told. “Well . . . maybe I didn't work on it all weekend,” he says, “but most of last night, anyway.” He doesn't want to raise her expectations.

He asks her to read the essay before they go over it together. But as soon as she starts to read, Jeff thinks he sees her smile fading, already.

A flash of worry appears in her brown eyes, which she tries to cover up by raising her eyebrows and nodding, like she's offering encouragement, or reassurance, to them both. She holds his paper at a slight angle, with both of her hands—a good grip, as if it's an important document she doesn't want to misplace, or maybe she's holding on like that to brace herself for reading the rest of his essay.

He slouches down in his seat, which puts more comfort space between his knees and the table. He'd hoped college desks would be taller than the ones in high school. Bruised knees are an unexpected college pain. His zoology class is another pain. Who'd have thought Professor Marshall would have such a “thing” for nematodes?

He straightens his button-up cotton shirt (it's plaid—“seersucker”—his mom says), and tries to smooth the wrinkles. He pulled it out of the clean clothes pile on the floor of his dorm room this morning and didn't get a chance to iron it. He rests his chin on his chest and tries to look interested . . . polite. He can't write worth beans, but he does have good manners. It's the way he was raised.

Wendy puts his paper on the table between them. She points to the introduction. “OK, Jeff, let's see now. Maybe we can start by you telling me what your main idea is for your essay. Now, what are you trying to say here?”

Jeff tries to remember . . . what was his main idea? He knew it last night. He wants to tell her: it's just an essay for this stupid writing workshop. It doesn't have to be perfect. But obviously Wendy thinks it's supposed to be more perfect than it is.

Junkin was a lousy teacher, but Jeff wishes he'd tried harder in his high school English classes. (Like, for instance, he never studied for one spelling test his whole senior year.) Maybe he shouldn't have just got by. Wouldn't be here, trying to pick up a main idea.

Maybe he could grab one out of the air. Or call out to everyone here in the writing center: Does anyone have a spare main idea? A main idea to spare?

All these students huddled around tables with their tutors remind him of his high school football huddles. There were some hot main ideas tossed around in those sessions out on the field. He can still hear Matt, their quarterback, saying: “We're gonna move the ball down the field and they're not gonna stop us!” Or, “Jeff, go long. Just be there, in the end zone, and I'll get it to you.” Why can't writing be more like football? Clear cut. Definite purpose. You always know where you are and where you're going.

“OK, Jeff,” Wendy says, “why don’t you read your introduction out loud to me? Remember, this is just your first draft. Sometime a first draft is where we figure out what we want to say in our essays.” Wendy scoots a little closer, so she can read along with him. A faint scent of red licorice comes to him. He wonders if it’s some new perfume. He doesn’t mind it, in fact, he likes red licorice.

“Excuse me, Wendy?” The secretary, a friendly woman who always smiles when he enters the writing center, comes up behind them. “Your eleven o’clock appointment, Susana, is on the phone. She wants to talk to you for a second.”

“I’ll be right back,” Wendy says to Jeff. “Why don’t you read over your essay. Think about what you’re trying to say.” She gets up, and he watches her walk away. Purple shirt, jeans, sandals. Neat and casual. She always seems so put together. It’s probably because she’s an English major. If you know how to write, life probably goes smoothly in all areas. Not to mention the fact that she probably has all her main ideas in the bag—ready and waiting to pull out whenever she wants one.

Main ideas seem to be such a big deal with all these college-writing experts. Why not have a lot of little ideas? Why focus on just one. FOCUS is one of their favorite words, too. Prior to coming once a week to the writing center he’d only heard the word “focus” in reference to cameras and movies. Now he knows all about it in relation to essays—especially since “focus” is something he stinks at.

He wonders if he might have A.D.D.—although he can spend hours working on his car or tossing a football. Too bad this college doesn’t have a football team. But then, he’s here to concentrate on his studies. He could have played football at the junior college. But he and his parents decided it

was time to leave football behind. (But can a person ever leave football behind, he wonders.)

