



WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER



Vol. V, No. 9 (May, 1981)

In the first article in this month's newsletter, "Writing Labs That Hum," Paula Guetschow offers us her perception of some characteristics of a good lab. Do you agree or disagree? Has she left anything out? We look forward to hearing your reactions and invite you to send them, along with your articles, reviews, questions, names of new members, and donations of \$3 (with checks made payable to me) to:

Muriel Harris, editor
WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER
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WRITING LABS THAT HUM

In November 1980 I made a three state, nine campus tour of writing labs to become familiar with how a writing lab functions. Certain strong and weak features of these labs stand out and even group together to suggest broad guidelines for good labs. The positive features are to be concentrated on; the significant negatives can be inferred easily from them.

Good labs, whether part of a remedial education unit or part of an English department, have good directors. The director has an English teaching background and is located in or very close to the lab. Often, in addition to overall lab management, the director also tutors students. Thus, she keeps in touch with tutoring as an activity and is a valuable model for tutors. The director is tireless in spreading word of the lab's service and successes, and evangelical in soliciting administrative support for the lab. The director is people-smart, known around the campus to be full of helpful suggestions for teachers having problems with their students' writing. The director is pragmatic and a deft scrounger, appropriating chairs, tables and shelves left vacant overlong, happily adding

office copies to lab shelves, etc. The lab director likes the lab and is there because she wants to be, not because it was assigned by the head of the department, or it was the only job open.

A substantial part of the director's job is training and supervising tutors. Though there is considerable variation in how tutors are prepared, none of the good labs simply turns them loose, depending on previous course work in English and demonstrated composition abilities to make them effective tutors. The preparation is more than merely familiarizing them with lab materials. It involves attention to questioning and probing skills, as well as learning to deal with adult students who have weak academic skills, poor self-images, inefficient work habits and many manipulative ploys. Tutor preparation makes clear the difference between teaching and tutoring to forestall hostility from English staff who may feel their courses threatened by a writing lab. Tutors also learn to teach the skills of proofreading and editing, rather than to do these tasks for the student. Once tutoring, the tutors remain in regular contact with the director and often with each other. This becomes inservice training in the best sense.

Good labs exhibit specific features in both space and location. Good labs are located close to students' major traffic patterns. An obscure location is bad for business, image and lab workers' morale. A prime location is close to where English courses are taught, increasing the likelihood of teachers escorting students to the lab or simply ambling in to chat. In schools where the lab is part of a remedial unit, rather than the English department, the centralness of the program's location is a measure of real administrative support. If the school is serious about upgrading the skills of underprepared students, it will find space for its remedial program in the mainstream of campus activity.

Space is a difficulty everywhere. Labs need enough space to be able to accommodate simultaneously one-on-one tutoring and the student working alone. One needs physical distance for privacy and the other needs sufficient quiet for concentration. The best labs are able to meet both needs.

Most labs have roughly the same selection of texts, handbooks and, within limits, audio-visual materials. The best ones focus tutor and student attention on texts and handouts rather than cassettes and computer terminals. They see these as appropriate for drills for the well motivated student. However, they recognize that most lab students need frequent human response to clarify, goad and encourage them.

But the star in the materials of good labs is the highly developed handout file. Subdivided into small topics, the handouts present theory, example and practice of a feature of writing in at most two pages. The index to the file lists several items per topic and sometimes is cross-indexed to the handbooks and texts in the lab. Over time, tutors cull ineffective, confusing or overly complex handouts and replace them with improved ones. Students can carry off the handouts for reminders or for further practice.

The atmosphere in good labs is a careful blend of order, chaos, and relaxed, purposeful bustle. The order and chaos combination derives from the variety of materials that must be available to students--assembled, labelled, exposed and free to be moved around. Labs where only tutors lay hands on the neatly shelved, or worse, cupboarded, materials to bring them out for working have sacrificed function to order and unintentionally keep the student in a psychologically supplicant position, not a good one for learning. In addition to help from a tutor, the best labs offer students the opportunity to come in at will to rummage for themselves in the handbooks or handout files. The lab aims to let the student know there is remedy for writing ills in this place where a tutor's time is the student's time and the focus is narrowed from the assault of generalized marginal comment to specifically diagnosed and taught skills. A good lab has no clearly demarcated student and teacher areas; it has ashtrays, coffee cups, chit-chat, posters on the walls, and an acceptable hum of noise. The best labs

experience students returning repeatedly on their own, because the students got what they wanted without feeling "put down." The purposeful bustle is unavoidable, and worth noting to passing administrators.

