

THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E T T E R

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Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in one-to-one teaching of writing

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...FROM THE EDITOR...

A hearty welcome back to everyone as we start a new academic year and a new volume of the newsletter. We begin with Christopher Ervin's first report of the Writing Center Research Project (WCRP). You're encouraged to participate in future surveys and to contribute to the growing repository of writing center materials that WCRP is collecting. (See Chris Ervin's article for more details.)

This issue also offers articles on what workshops can add to your services, what tutors need to consider when working with religious writing, and why adding tutor growth and development can be an important part of your writing lab's assessment procedures. You'll also find a review of one of the recent writing center books to consider adding to your bookshelf.

And a plea to conference coordinators and search committees. The newsletter will gladly include notices of writing center conferences and writing center job announcements, but we need to have them a month in advance.

May all our new tutors, programs, and plans for the coming year work out even better than expected!

Muriel Harris, editor

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The writing centers research project survey results, AY 2000-2001

In fall 2001, the Writing Centers Research Project (WCRP) at the University of Louisville conducted the first survey in an ongoing study that collects data about administrative and operational matters common to most writing centers. The research database created from the survey's findings meets the writing center community's need for a means of generating comparable statistical information about writing centers. Specifically, the survey collects data in five areas: writing center contact information; operations; non-administrative personnel; student usage; and writing center administrators.¹ Based on participants' responses for academic year 2000-2001, a revised survey was written during summer 2002. The data from both surveys lay the foundation for a longitudinal database that will be updated biannually and will prove invaluable as writing center directors make administrative decisions about their programs.

In addition, the longitudinal database will benefit researchers, who will be able to focus their data analysis on, for

example, only writing centers at research universities; or writing centers in a particular state or region; or writing centers employing only peer tutors; or to all writing centers located within English departments. Other ways to configure data for analysis include conducting research on hourly wages for peer tutors; examining the usage records from a single writing center across a number of years; or developing and periodically revising a profile of writing center administrators. In this article, I preview some of the AY

2000-2001 survey's findings by providing several examples of data analysis. However, a comprehensive report is published online at <<http://www.wcrp.louisville.edu>>.

Finally, this article serves as a call for participants for the AY 2001-2002 survey. Although one hundred ninety-four respondents provided data for AY 2000-2001, our goal is to hear from every administrator on the WCRP mailing list, which currently numbers at over 1,000 writing centers. To that end, the WCRP invites *all* writing center directors to visit the WCRP web site (web address provided above) and either complete the survey online, download a printable version and complete it by hand, or request a hard copy through conventional mail. Respondents are asked to submit surveys by Friday, November 1, 2002.

Writing center operations

One of the WCRP's principal goals in conducting this survey is to provide writing center administrators with comparable benchmark data for assessing their programs, planning budgets, requesting funding and resources, hiring and training personnel, and documenting accountability. At the same time, we recognize that this kind of information is highly contextual; thus, respondents were first asked to help identify their centers' local institutional contexts.

Writing center directors from a variety of institutions participated in the survey. Of the 194 respondents, 67 (or 35% of the total) directed writing centers at research universities, 59 (30%)

at 4-year comprehensive universities, 32 (16%) at 2-year post-secondary colleges, and 30 (15%) at 4-year liberal arts colleges. Only six secondary school writing center directors (only 3% of the total) participated, and no directors from elementary schools returned the survey.² Respondents were also asked whether their writing centers were "independent" (137 centers or 71%) or "part of a larger unit" (57 centers or 29%); whether they operated satellite locations (44 centers or 23%); and whether their centers remained open during one or more summer terms (137 centers or 71%).

Finally, respondents were asked to identify the institutional location(s) of their centers (see Table 1 below). Many of the writing centers surveyed (83 centers or 43%) maintained their ties with English departments; 28% or 54 centers were identified as "independent"; and 29% or 56 respondents reported "other" institutional locations not listed among the choices on the survey. These included various academic support services, departments of communications or humanities, libraries, provosts, and academic deans. Moreover, 18% (or 35 respondents) reported multiple institutional locations. For example, the English department at the University of Louisville provides graduate students for the University Writing Center's consultant staff, but the center receives its operational budget jointly from the Provost and the College of Arts and Sciences.

Non-administrative personnel

Because many of the decisions directors make about their writing centers

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Manuscripts: Recommended length for articles is 10-15 double-spaced typed pages, 3-5 pages for reviews, and 4 pages for the Tutors' Column, though longer and shorter manuscripts are invited. If possible, please send as attached files or as cut-and-paste in an e-mail to mjturley@purdue.edu. Otherwise, send a 3 and 1/2 in. disk with the file, along with the paper copy. Please enclose a self-addressed envelope with return postage not pasted to the envelope. The deadline for announcements is 45 days prior to the month of issue (e.g. August 15 for October issue).

Table 1. Institutional Location(s) of Writing Centers

| Location | % of Respondents | # of Respondents |
|------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| English Department | 43.01% | 83 |
| Other | 29.02% | 56 |
| Independent | 27.98% | 54 |
| Learning Skills Center | 12.95% | 25 |
| Student Services | 4.15% | 8 |
| Rhet/Comp Department | 3.11% | 6 |

directly involve staffing, the third section of the survey gathered information about non-administrative personnel. The survey's findings show that the average number of consultants per center for AY 2000-2001 was 16. The highest was 100, and the lowest was 1. Respondents also reported that 79% or 153 centers employed undergraduate writing consultants (peer tutors); almost half (43.5% or 84 centers) employed graduate student consultants; almost a third (28.5% or 55 centers) employed faculty consultants; and a quarter (24.35% or 47 centers) employed professional staff. Respondents who chose the "other" category for this item were asked to identify these "other" consultants. This group included "members of the community," journalists, free-lance writers, high school teachers, and "retirees."

Finally, respondents identified tutor/consultant compensation. Overwhelmingly, they indicated that consultants were paid by the hour (see Table 2).

When hourly rates were correlated with consultants' employment/educational status, we found that peer tutors received the lowest average pay rate at \$6.40 per hour. At \$17.94 per hour, faculty consultants received the highest average pay rate, and graduate students (\$12.22 per hour) and professional staff (\$17.94 per hour) fell in the middle.

Writing center administrators

The final section of the survey has much to offer those interested in research on writing center administrators. First, the survey results show that as of spring 2001, a large number of directors had held their positions for five years or more, and very few reported having held positions for less than one year (see Table 3).

