WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

For most of us, another academic year is now history, statistics to fill the pages of our annual reports and stories of student successes and failures to remember as lessons for next year. As we all wind down for the summer, so too does the Writing Lab Newsletter. With this issue we complete publication for the 1984-85 year and look forward to resuming next September.

I hope your summer schedule includes some relaxing time, but if it also includes some writing time, please consider among your projects a response to Betty Neumann's questions in this issue about peer tutors (p.10). Her list of questions reflects similar concerns among many lab directors in two-year colleges and is in dire need of answers. Another question to respond to is the one so many of us ask when we meet each other: What is your lab like? In a page or so, why not describe what your writing lab does, what kinds of services and programs you offer, how your tutors are selected, and so on. Since so many of us find this kind of view into each other's lab so interesting, we'll try to highlight one or two writing labs in each month's newsletter.

In addition, please keep sending your articles, announcements, reviews, queries, names of new members, and yearly $5 donations (in checks made payable to Purdue University, but sent to me) to:

> Muriel Harris, editor
> Writing Lab Newsletter
> Dept. of English
> Purdue University
> West Lafayette, IN 47907

Have a pleasant, productive, and (if possible) relaxing summer!

RE-INVENTING THE WHEEL: VERY QUICKLY

In a small state college changes often occur swiftly. One semester we're all using a reader; the next, a rhetoric. Out goes outlining; in comes finding an authentic voice. Now process; then product. Uniformity of approach; then individuality. Along comes the state legislature slashing budgets, and the part-time faculty can't use any approach; they're gone.

Those of us who teach in small state colleges know the meaning of "vicissitudes" deeply and personally. So I was not shocked when I was told a week before the fall term was to begin that we were discontinuing four sections of an unsuccessful developmental writing course in favor of a laboratory approach, with one instructor and two tutors responsible for all fifty students. And when asked if I would be interested in running it, I replied as one who knows his place in the department, "Yes, please."

Lewis-Clark State College is a 2,000-student, community-based college with a significant percentage of re-entering students and, due to open admissions, students in need of remedial assistance. In the past we offered two courses for those who scored low on our two-part placement exam, an impromptu essay holistically graded and the Test of Standard Written English (TSWE). One of the courses, EN 101, a three-credit remedial class, had been working well, a high percentage of those enrolled going on to succeed in the required composition classes, EN 103 and EN 104. The other preparatory course, however, a five-credit class for basic writers, EN 100, had been something of a cube. It just wouldn't roll. During the previous school year only 12% passed; in addition, many who were not passing dropped the class, some of those withdrawing from college at the same time.

We live in an age when "retention" is a byword: those who can retain survive; those who cannot retain attend career-guidance workshops, so we knew we needed to do something. Students were frustrated and discouraged. Instructors were graying prematurely. We needed an approach that would succeed, a course that would roll. I was given one week to invent the wheel.

I knew several things at this point: that others had invented this "wheel" long ago; that the journals bulged with articles on writing centers and on basic writing, though I had not yet read beyond Errors and Expectations; that I was a novice at what I was assigned to do; and that I would soon have two anxious, inexperienced tutors and fifty or so basic writers--some resentful, some scared, others bitter, many confused--all dependent on how quickly and how well our writing center, our "wheel," could be invented.

One of my first steps was selecting tutors, and here I had a stroke of luck. Two of the seven candidates stood out as a matched pair, the equivalent of the old police department interrogation team--the tough cop and the nice cop. Our no-nonsense tutor, a recent graduate of our education department, had tested out of English 103 and breezed through 104. Writing is relatively easy for her, and she's good at it. Confronted by an unhappy student, she would tell him that complaints and self-pity don't help and that he must simply do the task. Not exactly a drill sergeant, but not Francis of Assissi either. The other tutor, a freshman nursing student, had struggled through English 103 class during the previous summer term, achieving an "A" largely through perseverance and hard work. She exudes empathy and listens sympathetically to the unhappy student, offering solace and gentle encouragement. Working together, the two of them could soften the frustration-encrusted, hard-shelled tough guy; make a vertebrate of the spineless; embolden the bashful, and rejuvenate the recalcitrant.

My tutors received on-the-job training. Before the semester began, we had time for only a couple of meetings to discuss general procedures and expectations. I cautioned them that it would be at times as frustrating a job as they would ever have, but at the point of peak frustration they would feel what many of our students have felt for as long as they have been taking English classes. Our students' problems would be deeply rooted and difficult to overcome in one short semester, so if one-third of our students passed, we should consider ourselves successful. My initial instructions were to concentrate as much on attitudinal as on writing problems and to view attitudinal progress as more important than syntactic progress. To this end, we exuded cheerfulness and optimism, hoping it might prove contagious. Since we were dealing with a student population somewhat bitter and resentful about being placed in 092, our smiles often went unreturned the first couple of weeks. Gradually, however, that changed and most of our group relaxed and went about their work, if not with giddy delight, at least with optimism and good spirit.

For both my tutors' benefit and for my own, I made the premises of our program simple. We would have students spend almost all their time writing, and we would give immediate feedback on it, sometimes talking briefly with a student three times during the course of the student's daily hour visit, sometimes for ten or fifteen minutes, rarely more. Much of my tutors' technique, such as sandwiching suggestions for improvement between praise, finding something nice to say, even about a sentence or paragraph which was a total disaster, came from observing my interaction with students. I would, in turn, observe them in action and discuss their performance with them informally. We held some meetings outside working hours (we were open four days a week, four hours per day), but these were few. A natural momentum built, and by the second month we were rolling, student, tutors and director, all. The tutors grew into their jobs, carefully guided experience being indeed an excellent teacher.

The writing-center approach proved conducive to helping basic writers. Our students found the individualized approach and the relaxed, friendly atmosphere very agreeable. They were happy to be out of the classroom where they had experienced so many prior frustrations and failures. Our retention figures bore this out: 76% of those who enrolled were still around to take the post-test. The pass rate was satisfying: 49% of those who took the post-test passed, scoring at least 30 on the TSWE and a 2 or better on the holistically scored essay, scored on a scale of one to four.