And he wonders, too, can A.D.D. be just specific to writing? Or maybe it’s a matter of discipline . . . or desire. Why does writing have to be so important, anyway. He’s pretty good in math and science. Why isn’t that enough? When he becomes an anesthesiologist he can hire someone to be his personal writer. They have personal trainers, personal shoppers, personal chefs . . . why not personal writers, too?

Wendy sits down again. “Why don’t we go back and review the original assignment,” she says.

Wendy’s OK, really. Seems to want to help. And it is red licorice. He’s sure of it. Maybe her shampoo. Her long black hair looks kind of damp and shiny, like she’s just washed it.

Jeff opens his binder and reads out loud: “Write an essay in response to any of the assigned reading from Chapter 3. You have written journal responses to all of these essays, and we have discussed them thoroughly in class. Your essay may grow naturally out of one of your journal responses, which often serve as preliminary drafts. You may decide to disagree with the author and show why he or she is not right. You may. . . .”

Jeff pauses. He thinks about the reading and the lively discussion they had in class. He was surprised that some of his classmates agreed with the author. It was obvious to him that the guy was all wet. He closes his eyes and concentrates. And now mixed in with the scent of the red licorice, the background hum of conversation, the anxiety over his zoology quiz which is coming up next period, suddenly, he sees the faint glimmer of his main idea.

Far away, like a football arcing in the air . . . sailing . . . on the way, from Matt’s arm. Flying somewhere up

there. He sees it, and he’s running, running downfield to the end zone. For a few seconds, it’s lost in the dazzling lights, then he sees it again, falling now, like magic, like a miracle, falling perfectly, into his outstretched arms.

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Help preserve the history of writing centers

The Writing Centers Research Project (WCRP) at the University of Louisville has established an archive—spoken memories and written records of writing center history—to preserve writing center history and facilitate scholars’ research.

In their effort to create a comprehensive archive of written, audio, and visual materials, they invite donations for the archival collection. Before you discard materials related to your writing center’s history, please consider donating them to the WCRP archives. Those willing to donate materials may mail them to the WCRP or make other arrangements with the WCRP to submit them. Your tax-deductible donations will be acknowledged by return mail, and the Research Project will reimburse mailing costs where requested.

They would like grant proposals, notices to faculty, workshop descriptions, flyers, bookmarks, writing center handbooks, reports, studies, training materials, schedules, meeting minutes, mission statements, dissertations and theses on writing centers, policy statements, etc.

For more information, their Web site is: <<http://www.louisville.edu/a-s/writingcenter/wcenters index.html>>.

SMART Board: For the writing center that has everything

Would that my writing center were one of those long-established centers with a well-endowed budget to which this essay's title speaks. Unfortunately, it is not. Mine is a fledgling, one-year-old center, which had no budget when it started, and which has had to share space with a computer classroom since its doors first opened. While working without a budget and competing for space with a computer classroom has been problematic, one benefit has arisen from the latter: my staff and I have had access to wonderful new technology, including a SMART Board.

For readers unfamiliar with the SMART Board, let me explain what it is and how it functions. Simply put, the SMART Board is a medium for displaying information electronically. When interfaced with a computer and a projector, the SMART Board serves as a 5' X 5' electronic white board that allows users to view and, by touching the screen, perform any function that can be executed with a mouse on a computer monitor. Thus, with the SMART Board, surfing the net, browsing through menus, opening files, running programs, and creating documents is literally at the control of users' fingertips. In addition, the SMART Board allows users to highlight text or graphics, draw illustrations, and write notes on screen while any number of windows may be open—an especially attractive feature for those interested in helping students analyze and revise their writing.

Sound like a glorified chalkboard? Well, maybe. But what makes the

SMART Board particularly valuable is its screen-capture function that allows users to save screen material—text, graphics, or notes—so that it can then be printed, emailed, or uploaded to the Internet. As Jeffrey R. Young notes, this feature is a real boon for students, instructors, and tutors because it gives them the ability “to store information that once vanished into chalk dust”—or was lost when disks failed or paper copy turned up missing.