In addition, the survey asked for the highest degree held by the director, the director's tenure status, and the percentage of the director's annual appointment in the writing center. Con-

sistently, directors reported holding advanced degrees, with most either at the master's (45.36% or 88 directors) or doctoral (52.06% or 101 directors) levels. One director held the specialist's and three held the bachelor's as their highest degree. At the same time, the tenure status of directors varied widely. Forty-two percent or 81 directors reported either tenure-track or tenured faculty positions, and 58% or 112 directors reported holding non-tenurable faculty or staff positions. Table 4 details these findings.

Finally, respondents were asked how much of the director's annual appointment was in the writing center. Analysis of this item proved quite challenging—and quantification of the data proved impossible—because respondents used various methods of determining administrative workloads. For instance, several directors reported

their annual appointments as "full time." However, many of these "full time" directors' responsibilities included regular or sporadic classroom teaching or other administrative responsibilities such as directing other writing programs. For instance, one director described herself as a "full time writing center director [who] teaches at least one class per semester (by choice)," which left unclear whether she received additional compensation for teaching. Another "full time" director clearly addressed this issue, stating that she was "full time, but I teach Methods of Teaching English, Usage and Composition for Graduate Students, Advanced Grammar, Advanced Composition, and American Indian Literature, for which I am not compensated." Although this data is not quantifiable, writing center directors' narrative statements about working conditions serve as an example of how

Table 2. Compensation for Writing Consultants

| Compensation | % of Respondents | # of Respondents |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Per Hour Wage | 82.29% | 158 |
| Stipend | 22.92% | 44 |
| Course Credit | 18.75% | 36 |
| Released Time | 11.46% | 22 |
| Other | 11.46% | 22 |
| Tuition Waiver | 10.42% | 20 |

Table 3. Number of Years Directors Have Held Position

| Number of Years | % of Respondents | # of Respondents |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Less Than One Year | 12.37% | 24 |
| One to Five Years | 41.24% | 80 |
| Five to Ten Years | 25.26% | 49 |
| More Than Ten Years | 21.13% | 41 |

Table 4. Classification/Rank and Tenure Status of Writing Center Directors

| Classification/Rank | % of Respondents | # of Respondents |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Tenured Faculty | 29.02% | 56 |
| Tenure Track Faculty (Untenured) | 12.95% | 25 |
| Non-Tenurable or Full Time Faculty | 21.24% | 41 |
| Part-Time Faculty | 3.11% | 6 |
| Non-Faculty or Professional Staff | 32.64% | 63 |
| Graduate Assistant | 1.04% | 2 |
| Tenured or Tenure-Track Faculty | 41.97% | 81 |
| Non-Tenurable Faculty or Staff | 58.03% | 112 |

the WCRP database can be a rich source for researchers, even those who repudiate “bean counting.”

Conclusion

I hope that by previewing the myriad possibilities of this database, I have encouraged greater participation in an ongoing project that will facilitate positive change in writing center theory and practice. In concluding this discussion, I offer a few suggestions for directors who either experienced difficulties completing the survey last year or did not complete the survey at all. First, respondents might find it useful to print a copy of the survey from the web (or download a printable copy) and complete it by hand before entering data into the online form. Because section four of the survey asks for the writing center’s usage data, gathering this information beforehand would expedite the process. In addition, directors who are unable to provide data for some survey questions should not be discouraged from submitting partially completed surveys and should respond to as many questions as possible. Participating in this manner is important since all new respondents will be

added to the WCRP mailing list and since providing *some* information for a writing center is far better than providing none at all. Furthermore, writing center directors who completed the survey for AY 2000-2001 will be happy to know that many items only need to be checked for accuracy since only items that change from year to year will need to be resubmitted with each update.

In the coming years many writing center directors will be using WCRP benchmark information for various administrative purposes. In order to meet this demand, we hope that all directors will complete a survey for AY 2001-2002. In fact, one of the purposes of conducting this survey longitudinally is to encourage consistent record keeping. Writing center administrators who keep records responsibly discover that they can be useful rhetorical tools—that quantitative data can be empowering and can result in substantial positive change for writing centers, writing consultants, administration, and most importantly, for clients. In the end, we hope that our work on this survey and database helps writing centers serve

the mission that most of us share: to make better writers.

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Notes

¹ Because of several difficulties with student usage data for AY 2000-2001, I include only selected results on operations, non-administrative personnel, and writing center administrators. The survey for AY 2001-2002 has been revised based in part on the problems presented by the student usage section of the AY 2000-2001 survey.

² Not all respondents provided information for every survey item; thus, percentages are calculated based on the total number of respondents for each item. Only a few survey items received such low response rates that the results were considered invalid. Most items received 190 – 194 responses out of 194 total possible respondents.

ASSISTANT WRITING CENTER DIRECTOR The University of Toledo

(Job #1596): The University seeks an Assistant Director for the Writing Center to assist the Director with coordinating training and evaluation of tutors, updating in-house materials, hiring and mentoring tutors, maintaining the online Writing Center, conducting classroom presentations on Writing Center services and other activities that would enhance the operation and effectiveness of the Writing Center and the programs associated with it (e.g. WAC, faculty workshops, community grants). Opportunities to develop research agenda in an established, dynamic, collaborative writing center housed in a new facility (see <<http://writingcenter.utoledo.edu>>).

Minimum qualifications include an M.A. in Rhetoric/Composition or relevant fields, a Ph.D. is preferred; technical experience with an OWL; knowledge of current writing

center/writing theory; and experience in a writing center or similar learning environment. This is a professional staff position with possibility of an adjunct faculty appointment; teaching or writing experience a plus.

Review of applications will begin November 15, but the position will remain open until filled. Anticipated start date for this position will be in July or August 2003. Interested candidates should submit a cover letter (include position title and job #), a resume, writing sample, and the names and telephone numbers/e-mails of three professional references to: The University of Toledo, Human Resources Department, Toledo, OH 43606-3390 or Fax 419/530-1490 or E-Mail: acarder2@utnet.utoledo.edu. Please use only one method of application. The University of Toledo is an EE/AAEE Employer.