It will be interesting to keep track of our graduates, to see if they succeed in the

traditional classroom environment now that they have finally met with success in a writing course. It's relatively easy to keep tabs on them in a small school, and if we find that some are struggling, we will offer our services as a supplement to their classroom instruction. We came to care about our students last semester: friendships formed; a sense of community developed. As I expected, many students felt more comfortable working with the tutors--one a bonafide peer tutor, the other almost--than with me. I did get to know them since I spent more than half my time tutoring and it was I who had final responsibility for analyzing problems and prescribing remedies. But it was the tutors who became closer to the students. Each tutor changed and grew through the term, the tough cop softening and the nice cop developing some necessary authority.

Now that the first semester is over and I have had time to survey the literature, it becomes even more clear that we were not, after all, in uncharted waters. If there had been time to read the wealth of material available, we could have pilfered ideas free which cost us the time and anguish of experimentation to learn. We would have read that free writing, that staple of most basic writing courses, yields diminishing returns after the first few weeks and that the student can then spend his time more profitably on other tasks. We would have anticipated that students would put more effort into narative writing--more re-writing, more proofreading--than into expository writing, mostly because they enjoy it more, thus care about it more.

But on the other hand, if I had known then all that I've read now, I probably would have refused the assignment as impossible. It's astonishing to think that some tutors take semester-long training courses. It's bewildering to see that someone has already tried and found problems with every approach in the world to the problems of basic writers, from compassion to stern objectivity to family histories to chain letters to M & M-fueled behavior modification to transactional analysis. It's discouraging to think that someone has probably already tried and written an article on everything, even my recent idea of having students touch each other's teeth, then write about the experience. If I had read all this and still accepted the job, it would be with more than trepidation; it would have been a mental block as formidable and detailed as the OED.

I marvel at the professionalism of a program like COMP-LAB at CUNY, York College, and some of the other highly developed and refined approaches to basic writers and writing centers that I read about. They are Cadillacs to our Chevette, orchestras to our garage band. Ours is just an 'umble writing center with an 'umble self-estimate. We are the poor relations of those established, big time centers. Nevertheless, we're proud, in an 'umble sort of way, about having invented, on our own, in relative isolation, the wheel. It's a crude wheel, granted, an 'umble wheel, but it rolls. Our modest successes will not spoil us because there are so many ways to improve. I did not, for instance, see the gains on the TSWE that I expected; in fact, a number of students backslid. Almost all students improved their essay scores, but we were obviously less effective imparting the conventions of standard written English, probably because we put greater emphasis on writing than on systematic study of grammar. Next semester, I'll work on incorporating systematic study into the course.

If we can achieve this kind of success, a 50% pass rate, with the seat-of-the-pants take-off we had, I'm optimistic for our future. Right now, we're discussing becoming a true campus-wide writing center: offering consulting service for all the other English courses, especially the composition courses, and for our fledgling writing-across-the-curriculum program. We do not want to become, as Joseph Weizenbaum has called the computer, a solution in search of a problem; however, we do want to explore the possibilities of how a writing center and peer tutors can help students with their writing in as many ways, for as many kinds of writing as possible. It is opportunities like this that make work in a small school exciting: the way a new program can become reality without semester-long committee meetings, the way individual faculty members can expand and experiment in new areas, avoiding the pigeonholing which sometimes takes place in the larger school. The small college's proclivity for sudden change, while it can be an unnerving source of instability, can also be a source of stimulation and an opportunity for sudden growth.

James Goldsmith
Lewis-Clark State College

GRAMMAR HOTLINE GUIDE AVAILABLE

A Grammar Hotline Guide packet for colleges wishing to establish a Grammar Hotline is available from Tidewater Community College. Please send a self-addressed, stamped ($.39), 9-by-12 envelope to Grammar Hotline Guide, TCC, 1700 College Crescent, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456.

NWCA BOARD MEMBERS ELECTED

Three new board members were elected to the National Writing Centers Association Executive Board at the business meeting held during CCCC: Robert Leonard, Huntington High School, Huntington, New York; Lissette Carpenter, McLennon Community College, Waco, Texas; and Mildred Steele, Central College, Pella, Iowa.

In other business, Jeanne Simpson distributed a "Position Statement on Professional Concerns of Writing Center Directors," which will be published in the fall/winter 1985 issue of The Writing Center Journal. That issue of the journal will be a double number as the current editors will end publication with the fall/winter 1984 issue. Also included in the issue will be a bibliography of writing center scholarship, collected by Jay Jacoby. He invites nominations for "best article" on writing centers with the award to be presented at NCTE in November. (Send nominations to Jay at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte.)

Joyce Kinkead
Executive Secretary

1984 WRITING LAB DIRECTORY

The 1984 Writing Lab Directory is a compilation of two-page questionnaires completed by writing lab directors. The questionnaire answers describe each lab's instructional staff, student population, types of instruction and materials, special programs, use of computers, and facilities.

Copies are obtainable for $13.50 each, including postage. Prepaid orders only. Please make all checks payable to Purdue University and send them to Muriel Harris, Department of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907.

THE HIGH SCHOOL WRITING CENTER: SURVIVING OUR MISTAKES

Like a child learning to walk, the founder of a new writing center is bound to stumble. Some of these "falls" may be due to inexperience and are, therefore, inevitable. Eventually, though, the child learns to walk because he recognizes and corrects his errors. Likewise, the director of the new writing center is also going to make some mistakes if he or she does not have some experience to fall back on. If the director catches these mistakes early enough, the chances are good that his center will get off the ground and function smoothly. However, like the child who trips and plummets down the stairs, a novice director of a writing center could make an error in judgment in the early stages of his operation that could cripple or even terminate the center.

As the director of a fledgling writing center at Griffin High School, I can attest to the veracity of this analogy. Although I have tutored in the writing centers at Southern Illinois University (Edwardsville) and Illinois State University, I never directed a writing center before this past year. As a result of my lack of experience, I made some mistakes in the planning stages of the writing center. The less serious of these mistakes were easily recognized and remedied within a short period of time; however, some of the errors can never be entirely corrected. It may be true that these errors did not prove fatal, but they could have been. The following observations may be hind-sight in my case, but I hope they can serve as fore-sight for the reader.