Good labs enjoy close relations with the English teaching faculty. Regardless of whether or not the faculty themselves tutor in the lab, the faculty are familiar with how the lab works and the materials it has. Often the faculty help choose and organize the materials, contributing to the handout file, or donating office copies to the lab. Good labs make considerable effort to foster this closeness. They freely offer faculty permission to forage for material for classroom presentation. They set up a selection of especially helpful professional books and articles to lure faculty into the lab. This closeness keeps the lab activities appropriately centered on the writing demands of the classroom and makes faculty the primary recruiting device for students in the lab.

Obviously few labs have all these strong features all the time; each has to cope with indigenous conditions that change slowly, if at all. Nonetheless, in setting up a writing lab or seeking improvements in an existing one, these features seem worth pursuing.

Paula Guetschow
Anchorage Community College



THE WRITING LAB PROGRAM AT USAO

When I initiated the Writing Lab Program at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (a small liberal arts college of about a thousand students), I shared the fear--often expressed by others in the WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER--that the Lab would be thought of solely as a remediation center. But since this Writing Lab program would have but one instructor, I asked myself, in moments of realism, whether I would have time for little else than listening to subjects and verbs that disagreed or watching principles that dangled from student papers. A lab thus narrowly identified with remediation is condemned to serve but a small portion of the student body and may even be avoided by poor writers who stand to profit

most from the Lab. Like the parishioner who eschews the confessional identified "for sinners only," these students might feel that by using the Lab they were betraying their inadequacy to fellow students. It made good sense, then, to establish a writing lab that would be devoted to more than simply remediation.

Since its initiation, our program has developed four distinct activities. Admittedly, the predominate function is remediation. Most of the students who come to the Lab have serious writing ills. About two thirds of these students are referred to the Lab by an instructor (usually an English teacher in charge of a section of Freshman English) who may either politely suggest or adamantly insist that a student begin Lab attendance; the rest come to the Lab urged solely by the desire to enhance their writing capability. But happily, the Lab has met a need for many who write well but are perceptive enough to realize that successful college writing usually means a bit more than clear sentences and paragraphs with topic sentences. These students, fearless in their construction of lucid sentences and able to spell "misanthrope" in a single stroke, show appropriate reverence when faced with more challenging tasks: writing a good essay test, composing that first research paper, or learning study skills like budgeting time or reading content material effectively.

The first two roles of the Lab are accomplished by one-on-one instruction; and while this pedagogy is undeniably effective, even a nine-to-five schedule (appointments averaging 30 to 45 minutes) does not provide the wide availability that any Writing Lab should offer. So in response to the need for contacting a much larger segment of the student population, the Lab also sponsors each term a number of minicourses that are useful to both remedial and developmental students. To list the courses is to indicate their appropriate (freshman to senior) audiences: "Improve Your Spelling," "Writing Better Sentences," "Writing the Research Paper," "Taking an Essay Exam," etc. Except for the research paper classes, each of the topics can be adequately presented in an hour. This makes it possible to offer, several times a week, a class that treats its topic completely. One course--"Writing the Research Paper"--requires at least four hours of class time; but while presenting a slightly greater scheduling challenge, it can still be offered two or three times a term without over-taxing the Lab instructor.

Also included within the classroom function of the Writing Lab is a Reading Improvement course which, unlike the minicourses, is a catalog-listed, credit-granting course.

The last sentence serves to introduce a very brief digression, the point of which will be a question for any writing lab instructor willing to advise me. Neither the minicourses nor the one-on-one instruction gives the students any credit hours. The English department rationale for this has been that students, upon discovering some need for the Writing Lab (a failed test, a freshman theme that refuses to behave, a sonnet that will not grow beyond ten lines, etc.), will firmly grasp the bootstraps of self-improvement and trudge into the Writing Lab. This logical progression of discovering a deficiency and setting about to remove it undoubtedly happens in a number of cases. But I suspect that since we are in the United States and not in the Garden of Eden--where evidently splendid creatures ate of the Tree of Knowledge for as little as a dare--there may be more than a few students who would like to be paid for their effort.