Beyond the writing lab: Transporting workshops across the curriculum

In her 1998 article, Muriel Harris characterized the Purdue University Writing Lab as a “de facto” WAC writing center—a place where writing assistance is offered to students and instructors throughout the university, though operating in an institution with no formal WAC program. Writers such as Susan McLeod recognize that a successful WAC program needs to begin as a “bottom-up phenomenon” in which faculty mutually recognize and encourage each other’s efforts to develop their students’ writing skills (6). Toby Fulwiler and Art Young also note that most Writing across the Curriculum programs tend to be “teacher-centered, premised on the belief that permanent faculty are the route to stable institutional change” (3). At Purdue, however, a functioning WAC program has yet to be implemented, faculty from other disciplines are often hesitant (for various reasons) to assume writing instruction in their own classrooms, and, with over 39,000 students enrolled at Purdue, students’ demands for Writing Lab help far exceed the number of tutorials we can possibly offer. This complex nexus of desires, demands, and frustrations has inspired our Writing Lab staff to consider creative ways to help students build their writing skills and empower faculty to teach writing in their own courses, resulting in a significant expansion of our Writing Lab’s workshop program and the development of a series of interactive PowerPoint presentations. These multimedia workshops have also constituted a major addition to the instructional resources available on our OWL, Purdue’s Online Writing Lab. (I invite you to view these materials at <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/pp/index.html>>.)

When I joined the Purdue Writing Lab as a graduate instructor in 1998, the Lab’s Traveling Tutorial program

was already in motion. At the beginning of each school year, graduate tutors are invited to volunteer a list of writing topics they would be comfortable presenting to classes in short collaborative workshops. This list, comprised of topics ranging from invention and organization to punctuation and documentation styles, is distributed to Purdue faculty and graduate staff, who are then encouraged to invite Writing Lab graduate tutors to their classes as guest presenters on these topics.

These sessions aided in demystifying student misconceptions about the Writing Lab and increased student use of our services. After my workshops on “Research and the Internet” and “Sentence Clarity and Combining,” students would ask for more information about the Writing Lab, tutorials, and OWL, even asking if they could request me for a tutoring session. The workshops were more than learning opportunities—they were also public relations sessions. In a sense, I became an ambassador for the Writing Lab, representing our services and building alliances with students and teachers.

As I was quickly inundated with requests for my Traveling Tutorial topics, I decided to convert my teaching materials into Microsoft PowerPoint programs. Though PowerPoint is generally used as a static “presentation” tool for slide shows, the software proved conducive to these types of workshops for a number of reasons. PowerPoint provided me with a method by which I could easily maintain my notes, as well as adjust or revise them according to the needs of each class I visited. The animation functions also allowed for interactivity. I created several slides that featured discussion prompts; I could press the mouse during or after our discussion to

reveal possible responses or additional information. More importantly, it provided a visual medium by which I could supplement my oral commentary, as well as facilitate the needs of visual learners.

During the Internet workshops, I noticed instructors would often sit in the back of the room and scribble notes throughout class period. Some of these instructors were new graduate teaching assistants in the English department who were happy to receive any ideas about teaching Internet research methods to their students. Many others had taught composition for a number of years; they needed the workshop because the Internet was still quite foreign to them and felt they needed to play catch-up with their increasingly web-savvy students. Still others who requested my workshop topics were professors outside of the English department who needed assistance in addressing the researching skills of their students. As a result, the workshops became a modeling activity by which I trained teachers as I workshopped with the students—in essence, a tutorial in teaching methods.

The workshops often resulted in an exchange of writing information that became as important for instructors as it was for their students. Professors would often ask me questions, both during and after the workshops, about Internet research, punctuation, sentence structure, documentation styles—questions they did not know the answers to themselves. Through the workshops, I realized that in my small way I was literally teaching writing across the curriculum—helping students while providing faculty with training in writing instruction.

Through a sizable grant from the Multimedia Instructional Development

Center at Purdue, Writing Lab staff members developed CD-ROMs containing PowerPoint programs about writing skills. Graduate tutors could utilize the PowerPoints to facilitate workshops for classes. Instructors—both within and beyond the English department—could also use them to facilitate writing discussions in their own courses. The grant project became a way to provide instructors across the disciplines with tools that could be utilized for writing instruction. The grant also enabled us to purchase necessary computer equipment, including CD-burners, laptops, and a computer projector, for the development and implementation of this project. Our goal was twofold: 1) to create student-centered instructional resources that address students' common writing and research questions and facilitate students' writing development through interactive discussion prompts and activities; and 2) to shape this material in such a way that it would empower instructors from any discipline to operate these workshops on their own. We did not want the PowerPoints to become static presentations, but launching pads for discussion and interaction between students and workshop facilitators, whether they be Writing Lab tutors or professors.

In addition to the slides that students see in the "Slide Show" mode, I also developed a facilitator guide in the "Speaker Notes" section of the program. The facilitator guide is not a script—and we were careful in our planning stages not to create scripted dialogues that would limit facilitators to lecture-like presentations—but an actual guide by which instructors could tailor their workshops to the specific assignments and needs of their classes. The guide contains four basic sections of information: 1) rationale—an explanation of why the slide is important to the overall workshop; 2) key concept—a main idea that the slide addresses; 3) examples—samples that illustrate the key concept(s) of the slide; and 4) activities—ideas for further in-

teraction between instructor and student, including discussion prompts, web searches, writing activities, etc. Facilitators have the flexibility to select the examples and activities they wish to use with their students and can adjust the length and depth of the presentation according to their needs. The CD-ROMs are now available in the Writing Lab for instructor checkout, along with a binder that contains printed versions of the slides, facilitator guides for each workshop, and sample supplementary handouts from OWL. We do encourage instructors to run through the programs a few times before presenting them in the classroom. With some preparation, instructors are able to tailor the presentation to their teaching strengths and the needs of their students. In cases where faculty or teaching assistants have requested that Writing Lab staff facilitate the same workshop for multiple sections of a course, we have sometimes opted to facilitate the workshop as a modeling procedure for the first section, empowering the instructor to conduct the presentation for additional sections.

The PowerPoint workshops have been successful on a number of fronts across the academy—including a number of benefits I did not originally foresee when we began the project. In the last two years, our staff has conducted PowerPoint workshops for nearly all the major programs at Purdue. Writing Lab staff members have also demonstrated the workshops for the university's accreditation review board and Purdue's annual Teaching, Learning, and Technology Showcase. Projects such as our multimedia workshops contribute to the continued viability of the Writing Lab within the campus community. Not only are students gaining improved writing skills, but the physical product of the workshops themselves contribute to the institutional memory of the benefits inherent within Writing Lab collaboration. As Lil Brannon and Stephen North argue, "For writing centers to continue to be

(en)viable, those who teach and learn there must exploit the uses of the margins. They must claim their institutional space within the academy as well as their connectedness to the periphery, to the areas and spaces outside" (12). By casting our net more broadly, training instructors through teaching students, we are connecting to places in the academy we would otherwise be unable to access.

