



WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Vol. V, No. 8 (April, 1981)

Among the usual potpourri of articles and announcements in this month's issue of the newsletter, you'll notice that Pat Bates is already soliciting proposals for the 1982 CCCC Special Interest Session on writing labs and that Kathi Osterholm invites you to attend what promises to be a richly varied program at the Third Annual Writing Centers Conference, in May.

Also, in this month's issue, you'll find a tutor's report by Susan Goldberg. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did, and I also hope that Susan's report encourages more tutors to share their log sheets and observations with the rest of us. In addition, I add an extra plea to those of you in high school labs to let us know more about the high school writing lab. Recently, within a week, I received three phone calls from people about to take the plunge and set up labs in high schools. Although the forthcoming Tutoring Writing (Scott, Foresman, publisher) will have two excellent essays on high school labs, more information is needed.

Finally, happy springtime to all, and I invite you to continue sending your articles, announcements, reviews of materials, comments, questions, names of new members, and \$3 donations (in checks made payable to me), to help defray duplicating and mailing costs, to:

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

Conference on
THE NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT
May 14-16

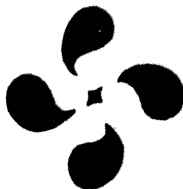
The third national conference on "The Non-Traditional Student in the College Learning Center" will be held May 14-16 on the campus of Long Island University/Brooklyn. Conference topics will include: Program Administration, Publishing, Tutoring, Learning Disabled Students, The ESL Student, The Preparation of Audio- and Video-Taped Resource Materials, Student Retention, Disadvantaged Students, Staff Development and The Physically Handicapped Student. Conference registration fee: \$75. For additional conference and hotel information, please write or call:

Dr. Lester Wilson
Director, Office of Special Academic
Services
Long Island University
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(212) 834-6054

CALL FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS
Special Interest Session
for Writing Lab Directors and Staff
1982 CCCC (San Francisco, CA)

Although the recent 4 C's is barely behind us, it's already time to begin making plans for the 1982 conference to be held in San Francisco, March 18-20. In order to prepare a proposal for a special interest session for writing lab directors for next year, we must put together a program and submit a proposal to Donald Stewart, the program chair, by the end of June. Therefore, I am asking those of you who are interested in participating to submit your proposals to me by May 20, 1981, so that I can meet the official proposal deadline.

I plan to use the same format arranged so



effectively by the 1981 chair, Jeanette Harris. That means our program, if accepted, will consist of eight workshops, each of which will be repeated so that everyone can attend two. Following a brief introductory session, participants will join the first workshop of their choice. After thirty minutes the workshops will conclude. Then there will be a fifteen-minute break to allow for time to examine materials at the Exchange Table. During the final thirty minutes, all workshops will be repeated.

If you are interested in leading a workshop, send me a detailed abstract of the proposed content and format. The sooner submissions reach me, the more time I will have to study them, make selections, and prepare a competitive proposal. I also need a volunteer to be in charge of the Materials Exchange Table and another to serve as recorder.

I look forward to hearing from a number of you so that I can plan a session which will be as profitable as those of past years. Please send proposals to:

Pat Bates
Writing Lab
Louisiana State University-Shreveport
Shreveport, LA 71115

THE WRITING WORKSHOP AT
MIAMI-MIDDLETOWN

Miami University-Middletown is a two-year branch of Miami University of Ohio. There is no formal writing lab on the campus, but there is a Developmental Education program that currently provides English tutors. During the 1979-80 academic year, an English course for remedial students was also offered. Students were screened during the first week of the semester in the regular freshman English classes, and those in need of remedial help were then advised to register for the one-credit-hour course. For a variety of reasons, the course was not successful, so our English remediation program has been redesigned. The purpose of the following description of the new program is twofold; first, since we anticipate success we want to describe the program in case there are others who might want to try it. Second, we solicit suggestions from any readers who notice potential weaknesses (and possible solutions) which will insure success of the program.