Still skeptical? Consider some of the benefits the SMART Board could bring to the writing center:

- The SMART Board can be used as a visual aid in one-to-one tutorials or in writing workshops, and on-screen material can be saved, printed, emailed to students or posted on a writing center OWL;
- SMART Board screen shots can be saved as part of tutorial reports and incorporated in tutor portfolios;
- Screen shots can also be used to train tutors and document the work tutors do with students for administrators;
- The SMART Board can be used for generating computer graphics for the web or for promotional materials like brochures and handouts.

While the SMART Board brings such possibilities to the writing center, it also sports a price tag more appropriate to Neiman Marcus than Circuit City. Although price may vary accord-

ing to model and by dealer, in 2001, my institution purchased the basic model for our writing center/computer classroom for around \$1,700. Remember, however, that the SMART Board requires a computer and a projection system to function, so prospective buyers will need to be prepared to spend, as we did, an additional \$1,000 on a computer and \$2-\$4,000 on a projector (unless, of course, you already have these accessories lying around your centers). With these additional expenditures, the SMART Board's start up cost can climb to nearly \$7,000.

Obviously, the SMART Board with its hefty price tag is not for everyone, but it could be a useful investment for those who wish to improve their writing centers and have the money to do so. More about the SMART Board can be found at <http://www.smarttech.com/>.

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Nobody's business?: Professional writing and the politics of correctness

Picture a tutorial in which you see several writing consultants circled around a table, jostling elbows, and all trying to assist a lone, bemused writer. The first consultant you spy is a six-year veteran of the writing center who's now a Ph.D. candidate in Rhetoric and Composition. She's expressing a concern with the product-over-process approach that she's seen in those students who come to her for help with professional documents. Competing with her for space at the table is a consultant who is also a professional communication teacher, a woman who is energetically stressing the importance of understanding the rhetorical situation of business writing—particularly in résumés, cover letters, and grad school applications—and who tells the writer to consider larger content issues before focusing on grammar. Volubly competing with these first two individuals is another writing center staff member, who states she used to be a manager in a highly competitive field and has firsthand knowledge of the impulse experienced when facing a hundred résumés for a single job; that is, the strategy of reading until given any reason to stop. And topping such a list, she claims, is mechanical error.

I'm sure you can imagine how confusing these competing discourses would appear to the writer seeking help, an individual already intimidated by a first attempt at professional writing. And it is similarly disorientating for a single consultant, like me, who carries this range of voices in her head, or for the writing center director who must advise tutors faced with such a quandary. Thus, in this essay I'm concerned with the problems and opportunities that seem inevitably to arise when consultants and administrators

try to take care of business, so to speak, in the writing center.

The professional writing tutorial: Three scenarios

"Not better papers, better writers." A beloved if well-worn motto of writing centers, this phrase sums up the cross-purposes that seem to be the problematic nexus of many professional writing tutorials. The consultant is invested in the notion of assisting the student to improve his or her writing skills, while the writer is concerned with the exigency, which, when writing a résumé and cover letter, is often the writer's first extracurricular rhetorical situation. Tensions tend to run high, for this a situation where you can't "settle" for a lower grade. It's pass-fail in that you get the job or you don't. Due to such anxiety, when one is writing for the job market, phobias can be expressed in a variety of ways. Before moving to the larger picture by considering possible strategies to deal with training in professional communication, I therefore first offer three snapshots of common scenarios I've seen along the spectrum of the composing process and the ways in which I've addressed each.

Perhaps one of the most common is the quandary that hits students at the most preliminary invention stage. These are the students who, sometimes sheepishly, sometimes tearfully, inform you that they have nothing, literally nothing, to offer an employer. In such cases, I seem to spend a sizeable portion of the tutorial just calming them down and the rest of it walking them through invention questions. Often, the problem at this stage isn't the students' total lack of pertinent experience; rather, they have no real un-

derstanding of the professional conversations they are trying to enter. That is, they have no idea what experience "counts." At this stage, it helps if the consultant has been familiarized with the various forms of résumés and the sorts of general skills that an employer will look for in a new college graduate, such as the ability to communicate or evidence of collaborative skills. Usually, a tutorial dealing with a client in this fundamental stage of the composing process takes the form of a brainstorming session. At the end, the would-be employee goes away with some handouts, some preliminary ideas, and a sense of reassurance, if not total satisfaction, that composing a job package cannot be done in one sitting. And, as I've repeatedly assured job seekers, I have yet to meet anyone without at least SOMETHING to put on a résumé.