The writing center at Griffin High School was instituted without the assistance and, in some cases, without the knowledge of the English faculty. I assumed that everyone would approve of the writing center because of the great amount of time that had been devoted during English Department meetings to discussing the literacy crisis at Griffin. I was also confident that having the backing of the administration would more than compensate for the objections of one or two teachers. Fortunately, I was right on both counts. As I explained the writing center concept to my colleagues, I could tell from their responses that I had their whole-hearted support. Nevertheless, I gathered from their surprised expressions

that I had committed an unpardonable breach of etiquette by not talking to them about the center before securing the principal's blessing. Not only was my oversight an act of rudeness, but it was a tactical error as well. Since my operation would depend heavily on referrals, I could not afford to alienate any of the teachers who would be sending students to me.

Failing to publicize the center's existence was a mistake which resulted because of the extent to which I narrowed the scope of my operation. Instead of announcing the center's existence and enumerating its services at the first faculty meeting of the year, I decided to make the center the province of the English Department because of my fear of failure; that is, if the center did not succeed, the "vibrations" of its collapse would resound only within the department. Because of my lack of confidence in myself and my project, two unfortunate developments occurred:

1. Only English instructors have taken advantage of the center because they were the only teachers who really understood what it was all about. Although I did not mean to do so, I actually denied the other faculty members the right to utilize the center by not telling them about it.

2. I inadvertently reinforced the myth that writing is solely an eccentricity of the English Department by not offering instructors who aren't particularly proficient in English a means of emphasing correctness in the writing assignments that they require.

Another error was my failure to adapt the writing center to suit not only the needs but the expectations of all of the referring instructors as well. If I had interviewed each English instructor before composing my hand-out file of grammar exercises, I would not have had to improvise as much as I did. On a more serious side, I accidentally offended one of the English instructors in my haste to solve all of the problems of my tutees. This particular individual who feels that her way is the only right way accused me of "running interference" for her students because they were coming to me for help instead of her. Since I have taught with this person for nine years, I should have taken her personality into account by explaining to her in the beginning of the year that the writing center was a tutoring

service, not a cheating service, and that it was instituted to assist her, not to replace her. I must admit, though, that I may have reinforced her impression that the writing center was a cheating service by my willingness to help her students with content instead of urging them to seek her advice. Consequently, she has referred only four students to me all semester.

Perhaps the most serious mistake that resulted from my lack of experience involved the selection of tutors. Since Griffin is a parochial boys' school, the administration could not afford to pay tutors the kind of salaries that college tutors receive. The fact that Griffin is a parochial school may also account for the principal's insistence that students volunteer to tutor out of a sense of Christian duty. The only material compensation that the tutors at Griffin receive is a letter of recommendation that I write for each of them. Needless to say, I had difficulty finding good students who were willing to sacrifice their study hall in order to help slower students.

I must also confess to feeling reluctant in the beginning, at least, to risk making my volunteers mad by disciplining them when they needed it. Regrettably, I did not put my foot down when two of my senior tutors invited friends to study with them in the writing center because the study halls were too noisy. Consequently, a little clique of tutors and their friends was formed. When I would ask one of my tutors to help me out, more often than not, I found that they were too busy working with their friends on calculus or physics assignments. I did not realize until two months later that I was doing all of the tutoring in a noisy atmosphere simply because I was afraid of losing them by telling them to keep their friends out, to be quiet when a tutee was in the room, and to assist me when I needed help. As it turned out, I did break up the clique and discovered, to my surprise, that my tutors were willing to follow my rules in exchange for a quiet place to study when there was no one to tutor. After all, even some bright high school students will act like average adolescents unless told to do otherwise.

In the final analysis, I believe that some problems, such as the sophomoric behavior of my tutors, occurred because most of my tutoring experience has been with college students, not high school students. The other problems probably resulted because as a tutor, I was unaware of a guiding princi-

ple that any experienced director follows every day. This is the realization that no high school or college writing center can exist only with the backing of the administration. Any writing center that fails to satisfy the needs and expectations of the referring faculty has seriously reduced its chances of survival.

Alan Brown
Griffin High School

NCTE ASSEMBLY FOR COMPUTERS IN ENGLISH

Over one hundred English teachers at all levels of instruction met while attending the 1984 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Convention and formed the Assembly for Computers in English (ACE). Approved in January as an affiliate by the NCTE Executive Committee, the Assembly has as its purpose to promote communication and cooperation among all individuals who have a special interest in computers and the English language arts, to present programs and special projects on this subject, to promote an increase in the number of articles and publications devoted to it, to encourage the responsible development of computer software in the language arts, and to integrate the efforts of those with an interest in any aspect of English language arts computer use.

The Assembly will meet formally once a year during the NCTE Annual Convention. Members of the ACE Executive Committee have already proposed workshops for the next Convention, and plans are underway to have software demonstrations in the exhibit area along with an ACE membership booth. A newsletter, featuring articles and announcements of interest, will be sent to every member.

Any individual who is professionally or personally interested in computers and English language arts is eligible for membership in ACE. The dues are $5.00 per year, check payable to Assembly for Computers in English, and sent to Jack Jobst, ACE Treasurer, Humanities Department, Michigan Technological University, Houghton, MI 49931. Further membership information is available from Leni Cook, ACE Membership Chair, 12 Coral Tree Lane, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274.

NOMINATIONS INVITED

The National Writing Centers Assembly is soliciting nominations from its members for Outstanding Scholarship Awards. Awards will be given at the Writing Centers Workshop at the 75th Annual Convention of the National Council of Teachers of English (to be held in Philadelphia on November 26).

One award will recognize the author/s of the best theoretical/research-oriented article on writing centers. A second award will recognize the author/s of the best article on writing center practice. Articles must have been published between April 1983 and March 1985. This two-year period is designed simply to limit nominations and still honor those who have published articles on writing centers in the recent past.

All nominations will be considered by the awards committee of the National Writing Centers Assembly.

Send nominations by September 1, 1985 to:

Jay Jacoby
Department of English
University of North Carolina at
    Charlotte
Charlotte, North Carolina 28223

A READER RESPONDS . . .

