



WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Vol. IV, No. 6 (February, 1980)

Herewith, some answers to questions I keep answering:

- q. For how long a period does the \$3 donation to the newsletter cover?
- a. Since there is no subscription fee as such, your donation covers as long a time as your conscience permits. However, because the donations do not cover the whole cost of the newsletter and because the cost of paper, postage, and duplicating services continues to rise, the people who keep trying to stretch my department's budget would greatly appreciate at least a \$3 donation each year. For those generous benefactors who periodically send in \$5 or \$10 (even if it is drawn on university funds), blessings upon you and may your budgets increase!
- q. How large is the mailing list of the newsletter?
- a. With this issue, it is over 650.
- q. Why haven't I yet seen my article in the newsletter, even though it was accepted many months ago?
- a. The stack of manuscripts waiting to appear is rather large and doesn't diminish rapidly because each issue includes only a few major articles. However, it is reassuring to know that so many of us who teach writing also write--and write well. Also, I have tried in each issue to mix articles and notices of immediate interest (such as the pages of job openings in this issue) with more general, "timeless" articles.

Please, though, do continue to send your articles, announcements, suggestions, questions, names of new members, and donations of \$3 (with checks made payable to me) to:

Muriel Harris, Editor
WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER
Department of English
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN 47907

PEER TUTORS STAFF WRITING ROOM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

The Study Skills and Tutorial Services is an independent department at the University of Texas at El Paso. The Writing Room has been a major division of this department since 1976. Each year approximately 1,200 students visit this room an average of five or more times to receive help from well-trained peer tutors. These tutors ask and answer questions, explain concepts, and help interpret assignments in their efforts to help students improve the quality of their written work. The students--whether unprepared for college writing, rusty from many years' absence from formal writing, or merely confused or unsure about their own abilities to communicate in writing--seek help from Writing Room tutors as an alternative to misunderstanding, being confused, or failing.

The Writing Room staff consists of twelve or more undergraduate tutors who are most often English majors, but who might also represent such areas as education, business, or speech. Tutors' majors are less important than their writing and teaching abilities which they are asked to demonstrate when they are hired. Prospective tutors are given grammar tests, close reading tests, and are video-taped in simulated tutoring sessions in which they actually tutor staff members who pose as students seeking help. A high grade point average (3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale) and two professors' recommendations are also required of new tutors. New tutors then attend three training sessions in which they discuss with experienced tutors the types of tutoring situations they can anticipate as well as methods for dealing with them. After these initial training sessions, tutors continue to meet weekly either with the Director of the program or with faculty resource people for continued training.

Tutors maintain an informal atmosphere in the Writing Room which makes it easy for students to seek and receive help. Located in the Student Union, the Writing Room is readily accessible to students. It is open from Monday through Friday, on a walk-in basis. Three to seven tutors are available each hour. Tutoring is free to all University-enrolled students. During peak hours, from 11-2 daily, tutors may work with four or five individuals at one time. This is accomplished either by working with small groups or by rotating from student to student. Students often return and ask for certain tutors with whom they feel comfortable. A large work schedule is posted on the wall so students can conveniently check to see when each tutor will be working.

The students who visit the Writing Room represent all university majors and ask for assistance with all types of writing assignments, ranging from a grammar lesson in a linguistics class for foreign students to editorial work on Master's theses and advice on letters of application to professional schools. The most frequent assignment brought to the Writing Room, however, is the freshman composition. Students learn about Writing Room services from professors' referrals, from information signs, and from other students. Writing Room tutors also visit classes at the beginning of each semester to give brief, five-minute talks on the services they provide.

Instructional methods in the Writing Room are meant to complement and support those of the classroom. In order to coordinate tutoring with classroom instruction, writing professors are invited to meet weekly with tutors to discuss their teaching approaches, their objectives, and the problems they expect Writing Room tutors to help them solve. To further aid tutors, an up-to-date textbook library is maintained. Tutors also have access to instructors' guidelines for courses and various commercial materials developed for diagnostic, explanatory or correctional purposes. Tutors, themselves, have written many of the work-sheets in the Writing Room files.