The next issue in the composition process of business communication—and offering a nice contrast to the previous scenario—is the "I'm-not-going-to-rewrite-it-I-just-want-to-fix-it" response. In less successful tutorials, this situation gives a consultant the feeling of watching Wily Coyote walk off a cliff in the Road Runner cartoon: you know what's going to happen is going to be painful, but sometimes you just can't stop it. This tutorial often begins with a writer thinking (a) "I hate writing this document and the sooner it's off my desk the sooner I can stop worrying about it and get a job"; (b) "This person is a writing consultant and will have no notion of the professional discourse of food sciences / electrical engineering / fashion and textiles"; or, finally (c) "Style doesn't matter in a job package. As long as everything is spelled right, no one is go-

ing to care how or where I put things.” Thus, these clients want their materials, often crawling with rhetorical missteps, simply fixed grammatically.

In this situation, I find it’s important to establish my professional ethos before moving into the documents. By talking about the plethora of job packages I’ve seen, both in the academy and out, I can usually convince writers at least to hear out my predictions on audience reactions to their approaches. From here I move to—and perhaps this is more pertinent for those consultants with less experience in a professional setting to draw upon—the position of invoked audience and attempt to persuade the prospective job-seeker that, even in a document as ostensibly concise as a résumé, style and substance cannot be separated. Through a “when you say X, I hear Y” analysis, I can often convince the writer that we need to work on revision before we get to the proofreading stage.

My final scenario is this proofreading quandary where consultants may find themselves grasping for answers. That is, if “Not just better papers, better writers” is the first credo of the writing center, “We don’t proofread” often runs a close second. Job materials, however, are going to have to be proofread in order to be successful. Yet, when I attempted to resolve this conflict through the scholarship most influential on my own tutoring, I realized that the rhetorical situation it addressed is the consultant-writer relationship or the consultant-writer-teacher triad. When I went back to Jeff Brooks’ “Minimalist Tutoring,” for example, I saw that this sort of approach is predicated on the notion that the writing seen in the writing center is not “real world”; indeed, it exists in contrast to professional writing:

While student writings are text, they are unlike other texts in one important way: the process is far

more important than the product. Most “real-world” writing has a goal beyond the page; anything that can be done to that writing to make it more effective ought to be done. Student writing, on the other hand, has no real goal beyond getting it on the page. In the real world when you need to have something important written “perfectly,” you hire a professional writer; when a student hires a professional writer it is a high crime called plagiarism. (85)

If, in the real world, you hire a professional writer (a contention increasingly invalidated by the changing workplace and the ever-expanding use of technology), whom then does the aspiring professional hire? Along with helping the applicant with the situation into which she writes and assisting her with marshaling the evidence of her fitness for employment, is it a writing center’s job to intervene in the text on the proofreading level? How can we reconcile minimal marking and business communication?

Joan Hawthorne’s essay “‘We don’t proofread here’: Re-visioning the Writing Center to Better Meet Student Needs,” gives a contrasting view of proofreading by examining those times in which copy-editing strategies can be useful in a tutorial. While Hawthorne thus challenges any instinctual proofreading moratoriums, there nevertheless appears a gap between the rhetorical situation she describes and a writer’s inauguration into the professional writing situation. That is, as Hawthorne delineates on a consultant handout distributed in her own center, “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” (6). Despite

their disparate visions of proofreading and directive tutoring, then, both Hawthorne’s and Brooks’s approaches seem designed for the classroom, not the marketplace.

So where does this leave me—or, more importantly, those students I’ve assisted with their job materials? Not in an axiomatically consistent place, I’ll admit, nor in one with which I’m particularly easy. Admittedly, there are times I’ve fixed a writer’s letter, when pen in hand, I’ve zipped through, unsplicing those commas and tucking in those last dangling modifiers. But this only happens after the writer and I have worked through a variety of other issues, and only after we’ve talked about proofreading strategies that she’s then applied to her document. This sort of editing is, after all, the final step in the agonizing and protracted writing process of a job package. For this final scenario, I have no ready tips, just a description of my own awareness of the complicated balance that must be struck in this situation.