Students will be asked to enroll in the English workshop based upon a screening process using both writing samples and grammar exercises which will be administered by the individual freshman English instructors during the first week of classes. In addition, students may voluntarily enroll for the workshop along with their other courses if they feel a need for such help. Those who pass the workshop will be given one hour of credit, and those who don't will be given no credit. We will allow students to terminate the workshop upon successful completion of predetermined levels of achievement in English usage, those levels to be determined by composition rather than tests or exercises.

The students, however, will not be taught by an English instructor. Through the cooperative effort of the English Department and Developmental Education, we have devised the following plan: students recommended by instructors on the campus will be used as tutors. For each hour they spend tutoring they will be paid \$3.50. Since we believe that English majors are not by virtue of being English majors the only possible tutors, we are accepting tutors from any major. We also realize that knowing how to use English properly is not necessarily a recommendation for being a good tutor, so we have devised a plan to teach our tutors how to work with developmental English students in a laboratory situation.

We will train our tutors to teach. During the week prior to the beginning of the Fall semester we will have a mandatory four-hour seminar. We will cover such topics as how to understand the frustrations, fears, motivational problems, and feelings of inadequacy that many remedial students may have. We will demonstrate good communication skills. We will discuss materials for writing lab use and encourage students to design new materials. The seminar will be directed by the Director of the English Workshop and the Coordinator of Developmental Education as well as the writing lab director from another university and a counselor.

In addition to the preliminary seminar, the Coordinator of Developmental Education and the workshop director will meet once a week for one and one-half hours in a group with the tutors. During this period we will discuss any problems they are encountering, any frustrations (those who work with developmental students know there are indeed frustrations), and various methods the

tutors are using to help the students.

Since Developmental Education does not have the funds to pay the tutors for the seminar and weekly meetings, we have devised another method to both create interest in our program among potential tutors and to insure mandatory attendance at all meetings. Miami University has directed studies courses. We are allowing our tutors to sign up for a directed studies course in English for one to three college hours of credit. The tutors, regardless of how many semesters they tutor in the program, can take the directed studies course for a maximum of six hours. The amount of credit for which the tutor enrolls each semester will be decided by the Director of the Workshop and the student.

Besides attending the initial seminar and the weekly meetings, the students must develop new materials which can be used by future tutors of remedial English students. The quantity and quality of the materials must be of practical value and must be original work designed for the remedial student. Bibliographies used by the tutor will be required.

Neither the Coordinator of Developmental Education nor the Director of the Workshop will be removed completely from the tutoring situation. The tutors will be required to keep files on each student's progress and suggestions about what should be covered with the student the following week. These files will achieve two goals. First, the Director can review the files each week to be sure that all tutoring is progressing as it should. Second, should a tutor not be able to attend a scheduled session, another tutor or the Director or Coordinator can fill in with no loss to the student.

Also, throughout the semester the Coordinator and the Director reserve the right to change tutors for a student upon request of either the tutor or the student. We realize that sometimes there are problems of incompatibility, and although we will initially try to screen the tutors and to properly place them with students, we realize that no process of screening is infallible...

Our rationale for such a program as we have described is simply stated. Developmental Education does not have the funds to pay students for work they do other than actual tutoring contact. The workshop as it was taught by full-time English faculty was not successful for a variety of reasons.

Since Miami-Middletown is a two-year school and many of our better students spend only one year on the campus before transferring to other schools, we need some way to give them an incentive to stay on this campus a second year and become more involved. We, therefore, devised this plan to give these students both financial assistance and college credit. In addition, we plan to write letters of recommendation for all tutors who successfully complete our program. We hope they will then be able to get jobs in writing labs at the schools to which they transfer.

We do not know yet how successful the program will be; nor are we sure that we have foreseen all the possible problems; but, we believe we have the start of a program which can be instituted by any school that needs a good remedial English program and has neither the personnel nor the money to support such a program. We solicit your comments for improvement or your questions about our new program.