I thoroughly enjoy the Writing Lab Newsletter; so often I find myself smiling and nodding in warm agreement to a problem, a concern, a discovery. It's a wonderful "What? You too?" experience. The newsletter is attractive, readable, and care-full.

You asked for suggestions for future topics. As a new writing center director, I especially value simple directions--"Here's how we do it" sort of articles. I'd like to see more reviews: short articles that discuss the relative merits of various journals, books, articles, conferences, software, etc. Special thanks for bringing calls for papers and job opportunities to our attention.

Diana Lynne Pavlac
North Park College

TUTOR'S CORNER

THE PEER TUTOR AS COUNSELOR

As an implementer of writing pedagogy, the peer tutor helps college students solve typical writing problems--non-critical reading, underdeveloped paragraphs, and poor proofreading--through prewriting activities and the reading aloud of papers. But the peer tutor can provide more than assistance with mechanical writing problems. He or she can also help students cope with their anxieties about writing--frustrations which range from adjusting to college life to dealing with professors' differing expectations. Functioning in such a way, the peer tutor becomes an informal counselor to his or her clients.

College and university instructors who already oppose peer tutoring services will object even more strongly to the peer tutor adopting a counseling role. Believing in a confidential student-teacher relationship, these instructors prefer their students talk to them. I argue, however, that some students feel uncomfortable discussing writing anxieties with their instructors. To these students, the peer tutor represents a less threatening figure. Thom Hawkins has noted that the peer tutor, ". . . unlike the teacher, is still living the undergraduate experience. Thus tutor and tutee are more able to see each other as equals and create an open and communicative atmosphere (66). As a peer tutor who has worked successfully in an "open and communicative" atmosphere, I would like to support the counseling side of peer tutoring. First, I will clarify what I mean by writing anxieties, distinguishing them from other writing problems. Then, by referring to my peer tutoring experiences at Occidental College in Los Angeles, I will show how the peer tutor can help students with writing anxieties cope with their problems.

A great deal of research on writing pedagogy describes writing problems as cognitive. Such research points out that many students come to college and write according to techniques they learned in their high school composition classes. They treat their ideas about writing as rules which they must follow in order to write well; for example, they always write five-paragraph essays, or they always develop intricate outlines before writing their papers. Mike Rose describes how strict adherence to writing rules actually undermines the composition process. What ensues is writer's block, which Rose defines as a ". . . frustrating, self-defeating inability to generate the next line, the right phrase, the sentence that will release the flow of words again" (389).

Teachers have ideas of how to help students with cognitive writing problems. Usually, they encourage blocked students to be flexible with their writing process, to use a variety of writing techniques. What these instructors don't always know how to deal with is something more prevalent than cognitive writing problems--something known as a writing anxiety. A writing anxiety is a psychological problem associated with a student's attitude towards writing. Students with writing anxieties are afraid to write. They feel insecure about their ability to compose papers, but even more important, they fear having their work evaluated. Even though they need help to overcome their problem(s), anxious students won't always turn to their faculty instructors for advice. They are afraid their instructors don't have time to talk to them, or they believe their instructors will think them stupid for feeling insecure about writing.

Since students with writing anxieties are not always identifiable, writing programs need to take special steps to seek out and help such students. Fortunately, some writing programs are searching for means to deal with this situation. For instance, Occidental College's Writing Program has made a successful effort to find and help writing anxious students. The program, which is run by a faculty committee and a writing specialist, first dealt with the problem by extending its communication with students. In addition to administering the freshman and junior writing proficiency exams (which students must pass in order to graduate), overseeing the freshman writing classes, and advertising the tutoring services of the writing specialist, the writing program publicized its desire to help all students who had questions about writing. To increase the possibility of reaching writing-anxious students, the writing program instituted a peer tutoring service which would also work as a counsel-

ing service. This year, I worked as a peer tutor.

Although the writing program hired tutors to work mostly with the freshman writing seminar students, the program chairman and the writing specialist also encouraged us to help upperclassmen. In publicizing our service, we told students we were not accomplished writers; rather, we were students who had written for a number of Occidental professors. Furthermore, we emphasized the fact that we would not evaluate students' writing; instead, we would give suggestions as to how to revise or begin writing a paper. During our training sessions with Occidental's writing specialist, we discussed teaching techniques, such as active listening, which might make us less threatening to clients. Our overall approach could be termed humanistic, for we sought the role of what Carl Rogers calls "facilitators"(164) to help clients come to terms with their thoughts about writing. Our counseling approach worked successfully with a number of students with writing anxieties. In fact, two of my most troubled clients, Denise and Jennifer, are now dealing more effectively with their problems.

A freshman, Denise first came to see me early in fall term when she was working on a proposal for an urban studies paper. Although Denise had a topic, she had no idea of how to begin writing her paper. We discussed the format for writing a proposal and developed a thesis for her topic. Denise then promised to go to the library to do research for the proposal, and she said she would return the following week to report her progress. When Denise did not return the next week, or the week after, I decided she had determined how to begin her proposal. Then, one day, I met her in the quad. My simple inquiry, "How did your proposal turn out?" made her burst into tears. After she calmed down, she told me that all her writing was going poorly; in fact, she felt she could not write anything acceptable to Occidental professors. On further probing, she admitted she had not passed her freshman writing proficiency exam--even after taking the test three times. With a third failure, she not only felt inadequate about her writing ability, she was also afraid to ask her writing professor, who graded the proficiency exams, for help.

In helping Denise, I did two things. First, I presented myself as a student who had experienced similar problems during my freshman year. I told Denise how difficult it had been for me to write for a philosophy professor, and how I constantly had to reorganize and rewrite my papers for that particular instructor. Secondly, I made myself Denise's writing coach and promised to oversee her work on large projects. To begin with, we discussed how she might have organized the proficiency exams she had failed. Then, I guided her through her term paper project, examining her thesis statement, her notecards, outline, rough draft, and final copy. By working with a guidance figure, Denise started to feel less intimidated about writing for college professors. Eventually, she was able to pass her proficiency exam, and by the end of fall term, she wrote a B+ paper for a professor with a tough grading policy.