Each tutor, armed with various professors' advice, current textbooks, and a wide variety of work-sheets and other explanatory handout materials, approaches each student on a one-to-one basis. Tutors are trained to use a question-and-answer approach. First they try to make students feel at ease.

Then they ask questions to determine exactly what is needed, or what the exact terms of an assignment are. After this initial querying, the tutor and student proceed to work on particular problems which may be identified on an instructor's formal referral form (with specifically marked problem areas in grammar, organization, etc.), or by a student's own stated points of confusion or feelings of inadequacy about an assignment. Occasionally, Writing Room tutors speak to or work with a whole class at one time. For example, if a history professor has a problem reading and grading the essay tests of the majority of his students, a tutor may be asked to assist him by discussing the techniques of writing essay exams with that whole class.

The University of Texas at El Paso Writing Room is currently examining the possibility of adding computer instructional programs to be used to drill students on specific points of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Computer Assisted Instruction, as envisioned by this program, would not replace the human interaction of our present one-to-one tutoring. It would, rather, be assigned to students by tutors for additional drill on matters that have long been confusing or difficult for them to learn.

Ann Olson
Senior Writing Room Tutor
Univ. of Texas at El Paso

The University of Texas at El Paso Writing Room staff would like to hear from other schools where Computer assisted instruction has been used successfully to improve students' writing. Also, the staff has developed a Handbook for Writing Tutors which is used each year during the initial training sessions. If you would like to receive a copy of this handbook, send a self-addressed envelope (9 x 12) with \$.67 postage on it with your request. Address either information about C.A.I. or requests for the handbook to:

Nancy V. Wood, Director
Study Skills and Tutorial Services
105 West Union
University of Texas at El Paso
El Paso, Texas 79968



ANNOUNCEMENT OF POSITION VACANCY
University of Southern Colorado
Pueblo, Colorado

The Learning Resources Center: Resident
Instruction Division

JOB OPENING
TEACHERS OF COMPOSITION

The Department of Rhetoric at the University of Minnesota invites applications for two assistant professor positions.

TITLE OF POSITION: Asst. or Assoc. Professor, Basic Communications Department (Reading Specialist)

Primary Responsibilities: To teach upper division and graduate courses in professional, scientific, or technical writing to students in the colleges of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics. To pursue research and teaching interests in various aspects of communication such as organizational communication, scientific and technical film, pedagogy of writing instruction, transfer of technology, technical graphics, oral communication, or rhetorical theory.

POSITION DESCRIPTION: The primary responsibility of this position is to teach remedial and college-level reading courses; a secondary responsibility is to teach remedial and college-level composition courses, plus other responsibilities.

Qualifications: Ph.D.; Two years experience in teaching professional or technical writing, or in a related assignment, is minimum; five years experience is desired.

QUALIFICATIONS: Applicants must have an earned doctorate from an accredited institution in an area such as reading, English, English education, linguistics, or rhetoric (a doctorate in reading is preferred). A minimum of two years' full-time college teaching primarily in remedial and/or college-level reading is required. Preference will be given to applicants with experience and/or training in 1) teaching college and/or remedial composition, 2) teaching minority students, 3) English as a Second Language, 4) application of resources to teaching/learning process, e.g., audio-tutorial delivery, laboratory instruction, study skills, 5) development of instructional materials, 6) research and publication, and 7) participation in professional organizations.

Salary: \$17,000 - \$20,000, 9-month schedule

Position Available: 16 September 1980.

Send letter of application and credentials on or before 21 March 1980 to:

Professor Thomas E. Pearsall, Head
Department of Rhetoric, Box W
University of Minnesota
202 Haecker Hall, 1364 Eckles Avenue
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108

The University of Minnesota is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

SEARCH RE-OPENED

STARTING DATE: August 25, 1980

SALARY: \$14,000 - \$20,000, dependent upon training, experience, and current salary schedule (9-month contract).