Wm. Coggin--Director of the English
Workshop

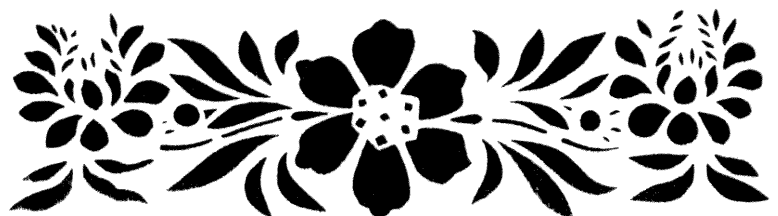
June Fening--Coordinator of
Developmental Education

Miami Univ., Middletown, Ohio

HELP NEEDED...

The Writing Lab Newsletter Directory, a list of all the names on the newsletter mailing list, has been compiled and distributed by Myrna Goldenberg (Montgomery College) for the last two years. After her heroic effort to keep up with a constantly expanding list which now exceeds 900 names, she would like to turn this responsibility over to someone else. If you are willing to take on this task, please let me know (write c/o Dept. of English, Purdue Univ., West Lafayette, IN 47907). And many thanks to Myrna Goldenberg for having handled the job so expertly for over two years!

Muriel Harris, editor



THE WRITING LAB AT ST. PETERSBURG JR.
COLLEGE (CLEARWATER CAMPUS)

Our lab is staffed with a full time technician and part time student tutors. We also have a member of the Department of Communications faculty who spends a portion of her time in the lab as a resource person. The basic writing course offered by the college is taught in our lab. We have referrals from instructors of our more advanced writing classes. Other disciplines, both academic and vocational, refer their students also. We have designed our program to include a variety of printed materials as well as the Auto Tutorial series so popular in the learning lab environment. We have indexed our printed materials, and we have designed a system for students to use to locate their area of need, refer to the index number and have within minutes several excellent sources of information.

Each student that comes into the lab seeking help has a personal interview with the technician to diagnose his/her point of entry into a specific skill area. One-to-one instruction is given if deemed necessary. The student is oriented to the lab by the technician, and all equipment is explained and demonstrated. A method of study is mutually agreed upon and the student is then responsible for keeping his information sheet up-to-date. The technician, thereafter, makes at least one weekly personal contact with the student even though that student may have chosen to work on an auto-tutorial program or may be working with a student tutor. In addition to the remedial students referred by faculty, we are most happy to have other remedial students referring themselves for help. We also have students using the lab regularly for enrichment purposes such as increasing vocabulary and seeking ways to extend their creative thinking.

Jean McCullough
Writing Lab Technician
St. Petersburg Junior College
Clearwater Campus

TO: WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER READERS
FROM: BILL STULL, DIRECTOR OF WRITING
(UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD)
SUBJECT: LEARNING SKILLS CENTER IN ACTION

Recently, I asked the graduate students in my seminar on the Teaching of Composition to write informal observations of our Learning Skills Center tutors at work. I urged those

who were themselves tutors to write reports on their own tutees. Included here you will find such a report by Susan Goldberg, a report that I believe says worlds about what actually goes on in that busy place.

I hope you find Susan's report as interesting as I did. I have many other such case studies on file, should you like to read them. I'm sure Susan would appreciate your reactions to the story.

TUTORIAL OBSERVATION

Monica, a senior piano major studying at Hartt, is enrolled in Lit 844, The Films of Woody Allen, an elective she chose because she is "really interested in the subject." She has a paper due at 7:00 on the same day she came to see me. She showed me a three-page extremely rough draft which I quickly read through just to get a sense of the whole paper. Although I tried to focus only on content during my first reading, I was unable to because of the numerous misspellings, faulty punctuation, and sentence fragments. I stored these stylistic concerns in the back of my brain and decided to work first on having Monica write a clear thesis statement.

I looked up at Monica, swallowed the lump in my throat, and asked her WHAT she was writing about besides Woody Allen. THAT much, at least, I'd been able to figure out. She tried to articulate a semi-thesis and I caught on to the scraps of meaning, I came to the conclusion that she wanted to discuss three topics: Woody Allen, his feelings toward women, and, based on his attitudes toward women, how he photographs them in his films.