Not all my clients were freshmen trying to adjust to college. In fact, one of my most frequent tutees was a junior English major named Jennifer. Initially, Jennifer came to see me in order to talk about the two classes we had together: Twentieth Century Poetry and Literary Criticism. She and I would discuss our paper topics for these classes, analyze poems by modern poets, or puzzle over literary criticism terms. However, as Jennifer's visits became more frequent, our discussions focused on a specific topic: her difficulty in putting thoughts on paper. Analysis of our discussions revealed that Jennifer possessed a complicated writing anxiety--one which involved more than a fear of writing for professors.

Jennifer's anxiety involved two interrelated desires: first, to emulate the philosophers and literary artists she admired, and second, to create a new theory about literature. Her anxiety manifested itself in various ways when she had to complete writing assignments. She would begin a paper by spending days reading and rereading the works of her favorite philosophers: Martin Heidegger and Jacques Lacan. During this time, she would attempt to apply these philosophers' ideas to her literature papers. Instead of going to see her professors for help, Jennifer puzzled over her thoughts, trying to determine how closely her ideas correlated to those of Heidegger and Lacan. One could say that Jennifer's anxiety about writing became more text-based than people-based. She wanted to use the ideas of her favorite philosophers, but she doubted her ability to do so. Near

the deadline of the paper, and once she decided on an idea to use, Jennifer would try to apply the idea to a specific literary work. Instead of selecting one piece of literature Jennifer would browse through an entire anthology to see how well her idea applied to a number of works. Finally, at the last minute--usually the morning the paper was due--Jennifer would frantically write something.

Helping Jennifer entailed more than changing her strategy for writing. Frankly, she did not need to completely alter her writing process because she thoroughly understood the dense ideas she worked with and developed. Her comprehension certainly showed in discussion and on every paper she wrote, for she received A or A- grades on all her work. What Jennifer needed to change was the way she managed her writing time. Perhaps if she spent less time worrying about how well her theory applied to a number of literary works, then she would write her papers earlier than the day they were due. From mid-November until the end of the term, I tried several tactics to help her work more efficiently: I walked with her to the English Department so she would talk to her professors about her ideas. I encouraged her to put away her anthology after she selected one piece of literature to analyze. Most importantly, I made her promise to telephone me, or find me in the library, when she needed to talk to someone about a particular paper. Each of these tactics proved effective in small but significant ways. Jennifer still prolongs her writing process, but she spends less time trying to apply philosophical ideas to a number of literary works. Because she now discusses her paper topics/ideas with her professors, she is better able to develop rough drafts of papers; hence, she doesn't write her essays a few hours before they are due. In fact, now, she even considers doing extracurricular writing for newspapers and magazines so that she will know how to write within a strict deadline.

Denise and Jennifer had major writing anxieties. Because these two students fear authority--Denise feared her professors, and Jennifer feared her professors and, ultimately, the texts she read--both students became intimidated about writing papers which would be evaluated. Consequently, neither student would admit her problem(s) to Occidental professors. By working with a peer tutor, both students began to realize their own capabilities. Denise recognized that other people fail; Jennifer saw that she could not spend hours trying to outthink philosophers.

Working with writing anxious individuals requires peer tutors to give extra time--to expect long visits from clients or to expect calls at home. But in giving this time, I believe peer tutors can help writing programs find students who need assistance in coping with their attitudes about writing.

Occidental's peer tutoring service may seem very casual, allowing the peer tutors to meet the needs of students in the way tutors see fit. However, I believe I can suggest some guidelines for colleges and universities which are interested in seeing a similar type of program emerge in their writing centers.

First of all, if your program allows, hire peer tutors from a variety of majors. A variety of tutors gives scope to your program and can attract a diverse group of clients, not just freshmen or English majors, two groups which typically write a great deal.

Secondly, publicize your writing service as being open to all types of students--not just students with mechanically oriented writing problems. Often, the more advanced writers, individuals like Jennifer, are the students suffering from writing anxieties.

My third suggestion is to encourage tutors to contact students. For example, at Occidental, tutors have access to a list noting the mailbox numbers of all freshmen. If tutors want to contact a client, they can send him/her a note. Larger universities would need to use a similar tactic to ensure reaching students who need tutoring help.

Finally, demand that peer tutoring/ counseling services have feedback sessions with their supervisor(s). During such sessions, tutors can recommend techniques, compare experiences, and perhaps, find means for handling a specific student's writing anxiety.

Susan J. Knight
Occidental College

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A READER ASKS . . . .

PEER TUTORS IN THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGES?

Many people begin their writing labs with idealistic ideas, but they are forced to be realistic about problems such as administrative support, supplies, money, staff, and negative attitudes expressed by colleagues. The two-year colleges share many of these problems with the four-year colleges and universities, but one situation is quite different. That difference lies in staffing. Because money, or the lack of it, is a major consideration, getting the proper staff is difficult.

Many four-year colleges and universities use peer tutors: they can draw from the junior, senior, and graduate levels for their tutors--whether English majors or not--because these students have acquired experience and expertise sufficient to label them qualified. With training and guidance, the students interested in tutoring can become excellent peer tutors. The tutees are even likely to enjoy interaction with fellow students who have achieved success with writing and who have survived to tell about it. However, the two-year institutions have only freshmen and sophomores, and many of these students lack background and skills needed to establish their credibility as tutors. Further, some two-year colleges have an open-door policy, and more than likely, their students are the tutees rather than the tutors.

Another aspect of the problem is instructor acceptance of the peer tutor. Some instructors do not want other students--regardless of their qualifications--to advise their students about writing. Many instructors see such severe and widespread problems in their students that they have some justification for scepticism. A major problem in gaining peer tutor acceptance is finding a way to overcome this scepticism. In part, the solution must include a clearly understandable and consistent method of demonstrating that the peer tutors to be employed are knowledgeable and skilled in the writing process and can impart that knowledge and skill to the tutees.

