

must rely on their judgment when to turn the classroom from "loosening and baffling" to heuristics and more structured teaching. And in the second place, since the theory is different, the explanation to the students is different, and in my opinion much more readily assimilated. As I pointed out earlier, it is important that students understand why they are being asked what they are being asked to do.

In conclusion, I would like to note that information theory supports the use of liberatory writing pedagogies in the early stages of writing, most especially for beginning writers who tend to arrive at universities with a deeply ingrained belief in two ideas that current composition theory now suggests are very wrong. These are the idea that good writers write a single draft of a paper and never look at it again, and the idea that it is the product — specifically the ideal paper that the instructor has in mind when he or she gives the assignment — not the process that is important.

I would like to leave readers with a thought from James R. Kincaid's book on Tennyson, in which he quotes from George Eliot's *Middlemarch*:

We do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual.... If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. (Kincaid 1)

Kincaid's point is that "when every life becomes tragic and the element of the special case is removed, human existence itself becomes ironic" (2). However tragic, anything repeated enough times must by familiarization become meaningless. Claude Shannon calls this process of familiarization by reiteration "redundancy." The greater the redundancy, says Shannon, the less the information in the message. For Kincaid, the essence of irony is the recognition of ourselves as victims of the trivial, trapped and released into what he calls the "illimitable inane." If we do not want to trap our students in the illimitable inane, or in what Neel calls "anti-writing," I suggest we must begin by taking some of the constraints away and letting beginning writers write.

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WHAT COMPOSITION TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WRITING CENTERS

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My Freshman Composition students filed out of my classroom, tossing their initial writing samples on my desk with relief written on their faces. One student remained motionless in her seat. I had noticed her for the past 45 minutes, recognizing visible signs of writing anxiety: flushed face and several minutes of staring at the paper followed by a brief flurry of writing; long periods of chewing on her pencil and looking out the window; a frequent crumpling and ripping of paper to the accompaniment of sighs and groans. As the room slowly emptied, she rose from her chair, lingering by her seat long enough to ensure we were alone. Then she approached my desk to submit to me a paper with two sentences written on it — her entire output for the period. With a look that mingled embarrassment and fear, Sondra apologized for her work, stating that she had problems writing under pressure. During our ensuing conversation, she also confessed that she had always had problems "putting ideas down on paper," although working with numbers came easily to her. She had already gone through a summer course in Developmental English, which she had passed. While she could "spot errors in sentences," her problems with organizing "all the stuff that dances around in my brain" hampered her writing under any circumstances and paralyzed her under the pressure of time constraints.

Clearly, here was a student who would require some extra attention, and I wasn't sure how much I could offer her. As a newly assigned Teaching Assistant re-entering a graduate program after a substantial hiatus from teaching, I didn't have much time to spare in an already overloaded schedule. After Sondra left, I remembered the flyer I had recently received from the university's writing center. The center identified itself briefly as a recently established facility operating under the supervision of the English department and staffed by graduate teaching assistants. As a fledgling center, its statement of purpose was brief. It offered tutorial help with students experiencing writing difficulties and suggested to composition teachers that they refer any students that might benefit from such help. Hastily digging through an overflowing briefcase to find it, I reread its brief message, which seemed to hold out hope for Sondra and relief for me. After the next class I informed Sondra of the writing center's availability for tutorial help and suggested she use it as a weekly lab to work on the writing problem we had discussed. She seemed relieved to be offered a way to recover from failure and readily agreed to do so.

My hasty introduction of the writing center to Sondra was, admittedly, a less than ideal presentation. At that point I had no notion of what services a center might provide, relying on faith that a fellow teaching assistant might just manage to provide some combination of warmth, interest, and tutorial dialogue that would help dispel the anxiety she felt. I also hoped that her tutor would somehow help her to organize her thoughts enough to produce the seven essays required by the course. This hope, I realized, might not be realistic within the space of one semester, and I remained somewhat skeptical about what was possible to accomplish. I was relieved, however, to at least share the responsibility for her writing development with another professional.