The Traveling Tutorial program is booming—in fact, we have so many requests from instructors for workshops facilitated by Writing Lab tutors that we can no longer accommodate all the requests we receive. In the fall of 2000, our tutors conducted 74 workshops for over 1,500 students, in addition to working one-to-one in approximately 3,000 tutorials. Focused attention on common writing problems in a workshop can resolve questions for many students, though we encourage those who still have questions or difficulties to come to the Lab for one-to-one assistance. Since the Writing Lab is operating at maximum capacity, the workshops have become a positive alternative to helping students one-to-one in the Writing Lab when we lack the resources to meet with each student individually. To expand the outreach of the Traveling Tutorials, in Spring 2001 we instituted the In-Lab Workshop Series. We offered workshops on a weekly basis, complete with bookmarks and snacks for participants. To promote attendance, we encouraged instructors to offer extra-credit to participating students.

The multimedia format also has performed an important function in documenting and archiving the workshops we offer through the Writing Lab. Every year a number of our graduate student tutors earn their degrees and move on to other academic pursuits—taking with them their collective wisdom and the individual resources they used during their Traveling Tutorial workshops. With funding for the development of PowerPoint workshops, we have devel-

oped a medium by which we can preserve the material of these workshops and pass them on to new tutors.

Graduate tutors no longer have to reinvent materials every time a tutor leaves the Lab, which has saved countless hours and amounts of energy.

The PowerPoints have also proved invaluable in engaging graduate tutors in professionalization activities and training our undergraduate tutoring staff. The project has inspired several tutors to learn how to use PowerPoint, write complex instructional materials for both instructor and student uses, improve their classroom presentation abilities, and develop their own online publications on the Purdue OWL. Writing Lab staff members have also featured the project at conferences for the East Central Writing Center Association and the Northeast Modern Language Association. Two workshops on resumes and cover letters that I co-created with Angela Laflen, the Lab's Business Writing (BW) Coordinator, have served as launching pads for discussions in the undergraduate tutoring course on business writing. Our BW tutors now regularly use these materials in tutorial situations, especially with ESL writers who are unfamiliar with American resume formats and for professional student groups across campus, and have developed their own presentations on the rhetoric of professional correspondence. Undergraduate tutors who are paired with basic writing courses at Purdue have also found the PowerPoints to be valuable teaching tools and excellent preparatory experiences for their future teaching endeavors.

Outside of the Writing Lab, the PowerPoint workshops have dramatically increased in their distribution, with over 150,000 downloads from the Purdue OWL during the last year. Emails from across the United States and Europe have let us know how helpful the PowerPoints have been—not only in programs across university campuses, but in middle schools, high

schools, and non-traditional learning environments.

All of this, of course, begs the question of why workshopping is a valuable activity in which the Writing Lab should engage. On the surface, it could seem that workshopping is antithetical to the primary activity of writing centers—to provide students with one-to-one individualized assistance with writing projects. Indeed, some of my colleagues have told me that the job of the Writing Lab is to tutor, not to teach. However, if the principal pedagogical goal of the writing center is, to invoke the Northian mantra, “to produce better writers, not better writing” (North 69), activities that offer students opportunities to develop their writing skills should be embraced—not discarded simply because they do not fit into a limited conception of what the writing center should and should not be.

By offering workshops across campus, our staff members have broadened the boundaries of our Writing Lab, creating what Alan Devenish calls “movable space[s] by reaching out to faculty and students alike” (4). Though the ultimate goal of the PowerPoint project is to help students improve their writing skills, in many ways our goal, however contradictory, is also to lighten the load of the Traveling Tutorial program. In tutorials we seek to provide students with the skills and confidence they need to succeed with their writing projects and become better writers. While the workshops are really aimed at students, we also hope that instructors—regardless of their discipline—will acquire the skills and confidence they need to teach some of these writing subjects to their own students, thereby providing students with consistent instruction in writing throughout their college careers. As Devenish writes, “[We] can enlist the support of faculty across the curriculum by demonstrating our commitment to the needs of learning and writing in their disciplines. To do so, however, we

need to take the initiative, start the conversation, enact change. I submit that we do this best by venturing from our physical and metaphorical centers” (7). Rather than continuing to inhabit “movable space[s]” across campus, which in some ways spreads our resources too thinly, we hope that these workshop materials will allow faculty to create and inhabit their own unique spaces for teaching writing in their disciplines.

By no means do I suggest that a workshop program such as ours can serve as a substitution for an institutionally implemented WAC program. As Harris writes, “Without a WAC Program, our Writing Lab can achieve certain goals but is limited in its ability to bring about the self-sustaining changes a WAC program seeks” (427). However, our Writing Lab is succeeding in motivating faculty from other disciplines to engage in the early stages of WAC development—talking about writing and thinking about what it means to teach writing skills in their own classrooms. From the periphery, we hope our efforts will contribute to the impetus for sweeping institutional change and growth.

Jennifer Liethen Kunka
Francis Marion University
Florence, SC
(former Asst. Director, Purdue University)

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(cont. on page 16)

Book Review

Nelson, Jane, and Kathy Evertz, eds. *The Politics of Writing Centers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, Heinemann, 2001. \$23.50.

Reviewed by Neal Lerner (Mass. College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences, Boston, MA) and
Paula Gillespie (Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI)

Perhaps the title of this review should be “The Politics of *The Politics of Writing Centers*.” After all, a collection of essays about “the terrain of power in which writing centers are located” (xi), in the words of its editors, Jane Nelson and Kathy Evertz, will by its very nature be political. What such a collection might include and exclude, privilege and penalize, assert and assume will certainly have political implications for the scholarship of writing centers and for the physical places themselves.

Along these lines, the editors tell us that while the authors who make up this collection find ways to celebrate writing center success, they also accuse the writing center community of complicity in sustaining the political conditions of marginalization. They find entry into the twenty-first century to signify the transition to a new stage for writing centers. Having performed the important “inside” work of establishing writing centers as sites for important intellectual work in educational institutions, the writing center community now needs to take the next step of communicating to and connecting with broader political and intellectual audiences (xiii).

If this collection is a map, then, of where writing centers have politically been and where, therefore, they need to move, we have to report that at times we lost our way. The writers’ maps conflicted with other maps, with our lived experience, with available evidence. Still, maps only go so far; at some point, one needs to put the map aside and simply experience the local

terrain. Not surprisingly, this collection allows one to do that, as well. Overall, *The Politics of Writing Centers* is an important addition to our writing center libraries, important not only because it won an International Writing Centers Association scholarship award, and not only because its chapters summarize and re-cast discussions that have taken place on WCenter, in previous literature, and at conferences, but because this collection raises new questions—if not controversy and discussion—about vital writing center issues.

