

# WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Vol. II, No. 1 (Sept., 1977)

With the beginning of the new semester, we also start Vol. II of THE WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER. I hope that your summer has been pleasant and productive and that you will soon be sending us reports of what is happening in your lab.

Please send your contributions to be included in future newsletters, your dollar or two donation to the mailing costs -if you have not already done so (with checks made payable to me), and requests to join our group to:

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## A LAB-CLASSROOM FOR PART-TIME STUDENTS

Two instructors at the Ft. Knox Center of the University of Kentucky, Ruth Redel and Michael Coyle, have devised a program to incorporate the pluses of the writing lab into a remedial composition course which meets approximately 10 hours a week (four evenings). The students are primarily military personnel with full-time jobs; the program at Ft. Knox is primarily evening courses for part-time students. The instructors meet constantly with the students on an individual basis to encourage revision and correct usage; the students work on papers, reading and grammar exercises, and on responses to audio-visual programs. Each student is thus met at the point of his own problems several times a week,

in addition to joining with the class to discuss methods and to study models presented by the instructors. The number of hours spent together facilitate this approach.

Dr. Ruth Falk Redel  
Ft. Knox Center,  
Univ. of Kentucky

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## INTERDISCIPLINARY WRITING AT RICHMOND

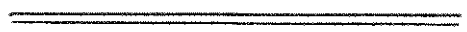
This year the University of Richmond, Virginia will be considering a proposal designed to encourage widespread faculty and student involvement in an interdisciplinary writing center designed to help upper classmen who have already received basic instruction in composition during the first year of freshman English. To start the center, a member of the English department will be released half time from teaching (Richmond is a teaching university where the usual load is 12 hours) as director for the first three years. However, the director will choose three other faculty members who will be released one-fourth of their teaching time (3 hours) for one year each from departments other than English to supervise the center on a rotating basis over the three-year period.

The hope is that such interdisciplinary faculty participation will facilitate the recruitment of an able graduate and undergraduate staff from all departments. After the initial three-year period a supervisor from a different department might even succeed the English department's

director. By encouraging faculty and students from all departments to assist with writing problems encountered in a variety of course situations we aim to make the center a university-wide service facility instead of a remedial program in English.

If you have heard of any similar proposals or have comments, please write me at the English department.

Alan Loxterman  
University of Richmond



A RESPONSE TO OUR QUESTIONNAIRE

Richard Mason (Michigan Technological University) offers some general responses to the questionnaire included in last June's issue of THE WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER (Vol.I, No.3):

While being established, our writing lab has focused on supporting English courses. We now have the capacity to service the whole university and will be extensively soliciting such use. We, ideally, consider all writing problems to be our challenge--from basic remedial to thesis writing. At present, these problems are within the university community, but we hope to establish a series of mini-courses that would service the larger community.

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We are starting a "teaching resources" room, and have some capacity as an A/V resources lab for faculty to prepare their own course materials.

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Our lab is staffed with a half-time director, full-time administrative assistant, one-quarter time instructors, and part-time tutors. All are trained "on the job."

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Our full-time students get course credit, but not for degree. We handle the multitude seeking help by extensive use of A/V machines. Twelve cassette playback, 20 cassette/filmstrip,

and 2 cassette/slide units serviced about 3700 individual visits (about 700 students) during the fall term, 1976. There simply is not enough time available for instructors/tutors to carry the load using one-on-one (or even one-on-five). With a good program, the machine can provide an effective one-on-one situation. Students are comfortable with the machine (alas, some of them prefer the machine), and many make considerable progress with little faculty time expended.

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As several other labs have reported the Educulture series of programs has proven to be effective. Using an adaptation of Educulture's diagnostic test, we provide a computer read-out sheet for each section of Freshman English, with scores for each of the fifteen modules in the "Mini-Course" series. Students are then referred to the lab for selected mini-courses. This process can be handled at the lab by the administrative aid or work/study students, though a qualified person is available if help is needed. For the basic remedial student, and for special problem areas (Sp., vocab., etc.) we have different programs (mostly cassette/filmstrip) and much more one-on-one.

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We hope to have a computer terminal this fall. We intend to use it primarily for administrative control and academic accounting purposes (pen and paper are just not fast enough), but it will also be available to develop writing programs (the latter is something of a luxury, since one could equip up to fifteen or more carrel stations for the cost of a terminal, and they would be available at all times).

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It was crucial to us that the bulk of the lab funds be considered as separate from departmental funds. Once this principle was established, we have had good

support from the university while remaining in the department. An alumni foundation has also provided essential financial support for equipment.

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The records we keep have so far been the messy kind, but we are improving and hope to reduce everything to one 5"x 8" card for referral, master file, and feedback (photocopy). Eventually, this would only be a back-up for the computer.

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#### NEW AND USEFUL READING

Learning Skills Centers: A CCCC Report, a new book available from the NCTE, is described in their catalog as follows:

In the last decade, there has been a great increase at the college level in the number of skills centers which offer individualized language skills instruction. This report gives the results of a survey of skills centers at 75 two-year and four-year colleges. It analyzes responses from faculty members on such topics as how the centers are staffed, methods by which students are admitted, types of materials used, and special problems encountered, and reports students' opinions about the centers. The committee summarizes the results, comments on strengths and weaknesses noted, and makes

several recommendations. "Skills centers," they conclude, "are not panaceas. But they can be arenas where the challenges to our discipline are met honestly and bravely by faculty and students alike." (26p., \$.75)

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#### ANOTHER USEFUL JOURNAL

In the fall of 1976, the National Association of Language Laboratory Directors Journal became The National Association of Learning Laboratory Directors Journal, reflecting the widespread evolution of the foreign language lab into the general purpose learning lab. Since the foreign language labs have been in development for about twenty-five years, they have a wealth of experience that we late-comers can draw on. Such articles in the Journal as "The Evolution of the Language Laboratory" (NALLD Journal, Winter, 1977) are very informative. The Journal lists significant articles in other journals, gives hardware sources (e.g., "The December issue of Training contains a very comprehensive listing entitled, '1977 Yellow Pages of Hardware'"), carries equipment advertising, and has a "Materials Review" section. To subscribe (\$6 per year) write to: James Ek, Treasurer NALLD, Language Department, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 49001.

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