Monica, enthusiasm welling up inside her, perhaps because I had pictorially diagrammed what she had attempted to write in jumbled prose, was now ready to talk about the other ideas she had. "How about comparing and contrasting the early Woody Allen (late 60's) with the later (late 70's and 1980) Woody Allen?" "Fine," I said, skeptically, "How do you plan to do this and complete the assignment by 7:00 this evening?" She, however, wasn't interested in reality; she only wanted to talk about her burgeoning ideas, so I too abandoned reality and gave in to newly-found excitement. We drew more pictures, organized the movies she was to use for examples, talked about a new thesis statement, and then I marched her over to an empty desk

so she could write a rough draft of her new introduction. She was so eager, so ready to write a better paper, and I, I was pleased we had been able to cull anything workable from the hodgepodge she had shown me. The new ideas seemed plausible. In fact, they seemed genuinely interesting. We were both on fire.

She struggled to write the introduction; once she had, I fought to keep my sanity as I read through the grammatical errors. "At least the ideas make more sense," I rationalized silently. "I'll help her with style after she's more sure of the content." After we had worked together for one hour, I felt confident that Monica could write the paper so I sent her to the library, schematic diagrams, pictures and outlines in hand. We arranged to meet in the LSC at 4:00 to review the draft.

Six hours later Monica reappeared, bleary-eyed and frazzled. "I only have three hours before I hand it in," she cried to me. Her pleas reverberated off the cinder-block walls of the now-empty room I'd been in since eight o'clock that morning. A quick rub of my watery eyes and swig of cold weak tea helped me to remember who she was and why she'd come back to seek my help. "Oh, yeah," I said to myself, "the Woody Allen freak who can only write in fragments."

I read the draft, again moving quickly through the choppy, incomplete sentences. The introduction was o.k.--we had worked on that together. The rest of the draft...Well, Monica THOUGHT she had finished the paper. Yes, an attempt had been made to write a conclusion. "Why then," I asked myself, "does she talk only about the later guy--the one we had decided was neurotic, afraid, and sexually repressed?" I wanted to scream. I wanted to cry. The excitement I had felt that morning when I thought I'd made progress with her faded into feelings of disappointment, anger, frustration, failure. I thought to myself, "This girl had all the necessary information...an outline...examples...What went wrong?"

Snapping back to reality, I asked Monica if she realized she'd omitted the early Woody Allen from her draft. "Yes," she sighed, "time was running out and I still have to recopy the paper and hand it in tonight." I looked at her, my face expressing little of what I was feeling inside. Quickly I told myself that I must help her fix up what she'd brought me. I could do little more than that now that it was 4:20, 10 minutes before my final appointment for the day was due to arrive. Together, we

read through the paper's body and conclusion, Monica rephrasing awkward sentences, rewriting fragments, repunctuating ideas she'd only half-expressed. She knew she had problems that neither she nor I could solve at that point in the day. After we finished correcting the draft as best I knew how, she sat, staring miserably at the crossed out lines, the red inky blotches my pen had made, and the last-minute, pencilled-in sentences she'd jotted down. She looked as though she was going to cry. She looked as though her six hours in the library had been worthless. She looked as though she'd been sentenced to death. I felt like an executioner. I mumbled something about how she shouldn't dwell on this paper anymore, that she should remember her experience with it and not let it happen again. She should come and see me two weeks before her next paper is due. I sounded like a doctor prescribing medicine for a patient. Ludicrous, meaningless comforts as the clock ticked away toward the fateful hour of 7:00.

Monica gathered her pencils, the loose-leaf paper her untitled essay was written on, her pocketbook and blazer. She thanked me for my help and left the LSC to sit in an empty classroom to copy over the essay. I gulped down the last drops of cold tea, stared blankly at the grammar texts on my desk, and waited for my next student.

NOTE: Eleven days after Monica first met with me to discuss her paper, she reappeared to tell me "all I have to do to revise the paper is fix the grammar and spelling and the teacher will regrade it. He loves the content." "What did he give you for a grade," I asked her. "Oh--an 'F,' but if I make all the corrections he said I would get a 'B-' or a 'B.'"