Potomac State College invites applications for the following position:

CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF COMPLETED APPLICATION AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS: March 17, 1980.

BASIC SKILLS CENTER COORDINATOR

APPLICANTS: Those wishing to apply should request a USC application form from:

Responsibilities include establishment of a Basic Skills Center which will coordinate a remedial/developmental program in mathematics, writing and reading skills. Qualifications: experience preferred in developmental education and an advanced degree in basic skills development is required.

Dr. Richard Lipp, Chairman
Search and Screen Committee
Basic Communications Department
University of Southern Colorado
Pueblo, CO 81001

This is a Title III-funded one-year position, available immediately. Closing date for applications is February 29, 1980. Send application, resume and references to Douglas A. Harrington, Associate Dean, Potomac State College, Keyser, WV 26726. Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer.

Return completed application form together with resume, minimum of three references, and unofficial transcripts to the above address, postmarked on or before March 17, 1980.

Job Opening

We are interested in locating a composition expert who might want to come to Del Mar College for a regular tenure-track position, which we think will be opening next year (Fall 1980) if an expected retirement takes place. As described in some articles in the NEWSLETTER, The English Department is in the second phase of the Minimum Competency Program. This phase concentrates on the carry-over to composition of the editing skills emphasized in the MC Program, phase one, last year.

The person should have at least an M.A., which is the minimum educational preparation, though we prefer a Ph. D. Training should be in composition and experience, too, of course. The load would be five composition courses; some, remedial, and some, regular beginning freshman English.

Our salary scale is likely to be increased some next year, but on the present scale the base for instructor is \$13,810 with additions of \$900.00 for the Masters, \$1680 for M.A. plus 45 SH, and \$3500.00 for the Ph. D. There is a \$300.00 addition to the base each year up to \$1500.00. There is also the possibility of an opening for an associate director of our English Learning Center. For further information, please write to:

Professor Virginia Stone, Chairman
Department of English and Philosophy
Del Mar College
Corpus Christi, Texas 78404

COMPUTER-PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION IN ELEMENTS OF GRAMMAR FOR STUDENTS WITH REMEDIAL PROBLEMS IN WRITING

During the summer of 1978, in response to the increasingly large number of undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh who display chronic deficiencies in elementary composition, Mr. Kriewald and Mr. Kilday of the English Department began work on a program of computerized instruction in basic grammar. This program, funded by the University of Wisconsin System's Office of Undergraduate Teaching Improvement Grants, was implemented in the fall semester of 1978 as an integral part of the Writing Clinic at UW-Oshkosh. The program is stored in the university's central computer and is available to students through a CRT terminal located in the Clinic.

Most of the students who have used the program to date have been enrolled in remedial composition courses, though students in regular composition and ESL courses have also benefited from all or part of the program. The five lessons contained in the program cover the following areas: 1) basic sentence parts--subjects and predicates, 2) verbs and verbals, 3) nouns and modifiers, 4) phrases and clauses, and 5) conjunctions. These lessons, each of which can be completed in 30-45 minutes, emphasize identification of and sequenced drill in the grammatical principles pertinent to each area. Because students' composition textbooks use the terminology of descriptive grammar, it was felt the program should conform to this convention.

The system, known as "WRITE 101-105," was specifically designed as an adjunct to the tutorial program in composition operating in the University Writing Clinic. To insure the maximum effectiveness of this program, it was necessary to acquaint the student with the elementary grammatical concepts necessary for him to comprehend the tutor's diagnosis of his compositional deficiencies. For instance, if a student was referred to the Clinic for assistance in correcting misplaced modifiers, it would be essential for him to recognize the form and function of modifiers before he attempted to correct his mis-use of them. Rather than spend his or her time explaining the terminology relevant to this problem, the tutor can simply refer the student to the appropriate computer lesson; then after the student has been given the necessary preliminary information, he can return to the tutor for personal help with his problem.