The business of administrators

From invention to drafting to proofreading, then, to me business writing tutorials are murky waters to navigate, for those who offer training in the writing center as well as for consultants themselves. In other words, from a director’s point of view what sort of policy decisions and consultant training are predicated by the decision on how to deal with this student need? While all undergraduate consultants will have experienced the classroom writing situation, many may have little or no experience with the professional job search, a situation that can lead to negative feelings for both consultant and writer in a business communication tutorial. Indeed, this frustration isn’t limited to the writing center: I have given papers related to this topic twice at business communication conferences, and, both times, several

people who worked in schools of business expressed to me their frustration that the writing center wasn't supplying students what they need. After all, it was argued to me repeatedly, if students can't get this help at the writing center, where ARE they to get it? And, if we send these writers elsewhere, such as career centers, does that mean writing centers don't have the ability to assist with "real writing"?

From what I can discern from my work in this area, our colleagues in schools of business have arrived at responses that range from the cranky (those individuals who want to turn a conversation about what to do with our students *now* into a harangue about what English departments or the high schools or parents should have done *before*) to the more innovative. Counted amongst the innovative are those departments that delegate an individual to deal with business writing in a discipline-specific center, which a few non-majors may be lucky enough

to access. In conversations with individuals outside the field of writing center studies, however, I find myself wondering if some centers aren't missing a chance for our students and ourselves. Were we able to engage our business colleagues in a conversation about creating an approach to these documents that satisfies the clients' dual needs as job seekers and as writers, couldn't we not only improve the position of the writing center but also get our Business counterparts to back up their desire for writing expertise with some sort of fiscal commitment? At the very least, I believe, Business schools, whose coffers tend to be deeper than those of the chronically under-funded writing center, will be willing to provide the materials and training to help us meet our writers' needs better, which is a primary goal of everyone involved.

From the immediate level of the individual tutorial to the larger contexts that shape our writing centers, business

communication is a concern that deserves additional attention. Despite the underlying thorny pedagogical issues, professional writing presents an opportunity for writing centers to raise our own profile, both in the university community and as our students send their professional materials into the marketplace, the larger community as well. Thus, I believe that everyone stands to benefit if we make these documents our business.

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Stillwater, OK

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Hawthorne, Joan. "'We don't proof-read here': Re-visioning the Writing Center to Better Meet Student Needs." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 23.8 (1998): 1-6.

Casting for God in the writing center

They cast for words; their fly-rods' released lines arch upwards smooth as hymnal notes sung in church by those casting for God. Words jerk the line. Reeled in and added to the stringer of syntax magic, subjects and verbs warble, harmonious as two Baptists at midweek prayer meeting or the parallel structure found in God—the Father, God—the Son, God—the Holy Ghost.

Others cast with rods of bamboo or cane. Their casts stray from the heavenly city, lines kerplunk in snag-filled waters, hooks descend into tangled syntax and quarreling subject-verbs—Baptist and Church of Christ ministers in doctrinal dispute. Tug and toggle, reel in and wrangle with the contrary lines. Failing that—cut, let go, and cast again.

Nelda Rachels
University of Tennessee at Martin
Martin, TN

Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

April 5, 2003: Northeast WCA, in Nashua, NH
Contact: Al DeCiccio, Rivier College, 420 South Main St., Nashua, NH. Phone: (603)897-8284; e-mail: adeciccio@rivier.edu. Conference Web site: <http://web.bryant.edu/~ace/wrtctr/NEWCA.htm>.

April 5, 2003: Mid-Atlantic WCA, in Westminster, MD
Contact: Lisa Breslin, The Writing Center, McDaniel College, 2 College Hill, Westminster, MD 21157. Phone: 410-857-2420; e-mail (lbreslin@mcDaniel.edu). Conference Web site: <http://www2.mcdaniel.edu/mawca>.