Because of these circumstances, there are a number of questions in need of answers:

1. Should the two-year colleges have peer tutors?

2. How do the two-year colleges identify qualified peer tutors?

3. What standards must they meet?

4. How should they be compensated?

5. Should they be paid or should they be given college credit?

6. How should they be trained?

7. In what areas should they tutor?

8. How can instructors who are sceptical about peer tutors be persuaded to support them?

Betty B. Neumann
Jefferson State College

SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON PEER TUTORING IN WRITING

Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA
Oct. 25, 26, and 27, 1985

Building a Community of Writers

Whether you are involved in peer tutoring as a student or as a professional, we invite you to join us in building a community of writers. As the participants did at Brown last year, we will exchange ideas in small group discussions focusing on peer tutoring. This year's conference includes workshops on managing writing centers, career opportunities for peer tutors, and funding for peer tutors. If you have any suggestions for other workshops, please drop us a line at the following address:

Rodney Shrawder
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Bucknell University
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania 17837

A READER ASKS . . . .

What composition software programs (including word processing, sentence skills, prewriting) have you found to be most effective?

We are searching the field for programs that do more than just reproduce workbook materials on the screen. So far, UCLA's WANDAH program does tap into the computer's potential with its prewriting program, particularly invisible writing and free-writing.

What are you using that you could recommend?

Please contact:

Barbara Budrovich
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PREWRITE: A SOFTWARE REVIEW

Mimi Schwartz's Prewrite is the companion software to her textbook, Writing for Many Roles (Boynton/Cook). The program operates on Apple computers and is designed to aid student writers in finding and focusing their ideas. This program is simple to use and requires no instruction in word processing and very little instruction in the use of the computer.

Once the program is opened, the student writer has a choice of either option A for autobiographies and fiction or option B for expository writing (including the term paper). Both options begin with a request for what is, in essence, a thesis statement, a working title, and a statement of the student's reason for choosing the topic. Next, the student is requested to compose a series of questions about the topic based on the journalistic who, what, when, where, and how. These are followed by prompts asking for a statement of purpose, a list of key ideas, a statement of the main message, an identification of the audience, and a list of key terms. Here, the options differ.

Option A requests attitudes toward the subject and metaphors based on the working title. These are followed by an opportunity to freewrite for twenty to thirty lines. Option B excludes attitudes, but adds requests for controversial issues, pro and con comments, the writer's opinions, sources of information, causes and effects, changes over time, and recommendations before moving on to metaphors and freewriting. Both options conclude with the printing of the student's prewriting (in outline form) or the saving of the file to another disk.

Either option can be easily modified by the instructor. Written into the program is a "Teacher Menu Option" which allows the teacher to alter the length and content of the questions and examples. Additional questions may also be added to meet student needs.

The program itself is basically sound, but it does have some weaknesses that limit its value. First of all, this program could not serve as an autotutorial without being extensively modified. Some of its concepts, most notably audience and metaphor, must be familiar to the user if they are to be of any use. It was refreshing to see that the audience was considered, but this section causes the second problem. The single identification of the audience is too shallow to be of much use to the student; it aids in the identification of key terms, but that is all. An additional problem is created by the program's lack of an editing feature. Admittedly, students are not expected to edit their prewriting, but once a line of text has been completed and the return key pushed, the student can not go back and add or delete information. This could prove to be extremely frustrating to student users.

Despite these problems, this program is worth looking into. Initially, I was not overly impressed with the program, so I asked three of my students to use it in preparing their own research papers. Two of them spent significantly more time and effort on their prewriting than they normally did. The third student, as usual, failed to show up. These students spent approximately three hours each on the program; however, it was their first time using it, and I expect that this time could be drastically reduced through repeated use.

The concepts in the unaltered program did not trouble my students at all; however, we spend a great deal of time with metaphor and a complex audience analysis in my course, so

the concepts were quite familiar. Perhaps the most significant point is that both students enjoyed the program enough to ask to use it again.

The cost of the program, including a back-up disk, user's guide, and a copy of the companion text, is $79.95 for the first disk. Additional disks are $24.95 apiece and there are discounts for class sets. For further information (including a demo disk) or to order the program write to Mimi Schwartz, 4 Evelyn Place, Princeton, NJ 08540.

Ronald Adams
Purdue University

PROTEUS: A SOFTWARE REVIEW

PROTEUS: The Idea Processor, marketed by Research Design Associates Incorporated, operates on the Apple IIe and the Commodore 64. Proteus is strictly a prewriting program, and it offers the student writer five options for getting started--freewriting, looping, listing, the 5 W's, and cubing. The program is entirely menu driven and provides help menus for each option.

The main menu, which comes up automatically, allows entrance into any of the five prewriting modules. Although the user's manual states that any of these options can serve as a point of departure, the manual and the prompts both emphasize freewriting, and all of the modules are either based on freewriting or incorporate it as a major component. The help menus and the user's manual, however, stress the importance of using the various modules interactively to expand and refine ideas.

The program is simple to operate and requires no previous experience with the computer. Students can easily access documents for review, and all text is automatically saved for printing. The help menus are easily accessed and each one provides both a brief explanation of the particular prewriting module in use and an example of its use. The forty page user's manual is designed to guide the student

through her or his first session with the program; it also attempts to conceptually orient the student to the five prewriting modules.

Freewriting-- This module asks the student to think of something to freewrite about (the user's manual suggests writing about yourself or something you hate or love or hope) and to let the ideas flow. If the student writer stops entering text for more than ten seconds, the computer will beep and flash a signal to "KEEP WRITING." All text is automatically entered in upper case and the computer will not allow the student to backspace, delete, or initialize a return for a new paragraph. Although all of these could prove to be frustrating (especially the beeper), the user's manual and/or the help menu forewarn the user; however, the user is not warned that after ten minutes the freewriting module automatically closes out and saves the text. Another disconcerting surprise is that after the screen is filled the last line will not scroll; although the text is being accepted and will be printed as entered, it appears that entering a new line of text will cause the previously entered line to be erased.

Looping-- It is difficult to view this as a module since it is simply another method of freewriting. In fact, looping and freewriting are grouped together on the main menu, and the only difference is found in the help menu where looping is described as focused freewriting. Since the difference between these modules is conceptual rather than mechanical, the glitches noted in the freewriting section apply here as well.