Susan H. Goldberg
University of Hartford



THE ROLE OF THE WRITING CENTER IN THE STUDENT'S SENSE OF HIMSELF AS A WRITER

At Indiana University of Pennsylvania we have two stated goals for the Writing Center: to act as a remedial aid for students with basic writing needs and to serve as a resource for more advanced students with specific and sometimes complex writing tasks. We are fortunate enough to have as tutors

graduate students (often doctoral candidates) with a good deal of experience in teaching; I think that would be necessary in this program which I will briefly describe.

Approximately half our work is with students referred to us by faculty teaching basic English and freshman composition courses. These students are assigned to a regular series of tutorial sessions, once a week for half an hour. The work in the Center is in addition to their classwork and may parallel it--or it may take on a different direction. The sessions are individualized; conferences speak to the needs of the student as identified in three ways: through the comments of the referring instructor ("errors in tense, spelling, and sentence structure," for example, or "The problem is uncertainty about what constitutes a sentence, primarily difficulty identifying fragments"), by the student's self-analysis in the initial session, and, third and most useful, by the tutor's analysis of a writing sample the student either brings with him or is asked to produce at the first session. We do not use standardized exams for placement or diagnosis as we feel they may limit too severely the total development of the student as a writer, for in fact only rarely does a student come without an understanding of "tense" or of "what constitutes a sentence." Problems (if they should be termed "problems") usually lie deeper than surface performance and require more than shoring up specific weaknesses.

It is this total development, then, that our Writing Center looks to. When a writing center runs programs parallel to other instruction, the potential for conflict between the methods of the tutors and instructors is real and constant--particularly when there is no fixed departmental text or course method. In order to avoid this problem and to work towards the student as a "whole writer," we try, through the conferences, to shift the perspective of the work to the students' perceptions of themselves as writers: that is, we try to move the burden of responsibility for the writing away from the tutor and on to the students themselves. One way to do this is by being non-evaluative, completely so: not only do we not give marks or hazard guesses at "What do you think she'll give me on this one"; questions like, "Do you like this?" are answered "How do you like it?" Students will very quickly pick up on this attitude and soon realize the Center is neither a place for dread reproaches nor a haven where bruised egos are solaced and stroked, but a place where they may realis-

tically assume control over a facet of their lives which until this time has likely been confusing and charged with negative emotions.

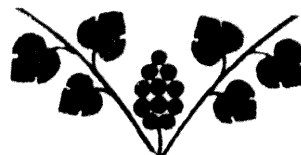
As the students begin to assume this control, they are free to do several things. Perhaps most importantly they begin to gain a sense of where their own strengths and abilities lie. Tutors can help foster this growth by frank and open responses to the students' writing.

This boosts students' morale and provides much of the motivation for continuing to work at the Center (for there is no additional credit given for their work). Almost of equal importance (and partly as a result of their increased confidence), students show strong signs of cognitive development. They sense in their control of themselves as writers the ability to control ideas as well--to experiment with lines of thought, to question and interpret: in short, to begin to become mature writers.

We also work with a second group of students, those who come to the Center seeking help with specific writing problems: a term paper or report, a letter or resume, a book review or master's thesis. In such cases our tutors use their best judgments. Do the problems merely require a simple solution? If so, we react to them. But also tutors find in these interviews students whose immediate problems suggest deeper difficulties. We try (and often succeed) to convince these students to return for further tutorial work.

In both cases--referrals and walk-ins--the emphasis is on a direct student/tutor relationship. Because we do not use programmed techniques and because each student is handled as an individual case, tutors have a large responsibility to respond in a wide variety of situations. Yet this flexibility has a reward in allowing us to take each student at his own level, help him to enunciate goals consistent with his teacher's expectations and his own needs and desires, and find his own way of reaching those goals through taking control of himself as a writer.