October 23-25, 2003: International Writing Centers Conference and National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, in Hershey, PA
Contact: Ben Rafoth, brafoth@iup.edu. Conference Web site: www.wc.iup.edu/2003conference.

LeTourneau University's OwLet— from hatchling to flight

At the beginning of the fall 2001 semester, the OwLet—Online Writing and Learning at LeTourneau University—opened its virtual doors. The idea behind the OwLet was the product of conversations I had with my division chair about our need to encourage and support student writing beyond the two required composition courses. We had begun by talking about how much we'd like to develop a writing center, but since we had neither space nor resources at the time, the conversations were more about wishing than planning. Then I attended a summer technology workshop where I heard Becky Rickly from Texas Tech University and Bill Condon from Washington State University talk about OWLs, and I thought to myself, "We can do this!"

My division chair encouraged me to pursue the idea, so I began to think about what our mission and who our audience would be. Since the OwLet would stand alone, its mission would have to be broader and more encompassing than that of most OWLs if we were to accomplish exclusively online what other universities are doing on-site or in combination with an on-site writing center. Additionally, our remediation program desperately needed overhauling. We have an English proficiency requirement for graduation; students who do not pass the English proficiency exam are required to take a one-hour English review course that consisted, at that time (as it had for many years) of grammar exercises and tests with little or no writing. We were looking for ways to restructure that course, and since most of our students are pursuing technical majors and are computer savvy, the OwLet suggested all sorts of interesting, interactive possibilities.

With these two goals in mind—to support and encourage better writing throughout the university and to provide curriculum for the English review course—I began talking with colleagues and students who helped me develop the following objectives:

- Provide easy access and round-the-clock availability
- Present content for multiple learning styles
- Focus content on writing for specific majors and professions
- Use technology to further independent student learning

Thinking about these objectives, however, made me realize that while the OwLet would be student-centered, it could serve faculty as well. Along with referring students who need extra help, faculty could also benefit by having a resource archive of helpful information about writing in their disciplines. The most effective way to achieve the goal of focusing content on writing for specific majors and professions would be to get faculty involved in developing discipline-specific content for the site, content which could then be included or referenced as part of their course materials.

I soon realized that in articulating a mission, I was also designing the architecture of the site. That architecture developed into four main content categories:

- Submission of papers for review by online tutors
- Content units for specific genres and writing projects in and across disciplines
- Strategies for research and citation
- Interactive grammar and usage tutorials

The idea had become a plan. My division chair and I met with the Director of Information Technology to find out about technology resources and needs. Then we drafted a proposal and met with our university Provost, who gave us his wholehearted support. Since the OwLet proposal was included in a proposed curriculum change (we not only restructured but completely overhauled and renamed the English review course), the proposal had to go through committees and be approved by the Teaching Faculty Organization. Although the OwLet itself did not depend on these approvals, in retrospect I realize the value of that process because it generated initial faculty awareness and investment in the OwLet. The Provost funded the project, including summer salaries for me and a student assistant to develop the site, and committed funds to train and pay student tutors for the next school year.

That's when the fun began—and when I finally realized just how huge a project I had taken on. I felt confident of my own ability to develop content for the site, especially with the help of other faculty. I can code HTML in my sleep, but I realized that simple HTML was insufficient. My friend in Information Technology blithely told me that I would need a database to keep track of the papers students sent in. Once a paper was submitted, the database would add it to a list of papers waiting to be critiqued. Tutors could be assigned a username and password that would allow them to login to the database and see the list of papers. A tutor could simply click a link to check out (download) a paper, critique it, then click another link to check it back in, and the database would automatically send the critiqued version back to the student.

This all sounded wonderful, especially when I realized that we could ask students about the class, the professor, the due date, what they liked about their paper so far, and what they wanted help with, and the database would deliver this information to the tutor checking out the paper. I didn't know anything about databases, but my IT friend said not to worry: two programming languages would do the job—MySQL and PHP. MySQL is the language used to program the database functions. PHP can be used with HTML to make personalized pages based on user input. With PHP, we could insert user-specific information like names, dates, and titles into a submission confirmation page. Also, PHP would enrich our grammar and usage tutorials, returning a customized page based on how a student answered a tutorial question and including the student's answer in the page. My IT friend recommended I talk to one of the computer science professors who taught databases and smilingly handed me a book on PHP, assuring me that despite my complete ignorance of computer programming, I could learn it. Attaching the OwLet to the overhaul of our English review course meant we had to be up and running at the start of the fall semester. We had about five months.