Listing-- This module gives the student up to fifteen numbers and asks her or him to create a list of ideas as fast as s/he can. The help menu points out that lists can be framed as words, phrases or sentences.

The 5 W's-- This module presents the user with the journalistic pentad--who, what, where, when, and why--and asks him or her to freewrite about a subject. Both the user's manual and the help menu stress the value of this module for working with stories and narrative events.

Cubing-- This module presents six categories--analyze, compare, contrast, argue for, argue against, and define--and asks the student to freewrite about each. The help menu provides a brief explanation of each of the six categories.

These five modules are obviously valuable tools for any writer; however, the three students who helped me test the program (all competent users of either WordStar or Apple Writer) were not impressed with its capabilities. The general consensus was that, since there were no real prompts, the information on the help menus was similar to a handout and a student would have more opportunities using handouts and a word processor. Perhaps if I were working with students unfamiliar with word processing, the results would be different, but I would agree that without some consideration of other aspects of prewriting (e.g. audience, situation, aim) the program has less to offer than a simple word processor and an introduction to prewriting techniques.

The cost of the program, including the user's manual, is $79.95 plus applicable sales tax and $3.00 for shipping and handling. For further information or to order the program write to Research Design Associates, Inc., P.O. Box 848, Stony Brook, New York 11790.

Robert D. Child
Purdue University

EXPANDING TURF: RATIONALES FOR COMPUTERS IN WRITING LABS

Although many writing lab staffs have articulated a variety of reasons why students use their facilities, writing labs are nevertheless still widely perceived only as operations for remedial students. Yet there is a prospective addition to writing labs whose incorporation could add to their value and at the same time emphasize that labs are not limited to remedial instruction: the addition of computers. What hurdles must be met if a lab staff decides to move to computers? Initially, administrators must be persuaded that computers would be a logical addition to a lab. I have noticed that among administrators there are levels of resistance depending upon the expense of proposals and that administrators, being human, sometimes like to be able to say "yes"; computers are probably among the least expensive of proposals with which they have to deal. Presently, the time is right, I would think, for writing lab staffs to persuade by emphasizing the flexibility of lab facilities and by pointing out their natural link with computers. Then, after an initial learning period, staffs might do what they have done so well in the past:

share their experiences in order to gain some additional ideas which would help strengthen the move.

Fortuitous factors have connected computer-assisted instruction at Cameron University to our Language Arts Division's Writing Laboratory. Importantly, our institution's federal Title III program has funded computers for our division as a result of much study and paperwork by our divisional chairperson, who has a specialized interest in educational media. By the end of this academic year, the Title III program will have purchased 8 Apple IIe computers, two printers, and hundreds of dollars of software for the lab. By providing money for workshops and conferences, the program has also helped the Writing Lab Director, the Comp Director, and other members of the Language Arts Division became more knowledgeable about computers. Further, our divisional secretary is a talented organizer and has developed a software indexing system for the lab. Our English department chairperson owns an Apple Computer and communicates about it. Also, space arrangements are convenient: in our divisional office area, the computer room is located next door to the lab; lab staff can tutor regular lab students and software users while staff members cover the computer operations. In addition, a proposed larger area for the writing lab will include inner rooms which can help secure the computers.

Over the past year, while developing the initial computer component in our Writing Lab at Cameron, we have discovered rationales which we hope will protect our initial arrangement. Our hope is that our own facility will become the hub of word processing and other activities related to composition and that other university facilities do not subsume that developing function. Our rationales for computers in our writing lab are as follows:

1. The composing processes about which writing lab tutors communicate with students not assigned to composing or editing with computers are similar to the process of those who are. Thus efficiency of instruction can be achieved when the tutorial function is applied to both groups of students. Obviously, such efficiency could not be exercised if a writing lab instructor was trying to cover a writing lab and also had to walk to a university computer lab to tutor students working with composition software.

2. Writing lab staff members improve their knowledge of lab materials by reading field-specialized journals. Many of those same field-specialized journals are now describing computer software for use in English composition. The knowledge which lab members gain from their journals can be applied to computer operations in their labs.

3. The specialized knowledge which writing lab staff members are able to apply to tutorials and to the usage of computer materials can also be applied to other components of composition instruction involving computers. An example is the application of such knowledge to the use of software for diagnosis and followup.

4. As our secretary has discovered, much effort is needed to protect software, critique it for publishers, maintain an accountability system for it, and to check it out to students. Math and science or university computer center personnel probably would not welcome the responsibility of maintaining software with which they are not familiar. Overworked university secretaries would welcome extending this responsibility to an English department and its writing lab.

5. English majors need composing experiences with varied types of software and hardware which will make them competitive in the job market. Since English majors tend to nest in buildings in which writing labs are located and even in some cases tutor in those labs, writing labs are logical places for them to work with a variety of hardware and software.

6. Writing labs, if utilized for word processing or other composition-related activities, would require concentrations of hardware, i.e., printers and printer-related items, different from that which can be found in math, science, or university computer labs, where a few printers are often in heavy demand; again, composition students and English majors would have difficulties in benefiting from the latter type of facility.

7. If an English professor is going to volunteer conference time with those students working with composition software, the professor is more likely to give up that time if the time isn't added to by a ten-minute walk to a computer lab located in another campus building.

8. Increasingly, English professors will be utilizing computers to write instructional programs for students and to develop and work with clerical programs which will provide help with student records. Just as professors should have access to a nearby lab for conferring with students, so too should they have access to the facility for using the computers in the development of programs.

These, then, are rationales for computers in the writing lab that seem applicable to our situation at Cameron University and perhaps to other campuses as well. Readers might wish to add to them by examining their own campus environments. Again, there is a practical reason for sharing rationales: the more we convince others by using them, the less likely we are to see only the remedial label being applied to writing labs.

Leigh Howard Holmes
Cameron University

TUTORING THE ADVANCED WRITER IN A WRITING CENTER

A writing center need not serve only the remedial or basic writer. A full-service center can and should serve the advanced writer at the undergraduate, graduate and faculty levels, as well, if the center is to have a full and permanent place on a college campus. I would like to show how our center serves, and how other writing centers might better serve, the advanced writing population of a college community. First, I'll discuss the applications, and secondly their administration, referring to instructional materials we use as I proceed. The need is real-- almost 70% of our clientele are self-selected advanced writers who need the structure and guidance of a tutorial designed to meet their special writing goals.