Now we smug academicians know that students who write shall be richly rewarded for the hours spent in the Writing Lab. Their recompense will go far beyond improved grades in Freshman English. And yet, the credit-hours for Writing Improvement 201 (or whatever name we give it) that appear on an official transcript seem, at least at first, a far more tangible record of achievement. In any case, let me formally ask the question: Should we grant credit for writing improvement, and will the benefit of introducing credit for Lab attendance be increased student participation in Lab services? I would appreciate the counsel of wiser souls than I.

The fourth role of the Writing Lab was somewhat unexpected. Soon after the creation of the USAO Writing Lab, I began receiving calls from fellow faculty members who--as they corrected student papers, wrote committee reports, prepared conference papers, etc.--inquired about some aspect (usually mechanical in nature) of the writing craft. Of all the questions that the Lab answers, these that came from my colleagues are, I think, the most welcome; perhaps because it is a demonstration that matters of composition are of importance to the entire college faculty and not just to language arts teachers. Of course, answering

questions about writing is but one way that the Lab can be of service to the general faculty. In addition, the Lab is sponsoring a small handbook that will illustrate many of the often-made writing errors that adorn as many biology or history papers as English themes. Also planned is a September orientation session with the entire faculty. We hope this meeting will more efficiently acquaint campus teachers with the many ways that the Lab can help them by turning our students into better writers.

I am most grateful to the WLN contributors for describing their writing lab programs, and thus providing us all with seemingly endless variations of some obviously successful themes. Much of the acceptance and effectiveness of the program here has resulted from the excellent suggestions proffered by lab instructors across the country. Hopefully this description repays a bit of the debt thus incurred.

Garitt Griebel
Univ. of Science and Arts
of Oklahoma



THE WRITING LAB AS CRISIS CENTER: SUGGESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW

Anyone working in a Writing Lab learns quickly that the tutor's role is hardly confined to that of grammar coach. Obviously, the tutor is supposed to help the troubled student correct errors in writing and learn such principles as necessary to prevent the recurrence of those mistakes. Yet often the Lab tutor finds that before s/he may deal directly with the paper the student has brought in, some kind of rapport must be established with the student. Certainly this is true in all teaching, but how much more so in the matter of Lab tutoring. The student, for example, may feel very defensive about his/her writing, or may be angry with the instructor because of the many negative comments on the paper, or may have all kinds of feelings about the writing process itself that might interfere with work done in the lab.

This problem of what to do about a student's negative feelings about writing was brought home to me recently when I tried to help a student in our Writing Lab at Purdue University. Though I had worked with this student before, I was unaware of her deep-seated hostility towards her instructor and his comments on her papers and failed to deal with these feelings when we began our work. Thus, in the second session, we were held up by her need to vent her feelings. Every time I tried to return to the paper, she voiced another complaint about the fact her instructor never wrote anything positive on her paper (though the papers were hardly such disasters that nothing good could be said about them), and she also complained that the instructor seemed to be rejecting her personally by rejecting her writing. Whether her feelings were valid is, in a way, almost beside the point. What is important here is that my job as tutor included helping her deal with those feelings; I suspect those feelings were present in the student during our initial interview, and I failed to take time to recognize them. Unfortunately, my failure to do so impeded our progress.

I have since concluded that a large part of the tutor's duty to Writing Lab clients is to help them deal with their feelings about writing, about being in the Writing Lab, and about any other difficulties they may have regarding their writing. While such care may not be required with all students, some certainly must be handled with special effort. And while these angry feelings may appear all through a student's tenure in the Lab, particularly as the student's trust in the tutor grows, many times the student's attitude about his/her current writing situation will manifest itself in the initial interview a tutor has with a student. If any negative feelings appear, the tutor would be well advised to help the student work through them. But how?