One of these issues is evident in the editors’ preface when they offer a “critique [of] our approach to putting this collection together” (xiii). We are told that they sought contributors first by “approach[ing] writing-center people whom [sic] we thought would be strong, potential contributors to the volume” (xiii), and based upon these submissions, the editors “selected the proposals that best fit our chapter topics and the political thrust of the book” (xiv). But, lo and behold, the editors admit in retrospect that

we had never once—for a book about the politics of writing centers—thought about including chapters on race or ethnicity or class in writing centers. It never once dawned on us, as we met over the course of months of talking about this project, to consider the racial and economic politics of our own choice of topics and contributors. (xiv)

While this admission comes across as honest and fresh—and a lesson in

how easy it is for us to be limited by a narrow political gaze—the editors’ solution was to refer in the preface to a conference presentation they gave on the issue and to offer a list of questions for readers to consider. Next, they put the onus on the National Writing Centers Association (or NWCA, now IWCA), who the editors think should discontinue “prize money for winners of the NWCA scholarship awards” and instead “[use] funds to assist tutors or directors from community colleges to travel to and present at NWCA meetings” (xv). The editors also urge writing center publications to work harder to feature the voices of those too-often silenced in discussions of writing center issues.

As the current president of the IWCA (Paula) and the past treasurer (Neal), we applaud the editors’ goal to increase the diversity of our field, but have a few problems with their accuracy and contribution. First, a point of correction: The IWCA has never offered prize money to the annual scholarship winners (best article and book on writing center topics) though winners do get wall plaques. The editors are likely thinking of the IWCA Research Grant Awards, a competitive process open to all of those who work in writing centers, whatever their location. Second, we would surely like to have seen their omissions addressed in this book itself, at the very least in a chapter that synthesizes the collection and focuses on the absence of authors of color and other under-represented groups. In a book that took nearly four years from original call for proposals to final printing, finding a way to

present contributions from those under-represented voices seems an obvious task.

So far, we have primarily addressed what is *not* in this book rather than what is. Readers will find familiar territory in this collection, including the politics of location, tutor/student roles and relationships, accreditation, professionalization, intellectual work and tenure, and, of course, what we call ourselves. At times the contribution is largely a narration of making one's way through the treacherous path of institutional politics, such as Pat McQueeney's account of the creation of writing tutoring at the University of Kansas, and Pamela Childers and James Upton's excellent offering of the challenges of creating and sustaining high school writing centers. Others take more of a research-based approach, such as Jane Cogie's account of Janelle, an undergraduate, and Ken, her peer tutor. Cogie offers a fine example of a close reading of tutorial interaction, demonstrating how our notions of directive and non-directive tutoring are complicated when examining actual practice. More research, in the form of surveying, comes from Eric Hobson and Kelly Lowe, whose subject is the IWCA and whose questions concern the identity and role of this organization in the eyes of its past presidents, members, and non-members. While we would like to have known the response rate to Hobson and Lowe's survey, we found ourselves reading a familiar account of the stops, starts, and growth of a professional organization with which we have long been involved. While we don't necessarily share the dire warnings these writers offer ("If the NWCA doesn't politicize itself, it will be politicized by external forces or will implode under the weight of its own atavistic desire to remain forever rooted in the good old days" [119]), we do appreciate the in-

clusion of the professional association among the topics presented. The politics of professionalization, whatever its forms, continues to be a vital issue for our field.

Other than narrative accounts and research reports, the bulk of these chapters operate along familiar lines: largely "thought" pieces drawing from previous literature on the topic or fairly broad descriptive pieces. We include in this group Pete Carino's review of writing center literature vis-à-vis its perceived relationships to writing programs, and we were particularly fond of his conclusion: "The center's relationship to the writing program will remain a challenge constantly refigured and negotiated, and well it should be" (11). Carol Peterson Haviland, Carmen Fye, and Richard Colby, drawing largely from postings to the listserv WCenter, describe the possible physical locations of writing centers and the political implications of each. Finally, Katherine Fischer and Muriel Harris offer a compendium of metaphors used to describe writing centers and writing center work, from the familiar *lab* and *clinic*, to the less familiar *studio* and *writery*. Overall, Fischer and Harris wisely remind us of the politics of metaphor and that "constructing metaphors and then dissecting them to find their limitations is, finally, a useful exercise" (34).

Of the contributions that seem more polemical in nature, we include Linda Shamoan and Deborah Burns' Marxian analysis of writing center work, a thought-provoking master narrative of the university as "Fordist factory" that, if true, makes one wonder how it could be that occasional "products" develop the ability to critique the university itself, as well as get hired to direct its writing centers. As Fischer and Harris point out in their chapter, like most metaphors, Shamoan and Burns' is

most interesting at its point of breaking down. Also in this group, we put Jeanne Simpson and Barry Maid's reminder as to why the IWCA should engage in the business of offering writing center accreditation, a call that has been addressed in part by an agreement between the IWCA and the WPA Consultant-Evaluator program. The IWCA now has two of its members on the WPA consultant board, ready to offer perspectives on writing center issues when the WPA is evaluating an entire writing program. Finally, Margaret Marshall makes a thorough argument as to why and how writing center work—particularly the reports and accounts we amass within our institutions—should be counted as "intellectual" when it comes to promotion and tenure decisions. However, we were disappointed that she did not address other crucial factors, such as the need for time to pursue scholarship, whatever its form.

Overall, then, we are glad to see this book finally come out, and found ourselves challenged by and questioning many of its chapters. It is not the definitive word on the politics of writing centers, by any means. After all, most writing center directors and scholars—and by extension, most tutors, whether peer, graduate, or faculty—are keenly aware of the political nature of our work. Struggles over literacy practices, institutional norms, grading and judgment, faculty rights and responsibilities, and institutional acceptance and adequate funding are all daily realities of our political existence. Readers of this book will be reminded of this reality and, at times, given a fresh perspective on navigating the terrain. If anything, this collection shows us there is much more to be written on these topics and many more voices to be heard from. Shamoan and Burns' closing sentence seems particularly appropriate here: "It is time in writing center scholarship to make the familiar strange" (72).

TUTORS' COLUMN

Sacred spaces: Tutoring religious writing

No one ever knows who or what will walk through the door of a writing center on any given day—a paper on political movements in the Baltic region, a generic book report on *The Bell Jar*, a résumé for tweaking or, on rare occasions, a highly personal paper addressing religious concerns. It is this “unknown factor” which makes tutoring exciting and challenging.