All of our advanced mini-courses are offered for either five or eight weeks, meeting twice per week for eighty minutes each time, or once per week for a proportionately longer period of time. Half of each session is spent tutoring, and the client writes or works on a writing problem during the second half. All the courses carry non-graded academic credit and are one-on-one, interview tutorials with the advanced writing specialist. We select writers for these courses, screening them through a sample that shows they are ad-

vanced, competent writers, capable of handling their intended projects.

One perennial advanced writing need is the long term paper, thesis, or honors project. Accordingly, we offer mini-courses in research writing in which the client learns to organize his writing time along with his research time in keeping with a step-by-step deadlining procedure that accommodates both the research and the writing processes. The tutor guides the client through each stage of the writing process until the completion of the paper, working out the "kinks" at each stage. It is a model the client can use over and over again.

We also offer advanced writers a mini-course in career writing for seniors and others who are on the brink of a job or a graduate school search. Once accepted into the course, clients work with the tutor to develop a resume (stealing techniques shamelessly from What Color Is Your Parachute, among others), to acquire the skills for writing tuned-in cover letters, and to write from a model (again traveling through the stages of the writing process) that ubiquitous "Why-Do-You-Want-To-Be-A-Something?" essay.

Many clients get trapped into a dull, self-serving, expressive autobiography and cannot cope with organizing the relevant materials of their lives. The tutor, using our "Career Goals Essay Module," sees them through. Always the aim is to improve the client's ability to work with his or her writing process and achieve a practical short-term goal.

The writing center is developing a course in stylistics, lasting eight weeks, but otherwise the same as our other mini-courses. Clients who have already demonstrated the skills to write successfully with expressive, referential, or persuasive aims work to develop style--not style as the description of a product or artifact only, but style in its formative stages; style as a teachable set of skills that can be acquired, as is suggested by Milic and Weathers.

In this course, the tutor guides the client through any self-selected aim in writing (expressive, referential, and so forth) towards an understanding of how style might be achieved for each aim and how conscious choices can be made in revising and editing a piece. Among these choices are (1) the appropriate pronounal voice to use for the aim of the work at hand; (2) the appropriate use of language with respect to diction, imagery, sentence structure and sentence variety; and (3) the best audience

and kind of audience to target. These areas of choice I derive from the elements of the communication model, on the one hand, of encoder, medium, and decoder. In graphic, the areas of style skills formation might look like this:

Encoder-----> Medium -------> Decoder

Voice -------> Language -----> Audience

We,I,You->diction,imagery-> general,literate
  S/he   sentence variety,   specialized
              structure

I have not included all the elements, only enough to indicate a pattern.

On the other hand, I derive the model from Britton's notion that we begin with our expressive "centers" before we transact, and so we begin our stylistics course by establishing varieties in strategies of voice before moving on to considerations of linguistic features and audience (thus the directional arrows). You can see, I'm sure, what other elements might apply in each area. In eight weeks, the client can usually discover his or her weaknesses and acquire new strengths, if not mastery. The course is repeatable. It is always booked solid.

Finally, in this mini-course cluster, we offer tutorials in creative writing. Clients work on special projects in poetry, fiction, or drama. Again, the client is escorted through the process, from prewriting to proofreading, which applies as much to these forms of discourse as to any other. We are still developing guidelines for this need.

Another advanced writing need is to prepare for the professional publishing world of deadlines and editing, to encounter a professional writing task that reflects and prepares a writer/client for the pressures and demands of the professional publishing world. An advanced undergraduate writer (selected and interviewed by the advanced writing specialist) can take, therefore, a special projects course for an entire semester to edit, produce, and distribute Wordrafts, the Douglass/Cook Writing Center writing process journal. The client who undertakes the responsibility and the staff who work for him/her learn about editing, deadlines, managing, and dealing with the difficulties and processes of writing in a real organization for a real audience. The journal serves other needs, as outlined in our writing center handbook, but the editor-in-chief and department editors work with the process both in the material they select for publication and in getting the issue produced. Clients who have been editors on Wordrafts are now editing journals of law and writing in the

professional world.

Graduate students have needs, too. The writing center works to coordinate instruction with graduate students in specific graduate schools. Writers at this level often need to be educated to the value of the writing process and its applications as much as green undergraduates, and the hope is to develop graduate programs across the curriculum. The clients are self-selecting, and we tutor papers they are writing for their courses in cooperation with the individual departmental guidelines or format. Such a procedure could be used with any graduate department.

But who handles all this? Such a wide range of tutoring and organizational skills requires particular talents. The advanced writing specialist, therefore, should not only be a teacher who writes, but a writer who teaches. S/he shoud be well-versed in the latest research in the teaching of writing-- trained in teaching the process as well as the product. But in addition, s/he must be a writer who offers the advanced client, by idiosyncratic example and practical professional experience, the credibility of a "real" writer. Such a writer in a writing center-- especially given the intimate tutorial environment--helps to satisfy the need for the age-old relationship of master to apprentice. The writing center is, perhaps, the appropri- ate place to accommmodate this need in an academic environment. The seminar and lecture hall are not personal enough. But in the tutorial, the master and apprentice can work intimately on the development of writing skills and style. The need for this relationship speaks out to us in the popular literature read avidly by today's young.

And, as the song says, we have only just begun. The wide variety of needs among advanced writers is demonstrated by the variety of courses that are filled each term, and by the percentage of clients whom we serve at the advanced level--I'm often booked up long before the second semester begins.

And it's not just me. It's the need. Remediation--ugly word--may self-destruct as a college level need on a broad scale as modern research and practice filter down to the secondary level. But the needs of advanced writers will persist and insist upon our attention over time, and a writing center that plans to be a permanent part of the academic process must meet the needs of the whole community of writers it serves and the center should plan for it. That is the way (if the clientele at our center is any indication) in which part of the future for writing centers in higher education lies.

Robert Blake Truscott
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