Let's look at a typical situation (if such a thing exists in a Writing Lab; I have my doubts.) We are all familiar with the fact that the suggestions of illiteracy carries a stigma that, say, inadequate knowledge of chemistry or physics or calculus does not. Some students I've encountered have expressed, if not in so many words, the feeling that writing is something learned in grammar school, an idea that to them often

appears to be confirmed by good grades received in high school literature courses. Writing Labs also and unfortunately might carry for those students implications of "dumb-bell English." That writing is a skill requiring a life-long study as most skills of any importance do is not an idea they may have considered or, once presented to them, that carries much credibility. While we may never make students delight in coming to the Lab, we might elevate its status to that of a chem lab or language lab: we must make the Lab respectable in the students' eyes, and one way to do that is by working through individual client's negative feelings about writing.

I believe that one good way to achieve that end is by borrowing techniques used by Crisis Center personnel in helping their callers and walk-in clients handle their negative feelings.¹ Romaine V. Edwards suggests a simple ABC formula that is easily remembered and applicable to a variety of interpersonal communication situations. Step A is the acquiring stage, Edwards tells us, in which "we relieve the tension....We'll spend the first part of the call or interview finding out a little bit about the client" (p. 17). This statement might seem obvious, but in the student's desire to get right to work and the tutor's equal urge to help, the process might get lost. Such cannot be the case because, as noted, problems with attitude might crop up later either in the first session or subsequent meetings. With the student I described earlier, I would now talk with her more about how she felt about the class and her writing in the class. Students might be reluctant to be frank with a tutor; an exchange might go like this:

Tutor: How do you feel about the class?
Student: It's okay.
Tutor: What do you like about it?
Student: (hesitating) We learn a lot.
Tutor: What do you feel you've learned so far?
Student: Not a whole lot or I wouldn't be here, I guess. (nervous laughter)
Tutor: How do you feel about the paper?
Is there anything you don't understand about the instructor's comments or about the grade?

With a few gently probing questions of this nature, the tutor conveys his/her degree of interest in the student. Edwards stresses the importance of this process:

And while we acquire information, we're also acquiring rapport. As the counselor is getting to know the client, the client is getting to know the counselor, and that is terribly important too. The more he can trust his counselor, the more honest and straightforward he'll be about his problem (p. 17).

Basically, what the tutor is doing is asking cattle-prod questions, encouraging the student to vent. This provides emotional release for the student as the tutor absorbs information.

Edwards tells us that "the acquiring stage gives way to the boiling down stage or Step B in the ABC method" (p. 18). In this stage, the tutor focuses on the student's feelings by encouraging the student to "lay out all the parts" as Edwards puts it (p. 19). "The counselor boils down the things that are disturbing the client until he has boiled them down to a one-sentence description of the problem" (p. 18). The benefits for the Writing Lab tutor are two-fold: the tutor understands the feelings of the student as regards to the writing class (or whatever writing situation the student is in), and the tutor can, by parroting those feelings to the student, help the student see them in their parts rather than as a jumbled mass of angry emotions. This may also lead indirectly to particular writing difficulties; for instance, a student might ask "Why does he take off all those points for comma splices? They aren't that important. What about my ideas?" These are concerns the tutor can address. Returning to my example, I would now make a brief jotting list of such concerns which I would help the student deal with in the C or coping stage.

Edwards tells us that the C stage is "what the client came in for in the first place" (p. 19). While I might not be able to get a student out of a classroom the student is not happy in, I still might be able to help the student cope with the situation.

Student: I really don't see why commas are all that important. I do have ideas.
Tutor: So you feel that the instructor is too picky? (1)

Student: Yeah. I mean, he never says anything good about my papers.

(now moving into C stage)

Student: All these marks are really a down.

Tutor: You feel very frustrated, don't you.

Student: You said it.

Tutor: I know it's hard to get a paper back with nothing but negative comments. (This reflects or parrots what the student has already said.) What are some ways, do you think, that we can draw attention to your ideas?

Student: I don't know.

Tutor: I can see you're angry now, but let's try to sort through some of these red marks. If we can clear up some of these grammatical errors, do you think your instructor might be more receptive to what you have to say?

Student: I doubt it.

Tutor: Do you? We haven't tried it yet, so we don't really know, do we?

Student: I guess not.