In spite of the tacit agreement that religion has a marginalized, if any, place in many educational settings, tutors should be prepared to read religious discourse. When assignments are opened, some students can be expected to choose religion or spirituality, in a broader sense, as a topic. This selection should be permitted because if prohibited “we will lose [students] if we refuse to listen to their arguments that emerge from strongly held values” (Neuleib 43). Students should write themselves as they see fit and tutors need to be equipped to handle such writings.

With an expanding of academic discourse comes additional responsibilities for tutors. Tutors are not social workers or psychologists, but it is not uncommon for them to be confronted with emotionally charged (highly personal/ confessional/ explicit/ inappropriate) writing. On occasion a student may choose to reflect on her faith and its affect on her life. Religion, like money and politics, can quickly become a tense and volatile topic, a topic which can potentially close down, if not destroy, channels of communication between tutors and students. It is best, although not always possible, to diffuse any potential problems at the

beginning of the tutoring session. When dealing with such sensitive issues, “whether the tutor has had a similar experience or not, it is best to acknowledge rather than ignore the burden of the writer’s task” (Agostinelli, Poch and Santoro 35). Tutors should tackle the paper at hand: Who is the writer’s audience? Does the student’s topic address the assignment? Is the student’s choice of rhetoric the most effective? Although oftentimes more difficult, the revision of religious writing should be seriously addressed and handled by both the tutor and write.

It should also be acknowledged that there is a broad spectrum of religious discourse which can be submitted for composition courses— from unsophisticated, proselytizing rantings to illuminating (intellectually and/or personally) and inquisitive reflections. Tutors should be prepared, in the rare occasions called upon, to respond to all types of religious writings. A tutor, unlike the teacher, does not have the luxury of reflecting on a perhaps highly charged, dogmatic and, in some instances, offensive (sexist, homophobic) essay in the privacy of her office. She must read the paper “cold” and control her initial reactions (body language, facial expressions, exclamations). The tutor is sitting with the student and should strive not to destroy the session before even opening her mouth.

Although students should be free to write on all topics, they should also be willing to listen to the ideas offered by the tutor. Tutors are charged to assist students with finding their own voice

and expressing their own ideas in their writing. Tutors should, in turn, be able to address this writing as critically and objectively as possible. “When a writer decides to use a personal experience or a deep-seated personal value for an academic paper, it is a tutor’s responsibility to help the writer articulate the ideas he has and to provide a fair-minded response, even if it means reaching deep inside ourselves to do so” (Agostinelli, Poch and Santoro 34). Tutoring can be draining work and, in the case of religious discourse, it can be emotionally as well as intellectually draining. The session may stay with a tutor long after the student leaves the building or even submits the paper. Handling sensitive issues can push tutors to re-evaluate their tutoring approaches as well as their own personal beliefs and prejudices. Tutors learn from each session, but those which force them to re-examine their accepted techniques and philosophies may be the most frustrating but, ultimately, the most enriching.

We cannot choose the students who write highly personal and effective religious discourse and, as a result, should be prepared to diffuse potentially volatile situations before they occur. Religion is often considered too personal or too anti-intellectual and, in effect, not worthy of serious consideration in the academic community in spite of the fact that although “the post-modern academy publicly denounces unreflective marginalization of students’ voices, their voices are frequently marginalized in the composition classroom when issues of religion or spirituality arise” (Dively 56). As the debate over religion’s (mis)place-

ment in the classroom continues, tutors need to be prepared to effectively deal with these students' various manifestations of religious discourse. It goes without saying that tutors learn from each session. However, those that force them to examine their accepted techniques and philosophies may be the most frustrating but, ultimately, the most enriching.

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East Central Writing Centers Association

Call For Proposals
March 27-29, 2003
Marietta, Ohio
Keynote speakers: Muriel Harris, Neal Lerner

Proposals are invited for presentations, panels, and workshop proposals that explore the history of their own writing centers, and reflect on how that history has been shaped by both space and practice. Proposals may take a broad swipe at this theme, and explore how localized history shaped and resulted in innovative research and practice, including unique tutoring and administrative styles.

Abstracts (250 words) need to be e-mailed (in word or text format) or postmarked by February 1, 2003. Include a cover page listing the name, institutional affiliation, and contact information of all presenters and indicating the type of presentation (panel, workshops, presentation) and duration of the presentation (20, 45, or 90 minutes). Completed proposals may be sent to Tim Catalano, Director of the Campus Writing Center, 215 Fifth Street, Marietta College, Marietta, OH 45750 <Catalant@marietta.edu>. For more details, please see the conference website at <<http://www.marietta.edu/~mcwrite/eastcentral.html>>. Materials for the Writing Centers Research Project <<http://www.louisville.edu/a-s/writingcenter/wcenters/index.html>>, especially pre-1995 materials such as grant proposals, mission statements, handbooks, reports, and training materials may be donated at the ECWCA conference.

Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

October 25-27, 2002: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in Lawrence, KS

Contact: Michele Eodice (michele@ku.edu) or Cinda Coggins (CCoggins66@aol.com). Conference Web site: <<http://www.writing.ku.edu/ncptw-mwca>>.

February 13-15, 2003: Southeastern Writing Center Association, in Charleston, SC (Joint conference with the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing)

Contact: Deanna Rogers, Writing Resources Center, 220 Fretwell, 9201 University City Blvd., UNC Charlotte, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001. Phone:

(704) 687-4226; fax: (704) 687 6988; e-mail: drogers@email.uncc.edu.

March 27-29, 2003: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Marietta, OH

Contact: Tim Catalano (catalant@marietta.edu), Director of the Campus Writing Center, 215 Fifth Street, Marietta College, Marietta, OH 45750 <Catalant@marietta.edu>. Conference Web site: <<http://www.marietta.edu/~mcwrite/eastcentral.html>>.

October 23-25, 2003: International Writing Centers Conference and National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, in Hershey, PA

Contact: Ben Rafoth, brafoth@iup.edu. Conference Web site: <www.wc.iup.edu/2003conference>.

Expanding writing center assessment: Including tutor learning

Last year, as part of an increased university-wide emphasis on accountability, our writing center was asked to develop a formal, outcomes-based assessment plan. In this article we recount some of the initial phases of designing that plan in the hope that one of its distinctive features—the inclusion of tutors as part of the population served by the writing center—may prove useful for others involved in writing center assessment.