Thankfully, the computer science professor was teaching a database class that required a real-world project. Two of his best students hadn't found a project yet, so I became the client, and the OwLet database became the project. My debt to these two students and to my assistant (who did most of the initial HTML coding while I wrote content) is enormous, not only because of the sheer volume of work they accomplished, but also because they brought the students' perspective to the project. When they suggested that a page would make more sense if it were arranged "like this" instead of how I had planned it or that my language didn't communicate to them, I listened. As end users, they know what works.

My assistant's visual learning style contrasted sharply with my read-write learning preference, so she initiated presentation strategies I would have missed. I frantically read about and coded PHP, but I wasn't very good at troubleshooting when something went wrong (which it frequently did). My assistant couldn't code PHP, but she knew just enough C++ to find and fix my mistakes. We made a good team.

With still-gaping holes in the site but enough content to support the English review course, we launched the OwLet at the beginning of the fall semester. Three weeks into the semester, I had hired and begun initial training of my student tutors. Tutors are undergraduates who have completed both semesters of composition with at least a B. As part of their application, I require a writing sample and two recommendation letters from professors who have graded significant written work. When a student sends in a paper, the tutors respond to content, structure, style, and grammar/usage (prioritized in that order). We meet regularly to monitor the quality of tutorial responses and suggest improvements. Along with responding to papers, tutors assist faculty teaching the English review courses. Students in this course are assigned specific OwLet content units based on the results of their English proficiency exams. By logging in to the OwLet database, students can see a list of their assigned units and their completion status. Each content unit consists of an interactive tutorial on a specific skill and culminates in a writing assignment, which the students bring to class for one-on-one conferencing with a teacher or tutor. Content units include graphics, video, written explanation, and suggested action and are designed to address the needs of visual, auditory, read-write, and kinesthetic learners. Additionally, each unit contains mouseover icons for javascript hints specific to each learning style.

Once we had caught our breath in the English review classes, we began to in-

vite students to submit papers. At pre-semester faculty orientation, I had presented the OwLet to the faculty and passed out bookmarks for them to use in referring students. One of the tutors was also the editor of the campus newspaper and made sure we got a feature article and an ad. We put flyers in student mailboxes and kept encouraging faculty to refer students who needed help, and the papers began to come in. The option of sending papers to a tutor was made available to only part of our student population—the almost 1,100 traditional students at our main campus. (They make up only about 1/3 of our total student population which includes graduate and non-traditional degree programs for working adults at the main campus and several satellite campuses. We plan to broaden our services to include these students this school year.)

During the first semester, I had only two tutors. About four weeks before the semester ended, we discovered that one common student complaint is legitimate: professors really do assign papers to be due all at the same time! The tutors worked more hours than they had bargained for, I tried to fill in gaps, and we still couldn't manage the load within our 48-hour turn-around time commitment. For the second semester, I hired three additional tutors-in-training. They worked with faculty in the English review courses (the best hands-on training I could imagine) and were on-call to assist the regular tutors when the queue was backed up.

During these first two semesters, tutors responded to 182 student papers. Our Web site statistics show that we process an average of over 700 successful page requests per day. We've been accessed through every major search engine (with Google leading the pack). We've tracked accesses from 20 foreign countries and have verified that composition instructors from several other universities have linked to our site. All of this makes me feel like the late nights falling asleep on the PHP book were worthwhile.

More important, though, are the reactions I've had from our own students, our primary audience.