Tutor: Tell you what. Instead of tackling all of the errors, why don't we start with just one of them--comma splices, maybe, since that's what he takes off the most points for--and then work our way up.

Notice several things in this scenario. In item one, the tutor is reflecting the student's feeling without siding with the student. This is most important; we don't want the student running back to the instructor with "So and so in the Lab thinks I'm right about this and you're not." Such an action would hardly encourage that teacher to continue referring students to the lab. The tutor here is simply reflecting feelings the student already has.

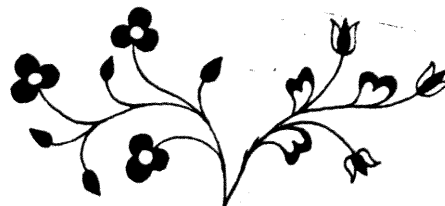
At point two, the tutor is again reflecting a feeling the student has already identified, though not in so many words. By focusing with the student on the angry feelings, the tutor is helping the student deal with those feelings. And, by implication, the tutor is showing that s/he is on the side of the student whether or not such is the case, i.e., whether or not the tutor in fact believes the student to have been treated poorly by the instructor. This is also true in point three where the tutor begins to offer some suggestion as to practical remediation of the problem. In this hypothetical situation, note that the student's dead end reply does not

appear to leave much room for the tutor to move in. Yet, in item four, the tutor back-tracks by again reflecting the negative feelings of the student, by showing sympathy, and then suggesting a coping mechanism--working in the Lab--that might have practical value for the student. The coping mechanism suggests a way not only for the student to deal with the anger but also improve the writing. Though the student may offer further resistance, in point five the tutor again rams that barrier with another question. By asking questions, even questions that obviously ask for a certain kind of reply, the tutor is showing the student that s/he is an independent operator; the student will have as much input into the corrective-coping process as s/he so desires. By point six, the tutor is showing one way to go with the coping procedure, again produced tentatively so that the student will not feel that s/he is preached at yet again by another writing instructor.

I am not suggesting that Writing Lab instructors become amateur psychologists. I am saying that by adopting some of the simpler techniques used by thousands of paraprofessionals in Crisis Centers across the country, the Writing Lab tutor can encourage students to regard the Lab not as yet another dreary English class but as a place where solutions can be found to the problems they are having with writing. In our great desire to correct those problems, we must not forget that first and foremost students are people with feelings and they bring those feelings as we all do to every situation; writing is no exception. By recognizing this phenomenon, Writing Lab instructors will be far better able to cope with those who need their help.

Thomas Dukes
Purdue University

¹Romaine V. Edwards, Crisis Intervention and How It Works (Springfield, Il.: Charles C. Thomas, 1977). Subsequent citations in the text. Readers will find Edwards' extended discussion of the C-stage (coping) helpful in further developing their feedback skills.





A
READER
INQUIRES...

I would appreciate knowing about any graduate school in the Midwest (preferably within rock-throwing distance of Oklahoma City) that offers a doctoral program (especially one that offers a Ph.D.) with a rhetoric/composition concentration. Please send your information to the WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER or to me: Garitt Griebel, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, Chickasha, Oklahoma 73018.



A WRITING CENTER REACHES OUT

The writing component of the Reading and Writing Center at the University of Florida is broadening the scope of its programs. Certainly, the Writing Center is not unique in this respect; neither is its approach necessarily applicable to other centers, which must at once work within the framework of their own institutions and respond to their individual student populations. Nevertheless, the concerns are similar enough so that the procedures followed by one center may suggest possibilities for development by another.

In order for quality to be maintained, the expansion of the Writing Center services at the University of Florida has been a gradual process. Founded in 1977 for the primary purpose of assisting Special Admission students, the Writing Center has slowly broadened its scope to include services for other University students as well. The multi-pronged approach at the Center now includes the following functions: (1) laboratory classes, for which credit and grades are given, (2) a non-credit, independent skills program for referrals and volunteers, (3) mini-courses on developmental

writing skills, (4) diagnostic testing of writing skills for interested departments or groups, and (5) the incorporation of Writing Center work into certain course curricula. Since each new function carries its own requirements for staffing and space, for extra materials, or for new record-keeping procedures, the adoption of these multiple services has not been trouble-free. Yet such growth is important, both for the Writing Center to remain a vital part of the University, and, more important, for writing to be perceived as an essential skill at all college levels.