Reviewing the literature

When asked to develop this plan, we had recently received end-of-term self-assessments from our writing consultants, many indicating how much they had learned during their first quarter of tutoring. Because those comments suggested that the writing center was providing a valuable service to its employees as well as its clients, we decided to include this aspect of the writing center's work in our assessment plan. Before attempting to draft that plan, though, we wanted to see how other writing center professionals have incorporated tutors into assessment. As expected, we found many articles involving tutors and assessment, often entailing reflective self-assessments or the observation and analysis of tutoring sessions. But, while there's no shortage of suggestions for evaluating the work of tutors and their impact on their clients, the literature about writing center assessment seldom mentions the other side of the equation—the impact of writing center work on the tutors themselves.

Writing center work as preparation for teaching and other professions

In looking through all this material, we noticed a pattern significant for our

purposes. Because tutors receive extensive work-related instruction (and sometimes get class credit for it), the writing center is recognized as an excellent site for training future teachers of writing and for re-training secondary teachers and college composition instructors (Almasy and England; Clark; Collins; Gadbow; Jacoby and Patten; Neuleib; Rottenberg). Further testimonials to the value of writing center experience in developing teaching skills have come from peer tutors (Anderson, Bommarito, and Seijas; Shull), as well as an empirical study demonstrating that GTAs with writing center tutoring experience were likelier to focus on higher-order concerns, have more empathy for students, and develop different views of the student-teacher relationship than other GTAs (Zelenak, Cockriel, Crump, and Hocks). Further, a pair of *Writing Lab Newsletter* articles describing formal and informal internship programs carried out in a writing center may be taken as evidence of a growing *institutional* awareness of the value of the writing center in preparing classroom teachers (Charles and Davenport; Franklin, Ferlo, Mayo, and Wood). Writing centers—particularly ones formally linked with education courses or offering independent credit-bearing courses—are serving tutors just as clearly as they serve developmental writing students required to attend weekly tutoring sessions or drop-in clients working on papers for political science or biology. Clearly, then, a writing center's role in teacher training ought to be considered in assessment.

However, not all (not even most) of our tutors will become teachers of English or any other academic subject. Although it might be more challenging to document the ways in which it happens, working in the writing center

prepares other students for other kinds of careers as well. This point has already been made quite forcefully by Elizabeth Bell, who describes ways a former tutor, now a personnel director for a national carpet company, uses “contact skills” developed in the writing center in her job every day (11). Aligning this and other accounts from former tutors with the basic tenets of leadership and business, Bell argues that the writing center offers “a unique framework for training competent professionals with very marketable skills, capable of fulfilling the growing leadership needs of our increasingly complex society. It is time,” Bell says, “we made the university, the employment community, and potential staff members aware of this” (10). Bell also notes that the “university superstructure” might be interested in knowing about “the percentage of former tutors employed and the variety of careers they represent” (12). In the fifteen years since Bell's comments were published, we have not seen anyone really follow up on her very sensible suggestion that we report ways writing center tutors benefit from their work.

From mission statement to assessment

Before we could develop a formal, outcomes-based assessment plan, our first step was to create a mission statement (although our writing center has been in operation—and growing steadily—since 1978, it had no formal mission statement). To be consistent with the larger mission of our university, which aims, in part, to meet “the need for an educated citizenry dedicated to lifelong learning and service,” our primary goal needed to link individualized writing consultation to the “larger” benefits that we know it can provide, including lifelong learning.

Thus, our current mission statement reads: “The University Writing Center will help students become more confident, independent writers, thereby enhancing their educational experiences at Wright State and their professional experiences beyond college.”

Just as our university’s mission extends to all of its students, the writing center’s mission extends to *all* Wright State students, not just student *clients* of the center. For this reason, consultant learning is included in the list of outcomes that will be assessed. (Its place in the larger assessment plan and the means by which we will attempt to measure it are indicated in the chart on page 15.)

Consultant learning in the writing center

We already have ample sources of evidence of consultant learning. For example, quarterly evaluations of consultants by their regular clients provide not only information about how those consultants have helped them but also suggestions of what the tutors themselves have learned. Also, we regularly discuss “successes and challenges” in weekly staff meetings, so consultants frequently talk about what they have learned from their tutoring experiences, including the strategies they have devised on that basis. Each winter, consultants “track” a regular client throughout the quarter, reflecting in a journal on that client’s weekly session. At the end of the quarter, they submit a larger “tracking reflection” drawing on those journal entries. In assessing one client’s progress and the tutoring strategies they employed, consultants articulate what worked well (and might be tried with future clients) and what they could improve.

Perhaps our most valuable feedback concerning consultant learning comes from the written reflection they complete after fall quarter, the first quarter of tutoring for many of them. Their responses to two simple prompts (“What

have you learned?” and “What are your goals for next quarter?”) consistently confirm our belief—and now our stated goal—that consultants learn a great deal, and not just about how to be a tutor. Consultants write about increased self-confidence, computer savvy, appreciation of cultural differences, knowledge of grammar and other conventions of writing, and understanding of what effective writing entails. One wrote,

When I say . . . that my own writing is influenced by my work here, I’m speaking beyond the extra grammar rules that may now seep into my papers, beyond the writing methods I’ve seen demonstrated by my clients that may prove useful for myself, (and even beyond the reluctant understanding that not all like to write), — I’ve come to consider writing itself in a new way, with an additional (though unnamable) understanding of what it means.

Another consultant commented, “I am not saying that I even come close to understanding everything about computers, but the writing center has prepared me to face the 21st century with a more confident attitude toward technology.”

Consultants after college

Such feedback made us confident that we could identify different types of consultant learning as part of formal assessment and demonstrate that it is enhancing their educational experiences at Wright State. But to measure our success in achieving this element of our mission, we needed to find out if consultants were applying what they learned beyond college as well. Former consultants often e-mail, visit, or call us with updates. Over the years, we have learned anecdotally about how they applied skills they acquired through writing center work in other academic and professional settings. One former consultant, who worked as a technical writer and development officer after graduating, e-mailed these

observations about his two years in the center: “I learned how to communicate complicated ideas to a diverse group of people. This has proven to be a highly valuable skill both in working at a job and in simply finding a job. I also learned how to think in an organized and efficient way.”

Such unsolicited comments invited systematic inquiry, so we developed a survey to determine what former consultants found most and least valuable about their work here. We crafted the survey to allow anonymous responses, unlike our end-of-year conferences and work-related writings. Although the elapsed time between separation and administration of the survey meant that former consultants might recall specific writing center experiences less readily, this time permitted them to observe the impact of their writing center experience as they pursued graduate degrees and found jobs.