Malcolm Hayward
Indiana U. of Pennsylvania





The third annual conference of the Writing Centers Association will be held on Friday, May 8 at Clarion State College, Clarion, Pennsylvania. Muriel Harris, Writing Lab Director of Purdue University, will keynote the conference. Concurrent presentations and workshops will feature the following speakers and topics:

Janet Callaway, Sheila Ewing, David Ewing, Purdue University
"The Writing Lab as Placement Service"

Wes Davis, Clarion State College
"Writing Center Internship Program"

Tilly Eggers, University of Wyoming
"Research in Writing Centers"

Thomas Flynn, Ohio University, Belmont
"Hierarchies of Skill in the Composing Process"

Marvin Garrett, University of Cincinnati
"Peer-Tutor Training: Adapting the Brooklyn College Plan"

Patrick Hartwell, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
"Teaching Surface Correctness" -s's, -ed's, and fragments"

Harry Horner, University of Cincinnati
"Evaluative Testing in Open Admissions"

Roseann Kalister and Joanne Petrick, Ohio Dominican College
"The Adult Learner in the Writing Center: Characteristics, Needs, Teaching Techniques"

Lea Masiello, Northeastern University
"The Identity of the Writing Center Within the Instructional Community"

Gaylier Miller, Pensacola Junior College
"A Functional Writing Lab: Seven Operational Truisms"

Nancy Rabianski, University of New Haven
"Spelling: Easing the Student's Anxiety and Improving His/Her Skill"

Paul Rice, University of North Carolina, Asheville
"I2R: Teaching Level of Meaning"

Marion Ruebel, Mary King, University of Akron
Panel on Professional Concerns

Pat Rizzolo and Moylan Mills, Penn State University, Ogontz
"Extending the Writing Center"

Phyllis Sherwood, Raymond Walters College
"Writing Center Services: Sensory Solutions"

Cynthia Stroud, Youngstown State University
"Tutor Training: Theory and Practice"

Peter Vance, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
"Metaphorical Tutoring"

Jerry Weber, John Wood Community College
"Using Personalized Systems of Instruction in the Writing Lab"

Conference Fee: \$15.00

Student Fee: \$ 7.50

For further information call or write:

Kathy Osterholm
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Clarion State College
Clarion, PA 16214
(814) 226-2173/2174



SOUTHEASTERN WRITING CENTER ASSOCIATION

Those in attendance at the Southeastern Writing Center Conference in Tuscaloosa, Alabama have just established the Southeastern Writing Center Association. This organization will sponsor the annual conference of center directors. Members will stay in contact with one another through a newsletter published twice a year. This association also intends to sponsor research among its members into the effective operation of writing centers. All interested parties may join by sending \$1.00 annual dues to:

Gary A. Olson, President
Southeastern Writing Center Association
Department of English
University of Alabama
University, AL 35486

TWO SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINING PEER TUTORS

The writing lab at Northern Michigan University, like those at many other schools, relies on peer tutors for a good deal of its staffing. Of course, providing these tutors with thorough and effective training is crucial to the success of the lab. In preparing peer tutors for their work with other students, I have found two activities, analyzing some student essays and role playing, are particularly effective.

Examining, analyzing and discussing two or three student essays has been a valuable exercise, because it increases the tutor's confidence. After having the tutors carefully read a student paper, we discussed its specific strengths and weaknesses. Almost all of their observations were valid, enabling me to point out that they could evaluate accurately a piece of writing and help in the diagnosis process. Next, we

considered the comments which could be made to the student writer of the paper, concentrating on the encouraging responses which could validly and honestly be offered. Finally, we discussed the paper's weaknesses in detail, hypothesizing about the comments that could be made to the student and the means which could be used to remedy these shortcomings. In general, this examination of student papers was a very effective exercise; in an evaluation of their pre-service training eight of ten tutors rated it as "very helpful."

Role playing was an even more effective training procedure. In a survey of numerous peer tutoring projects around the country, I found almost all of them used role playing, and they rated it very highly. In an evaluation of our tutor training program, five of ten tutors felt the role playing was the best part of the pre-service training, eight of ten found it "very helpful," and half of them wished more of it had been done. Running the exercise is relatively simple; a tutor can easily assume the role of a lab student, because of his familiarity with this type of student. At least two role plays of an initial tutoring session and one of a second or a later session should be conducted. The tutors should clearly understand that the primary purpose of these role situations is to give them practice in responding substantively and realistically to the "student," and that they are only secondarily intended to check on the tutor's understanding of the administrative procedures.

Mark Smith
Northern Michigan University



WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER - Supplementary Mailing List #39

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