The format of the program is multiple choice. A student is given a concise explanation of a specific grammatical principle and is briefly quizzed on his understanding of the material presented. The following example is from the beginning of Lesson I, which deals with the recognition of basic grammatical structures:

You have been using grammar almost your entire life. In reading and writing, speaking and listening, you must use grammar to understand and be understood.

Grammar is basically a system of relating words to one another so that they make sense together. A group of words without any grammar is just a jumble. If you can make definite

sense out of a group of words, that group must be organized according to some sort of grammar.

Here's a test of your ability to recognize English grammar in action. The following sentences use nonsense words, but one of the sentences makes some sense anyhow, because it uses English grammar.

Which of these sentences uses English grammar?

- A. The Ozox craffled an espidon.
- B. A the gormly incoop prodexid.
- C. Vertox fremit delane by over.

If a student answers incorrectly, he is told why his response is wrong and is given additional information. For example, if a student had chosen "B" as the correct answer to the above item, the computer would have given this message:

No, sentence B doesn't supply the kind of information that English grammar usually gives us. For one thing, it doesn't tell us whether "incoop" is a thing or an action, and we have to know that in order to figure out how "incoop" relates to "gormly." English grammar would make these things clear.

Try again.

The question is then repeated and the student gets another chance to answer correctly. If he responds incorrectly a second time, the computer gives further explanation and repeats the question a third and final time, thereby enabling the student eventually to choose the correct answer:

The sentence "The ozox craffled an espidon" uses English grammar. That's why we can see what kinds of words the sentence contains, even though we don't know exactly what the words mean. For example, we know that one of the words describes an action, an action that took place in the past.

This information introduces the next question, which pertains to identification of the predicate:

In the sentence "The ozox craffled an espidon," which word describes an action?

- A. ozox
- B. craffled
- C. espidon

computer to progress to more detailed and complex problems relating to the topic of that particular lesson.

The practical value of the system lies in its ability to relieve tutors and composition instructors of the burden of technical explanations of grammatical concepts which the student should have mastered prior to his entering college. The time thus saved by the program could be used to instruct the student in more of those advanced principles of English composition - particularly the construction of a variety of correct and intelligible sentence patterns - appropriate to a college-level curriculum.

If you wish further information concerning the computer program or the Writing Clinic at UW-Oshkosh, please write:

G. L. Kriewald, Department of English, Radford Hall, Room B-11, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, 54901.

Gary L. Kriewald
University Writing Clinic
U. of Wisconsin - Oshkosh

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
1980 SUMMER INSTITUTE ON
TEACHING WRITING IN THE HIGH SCHOOL
June 23-July 18
Robert Gundlach, Director

This summer the Northwestern University College of Arts and Sciences Writing Program and the Departments of English and Linguistics will offer a four week institute for high school English teachers, department chairmen, and curriculum supervisors. The goal of the institute will be to help each participant become a better and more informed teacher of writing. The institute will include two graduate level courses: Teaching the Process of Writing and A Seminar on Language and Writing in American Society. Institute participants may enroll in both courses, or in either one. Guest speakers at the institute will include Arthur Applebee, Wallace Douglas, Joseph Epstein, Leon Forrest, Gerald Graff, Frank Townsend, and members of the Chicago Area Writing Project.

For information, application forms, and material on summer housing at Northwestern, write to Professor Robert Gundlach, Director of CAS Writing Programs, 11 University Hall, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois 60201.

WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER-Supplementary Mailing List #27

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Rinderer, Regina
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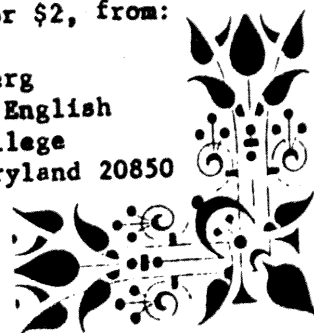
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A complete mailing list directory
can be obtained, for \$2, from:

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