(1) Laboratory Classes

For the purpose of helping to improve the writing skills of Special Admission students, who are scheduled for work in the Center as a supplement to their regular composition courses, the Writing Center conducts a series of small laboratory classes of 8 to 10 students taught by a graduate assistant. In these biweekly classes, for which students receive one credit and a grade of satisfactory or unsatisfactory, students work either collectively or independently on grammar skills and on structured writing modules as well. These modules, which emphasize such writing skills as the use of a controlling idea or the importance of transitions, culminate in paragraph assignments to be completed outside class; the compositions are then discussed by the laboratory instructors in individual student conferences. Students are required to revise their compositions until they are found acceptable; similarly, they are required to pass mastery tests on each of the grammar areas studied.

The structured program has benefits for both the students and the laboratory instructors alike. For the students, group instruction in typical problematic areas of writing and grammar is balanced with the individual attention they receive during conferences on their papers; similarly, their independent study of grammar is balanced with the writing assignments which require them to apply what they have learned. For the instructors, the use of an identical curriculum in all laboratory classes, as well as the Center's provision of all tests and instructional materials, simplifies their task and frees them from outside preparation, thereby enabling them to do additional tutoring work in the Center. Because a yearly evaluation of Special Admission students' grammar scores and

writing samples has shown this program to be successful, the Writing Center has opened its laboratory classes to any other interested University students as well. At the same time, the writing component, together with the reading component of the Reading and Writing Center, is involved in another type of laboratory class--still in a developmental stage--in which reading and writing skills are closely allied.

(2) Independent Skills Program for Referrals and Volunteers

But the answer to expansion has not come from the growth of laboratory classes alone. For one reason, the skills taught in the classes are often too basic for some University students who need other kinds of writing help. Moreover, the classes allow neither for flexibility of scheduling nor for truly individualized programs of study. Thus, an independent skills program has also been developed in which students either voluntarily enroll at the Center or are referred there by their regular classroom instructors. This program is publicized quarterly through campus-wide brochures and through information sheets which, together with referral forms, are sent to the various departments. Students are urged to commit themselves to a general program of improvement by attending the Writing Center for two periods a week; they work at their own pace on individualized programs prescribed for them from diagnostic tests. Neither credit nor grades are given, but a report of each referral student's progress is sent at the end of the quarter to the appropriate classroom instructor.

Since its inception, the independent skills program has been strengthened in three ways. First, students are urged to take Center-devised item tests on each area they complete in order to determine how well they have mastered the material. By reviewing these tests with individual students, the laboratory instructors use these tests as a teaching tool. Second, a laboratory instructor is personally assigned to each student in the independent skills program for the purpose of monitoring the student's work and conferring once weekly with the student about individual problems. Third, and most important, the students in the independent skills program are asked to do some occasional, in-class writing which is subsequently discussed in their conferences. In addition, laboratory

instructors will also review these students' papers for other classes, provided that the classroom instructor in each class has given permission for the Center to do so.

(3) Mini-Courses

As part of its outreach to other segments of the University, the Writing Center also offers a series of free, non-credit mini-courses on such specific writing skills as "Taking an Essay Exam," "Spelling Better," "How to Write a Paper," and "Fundamentals of a Research Paper." These two-hour mini-courses, which are taught by graduate assistants, take the form of workshops, involving direct participation by the students. The writing skills are first discussed and illustrated with several samples; then students are asked to apply these skills through a series of exercises. Participants have indicated on anonymous questionnaires that these mini-courses are helpful. However, despite extensive advertising in the campus newspaper and in brochures, attendance fluctuates widely and remains a problem to be resolved.