- A student I had never met stopped me in the hallway one day and thanked me for including video clips that explain the concept behind each grammar/usage tutorial. He learns by hearing something explained, and he said that for the first time, he can focus on what he's trying to communicate and not be stumped by how to structure sentences.
- This summer, another student I didn't know stopped by my office. She asked whether I am the "OwLet person" and told me how much the site had helped her. One of her professors had included using the OwLet as part of a writing assignment. Doing so benefited her so much that she started sending all her papers in for tutorial review.
- A student in the English review course sent me an e-mail a few weeks before the semester ended. The last few tutorials he needed weren't finished yet. He reminded me that "At the beginning of the semester, in all honesty, I did not want to take this review class." I remembered his objections, both for their vehemence and their poor use of language. This e-mail demonstrated much greater proficiency with written language as it argued that the class had "really boosted my grammar and writing skills" and encouraged me to finish the tutorials so he wouldn't miss out on them. (When is the last time a student asked me for additional work?)
- My "It's Worth the Effort" file includes an e-mail from another student: "OwLet, I just wanted to write and thank

you for all the help you have provided me with. The staff at OwLet really does an incredible job of critiquing my papers that I have sent to you. I have used OwLet many times during the last semester and will continue to use the service this semester. I tip my hat to you and your staff."

These and other similar responses keep me going when I feel intimidated by the still-gaping holes in the site. Several planned tutorials are yet to be written, and additional learning style specific content needs to be woven into existing ones. The "Research and Citation" section of the site is only about one quarter complete, and the section of "How-To's for Writing Assignments" is barely begun. (Currently, it contains only information on teaching students to write for the Web, but it's great stuff if you're looking for that.) Developing these two sections is one of my main goals for the upcoming school year. To do so, I will be visiting with faculty in every department of the university and soliciting their help with content development. I envision a content unit for every kind of writing assigned in every department in the university. Suppose you are a business major and have to write an executive summary? What is it? What kind of information should it—and should it *not* include? How should it be structured? How formal is it? How long should it be, and what should it look like on the page? I'd like to include a sample of a good one, annotated—What makes it good?—and a sample of a poor one, annotated—What makes it poor? The "HOW-TOs" section of the site is designed to serve as a curriculum resource for faculty and for current students, as well as for graduates once they've left the university and are writing on the job. Content for this section will take a long time to develop and will remain in a permanent state of evolution, especially as technology continually changes what and how we write. I've realized that the OwLet will never be "finished."

I've also learned some other really important lessons along the way:

- Institutional support is crucial to the success of this type of project. Funding was only the beginning; ongoing commitment to the project is essential, and I'm blessed to have strong administrative support that recognizes my administration and development of the OwLet as part of my workload.
- Faculty support is equally important and comes through investment. When faculty contribute to the site, they share ownership of it. The success of the site depends on faculty referring students. Part of my job needs to be continually bringing the OwLet to faculty attention. (Anyone need more referral bookmarks?)
- The folks in Information Technology are some of my best friends. They understand what I need better than I do, and it is well worth my time to cultivate good relationships with them. They deserve to be thanked, appreciated, and treated to homemade cookies.
- Student input is invaluable. They know what they need and what sort of presentation makes sense to them. Their input merits my undivided attention.
- And finally, I can now troubleshoot my own PHP.

All of which leads me to suggest that even a project of this magnitude is, in fact, possible and is definitely worthwhile. I hope you'll check us out on the Web at <http://owlet.letu.edu>. Please feel free to link to our site—and we'd like to link to yours too. We welcome questions and suggestions—and we don't mind kudos either. Send e-mail to owlet@letu.edu.

Annie Olson
LeTourneau University
Longview, Texas

Writing Center Director Montserrat College

Montserrat College of Art seeks to fill a full-time faculty position at Assistant or Associate Professor level to direct Writing Center and teach in liberal arts department. Position starts July 1, 2003.

Responsibilities:

Work with students to improve writing and study skills. Promote Writing Center and institute Writing Across the Curriculum initiatives. Train and oversee part-time professional writing center tutors and peer tutors. Teach one liberal arts course/semester and participate in advising and faculty committees. Requires minimum of MA or MFA in Composition/Rhetoric, English, TESOL, or related field; PhD preferred. Experience working in a writing center and teaching at the college level required. Candidate needs to

possess excellent interpersonal and communication skills. experience working with learning disabled students highly desirable. See www.montserrat.edu for more information. Fax or mail letter of application, CV and names and telephone numbers/e-mail address of three references to:

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