We sent the first surveys in summer 2000 to 35 former consultants who had worked at least three quarters in the writing center. While our sample was small (29 surveys returned), the return rate of over 80% thrilled us. Nearly every respondent provided current addresses and phone numbers for follow-up questioning, with only three returned anonymously. Our numerical data have not been analyzed, but our preliminary look at the breadth of the narrative comments surprised—and pleased—us.

Former consultants’ observations about the Writing Center

Naturally, many students noted improved communication and writing skills. Others commented about current and former administrative staff. Some discussed the physical environment of the writing center: one person longed for the “fish wall,” the underwater mural that graced the writing center’s former space, while another lamented the sometimes-distracting noise level. A couple of respondents who now work in other writing centers as professional tutors or

graduate assistants indicated that their current work benefits from the training they received at WSU. Two respondents even lauded the writing center as a good place to find a spouse.

An observation that echoed throughout many responses was appreciation for the writing center as a community of writers. One former tutor wrote, “I loved working with people on their writing. It was fun to hear their ideas and to see them in progress. It was also a really creative environment to work in. I enjoyed being among people who wrote and acted and did so many things well.” Nearly every survey commented favorably on the diversity of clients’ and peers’ talents. Another wrote, “Since Writing Center employees have high academic standards and are from a wide variety of majors, I found that I had something to learn from everyone. I could bounce ideas off co-workers, ask technical questions, and engage in challenging discussions.”

Another common thread was the atmosphere of the writing center. One writer summed up his experience this way:

Weird as it may seem, the work was the spice of life at the Writing Center. If you wanted to talk about words and writing or be creative, it was definitely the place to be. I also liked the atmosphere—creative, smart, full of word play, often on the edge of taking on a life of its own. Finally, I liked the people who made the reality of the above.

We were not surprised that many consultants remember the writing center as a space of creativity, camaraderie, and community. One respondent, however, did not share this perception. Rather, what s/he liked least about the writing center was “the cliques of employees. I definitely was not in the ‘in’ or ‘cool’ crowd.” This observation led us to consider increasing team-building efforts to ensure that *all* consultants

feel a part of the community.

Skills acquired in the Writing Center

In response to the question “What, specifically, did you learn from Writing Center training and tutoring?” many surveys referred to better communication skills and increased flexibility. Respondents also mentioned learning to identify others’ needs and prioritize accordingly, to adapt problem solving techniques to varied learning situations, and to break out of their comfort zones. Several consultants also welcomed cultural exchange with non-native students.

Former consultants as students

We often claim that our peer consultants make better students. Whether the position attracts more serious students or the job encourages employees to become more studious, several responses support the notion that consultants’ writing center experiences had a positive impact on their academic performance. Consultants cited not only improved writing skills but also increased awareness of their own work: “I became more confident in my academic writing; also, I felt a lot more comfortable about having people read my work and give me suggestions on how to improve it since I understood a lot of the theories behind tutoring. As a result, I didn’t feel attacked or like I was a bad writer just because I asked for help.” Consultants indicated that their collaborative learning skills carried beyond writing center sessions into their own academic work.

We noted how the Writing Center affected attitudes as well. One former consultant noted faculty’s perceptions of consultants: “There was a level of pride in being able to say, ‘I work at the Writing Center.’ I think faculty view the Writing Center tutors as more serious students.” Former consultants also listed benefits from writing center work that speak to the concerns of

many administrators: “More organized thinking and writing; more active in classes/participation; felt I had a better sense of campus community, which is hard for commuters; learned more about writing than I did in many English classes.” This student felt more involved with his/her education, and on the basis of this observation we plan to examine consultants’ retention and graduation rates as part of our assessment.

Former consultants in the “real world” of work

We received similar answers regarding the way writing center work affected former consultants’ professional lives. Two respondents mentioned that their experience had improved their interviewing skills. One observed the parallels between tutoring and interviewing: “This job has made interviewing easier. At the Writing Center, I had to meet ‘strangers’ every day and converse with them. The same happens in an interview. In both situations, I had to be the ‘outgoing’ one.” Several consultants noted that peer tutoring experience was an advantage when applying for jobs and entering graduate programs. Most consultants felt that they did not acquire a discrete set of skills applicable only to tutoring but that they have learned skills transferable to other academic and professional settings. As another former consultant commented, “I could write a book (and I may, some day). The things I picked up at the Writing Center often seem a part of nearly everything I do in my professional work.”

Toward a conclusion

Measuring the impact of writing center work on consultants—both during their time at the university and later—can be a valuable component of an assessment plan that also includes such measures as client success tracking, faculty surveys, committee evaluation, and other standard measures. Not only does this approach provide information

useful in improving our daily operations; such measures as a consultant post-employment survey may well prove to be a viable means of demonstrating some part of the writing center's contribution to the larger mission of the school, including the fostering of "lifelong learning."

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APPENDIX: Assessment Matrix

| | Outcome 1 Improved Student Writing | Outcome 2 Improved Confidence | Outcome 3 Consultant Learning | Outcome 4 Increased Faculty Understanding of Services |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Measure 1 Tracking Student Success | X | | | |
| Measure 2 Committee Evaluation | X | X | X | |
| Measure 3 Regular Client Evaluations | X | X | X | |
| Measure 4 One-time/Walk-in Client Evaluations | X | X | | |
| Measure 5 Consultant Post-Employment Study | X | X | X | |
| Measure 6 Faculty Survey | | | | X |

Beyond the writing lab

(continued from page 7)

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Need a writing prompt?

LeCount, David E. *Nonstandardized Quests: 500+ Writing Prompts That Matter.* Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002. \$15.00. (\$13.50 on Heinemann's Web site: <www.heinemann.com>)

This handy little book might serve several purposes in your writing lab's resource bookcase. It offers over 500 prompts for writing that can be used in both high school and post-secondary writing centers where writers are given practice writing exercises or are in need of a topic to write about. Some prompts will require a bit of research (good for practicing search strategies), some seek opinions, some ask the writer to take an unusual perspective on a common topic, and some call for personal or affective responses.

For some of the prompts that need to be researched, companion Web sites are offered and can be used for practice in how to search the Web. (The Web sites are referenced to the prompt number in the book.) Some of the topics are more appropriate for high school writers, and some can be made more challenging for college students. And, finally, the book might offer a quick bit of help for a teacher who comes in seeking suggestions for what to ask the class to write about.

THE WRITING LAB
N E W S L E T T E R

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