(4) Diagnostic Testing of Writing Skills

The last two services of the Writing Center involve its growing relationship with other departments and with specific courses. Responding to requests by certain departments for diagnostic testing of their students' writing skills, the Center coordinators now administer to designated groups of undergraduate or graduate students both a writing sample and an objective, Center-designed test on grammar, usage, diction, mechanics, and spelling. The coordinators then holistically score the writing samples to determine students' global writing problems; similarly, they have individual "summary of error" sheets prepared to show students their areas of weakness on the grammar test. Students with deficient writing skills are urged either to register for an advanced composition course or to work at the Writing Center. To meet the diverse needs of the graduate students who may subsequently come to the Writing Center, the Center has added to its library some specialized texts on legal and technical writing, as well as materials on preparing scientific papers and abstracts. In this way the scope of the Writing Center as a resource for writing materials has begun to expand.

(5) Incorporation Into Course Curricula

Still another way in which the Center has broadened its scope is to become incorporated into the curriculum of certain courses. For example, during one recent quarter, work in the Writing Center was included as a requirement in two developmental freshman English courses. Classroom instructors indicated on individual student profiles the areas they wanted their students to study. The Center returned the individual profiles each week, noting student attendance, verifying work completed, and reporting scores received on the item tests. Because students were working directly on areas of immediate concern to them and were receiving credit toward their composition grade, they were motivated to take the Center activities seriously.

The affiliation of the Center with course curricula has taken other forms as well. For instance, some composition instructors have chosen to give a few of their weak but conscientious students a "hold" grade--the equivalent of an "incomplete"--which becomes resolved after the students satisfactorily complete another quarter of writing instruction in the Center. Providing this kind of service to the faculty who desire it represents a significant step in the Writing Center's effort to reach out to other segments of the University community.

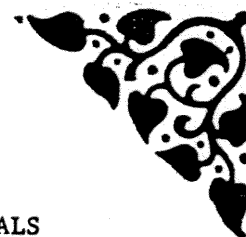
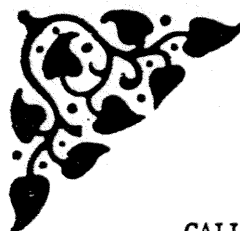
The Importance of Expansion

Thus, over a period of three and a half years, the Writing Center has extended its scope. Because the very reason for the Center's existence is to assist the Special Admission students, the laboratory classes with their emphasis on basic writing skills continue to form the core of the Writing Center's activities. However, through the addition of several other services, the Writing Center has begun to emphasize as well its role as a center for developmental writing skills, as a center for the diagnosis of writing problems, and as a resource center for writing materials. None of these Center roles are incompatible; rather, the roles frequently overlap and strengthen the program overall.

Certainly, these Writing Center services have not exhausted the possibilities for expansion; neither are the problems in the current programs resolved. Thus, making faculty and students aware of existing services remains a constant challenge,

just as balancing the needs of each service for materials and space is another. Similarly, anticipating the Center staffing needs for each quarter is a third. But despite the problems which expansion brings, the Writing Center must continue to meet the students' diverse needs. In this way, the broadening of the Writing Center role emphasizes the importance of writing as a communication process that spans all college levels.

Willa Wolcott
Writing Center Coordinator
University of Florida



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The New York College Learning
Skills Association
will sponsor a conference on
REMEDIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION
Nov. 1-4, 1981
at Grossingers'

This year's theme will be--

"Fall Focus on Learning Skills: The
Present Looks to the Future"

Possible presenters should submit two copies of an informative (300-400 word) proposal, a 75-word abstract, a copy of their current vita, and a self-addressed envelope to:

Phyllis Gosch (Proposal Chairperson)
Learning Center
Room 13, Alumni Hall
Niagara University
Niagara University, NY 14109





GLCA
 Cross-Disciplinary Writing Workshop
 June 21-24, 1981
 Albion College
 Albion, Michigan

The Great Lakes Colleges Association announces a workshop for faculty members in all disciplines who want to:

- Design new courses or redesign old ones incorporating a writing component or writing assignments
- Explore the conceptual and practical demands of a wide range of student writing
- Respond more effectively to student writing assignments
- Examine the relationship between clear thinking and good writing
- Reflect on writing and teaching in the company of interested colleagues from many institutions

A comprehensive fee of \$250 will cover housing, meals, and workshop costs. Registration is limited to 20 participants. Deadline for registration is May 1, 1981. For further information, contact Dr. Catherine Lamb, English Department, Albion College, Albion, Michigan 49224, (517-629-5511, ext. 340).

WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER
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