Luckily, Sondra was a student who was ready to commit to a course of action and follow through on her own. She was assigned to a talented tutor who met with her regularly throughout the semester. And luckily for me, her significant progress throughout the semester awakened me to a recognition of the center's potential for assisting the writer as well as the writing. Sondra not only showed great improvement in organizing and connecting ideas, but her confidence and verbal ability also seemed to undergo a change. Previously reluctant to say much in class, she increasingly participated in discussions over the course of the semester.

Her progress so intrigued me that I decided to find out more about my university's writing center and what takes place there. Further, I decided to visit other writing centers in the area to interview directors about their programs, especially about their relationship to teaching staff. Recognizing the fuzziness of my own understanding of the center's functions, it seemed worthwhile to learn more about a service that had demonstrated so clearly its power to effect change. I also read a number of articles from the two major publications in the field — *The Writing Center Journal* and *The Writing Lab Newsletter*. I learned both from visits and journals that I was not the only composition teacher with fuzzy notions about writing centers.

In fact, the frustration felt by writing center staffs over the lack of understanding by English faculty about what does and can happen in a writing center seems to be a recurrent theme. Stephen North, Director of SUNY's writing center and a prominent voice in the field, finds it especially frustrating that English department faculties have a false sense of knowing what writing centers are about. In his seminal article "The Idea of a Writing Center" he states that other groups in the university — non-English faculty, students, and administrators — are more easily educated about centers because they have no preconceived notions. But it is particularly difficult to get an accurate message through to a department that has an "investment in their ignorance" (433).

The notion of English departments often being stumbling blocks to writing center development — whether unwittingly or not — seemed an intriguing question to present, along with a number of others, to directors whose centers I decided to visit. My choice of centers was based on my interest in seeing a sampling of operations in various stages of development. One center had been in operation for over 20 years, two for about 10 years, and two for only a few years. Two were part of four-year universities, while three were part of community colleges, a population I was interested in working with upon completion of my degree. The focus of the investigation would revolve around information composition teachers should have in the following areas: a history of the development of college writing centers, the different concepts of their role in a college community, their staffing, the politics of their structural organization and funding, the array of services they provide, and the direction of their development.

HISTORY

To begin with, composition teachers need to know something about the genesis and history of writing centers. In the past fifteen

years colleges throughout the country have responded to the challenge of working with large numbers of underprepared freshman writers by instituting special centers on campus — often called writing labs — where individualized help was offered. Usually such centers sprang from English departments and often were initially staffed by volunteers; faculty wives with English degrees typically provided a strong core. I interviewed one director who stated that her operation began with "a couple of good volunteers armed with some yellow pads and pencils." It now services over 3,300 students annually. Other colleges have similarly witnessed explosive growth during the past decade under a variety of staffing and funding arrangements (North 445).

Yet in the process of growth and expansion writing centers have suffered from an identity crisis. Many of them were established in response to a perceived need for remedial efforts with freshman writers on the part of English Departments and college administrators concerned with retaining borderline students. They were seen by some colleges, particularly those which established open admissions policies in the 70s, as part of an approach to address alarmingly high attrition rates. However, there were some composition theorists who viewed their growth with a rather jaundiced eye. Maxine Hairston, for example, in "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing" attacked what she called "ad hoc" remedies to the writing "crisis":

Following the pattern that Kuhn describes in his book, our first response to crisis has been to improvise ad hoc measures to try to patch the cracks and keep the system running. Among the first responses were the writing labs that sprang up about ten years ago to give first aid to students who seemed unable to function within the tradition paradigm. Those labs are still with us, but they're still only giving first aid and treating symptoms. They have not solved the problem. (20)

Hairston's assumption here is that the concept of a writing center serves to reinforce the old pedagogy of focusing on isolated components of writing rather than on the process of creating meaning. This is not, however, how most writing center directors and personnel conceive of their function. They generally view the work they do in a broader context, closer to North's concept.

CONCEPT

In "The Idea of a Writing Center" North takes issue with Hairston's notion and is particularly troubled that as an eminent composition theorist, her lack of conceptual understanding has influenced many other professionals. He laments her mistaken assumption that the "skill and drill" model represents all centers equally well. He also cites her failure to assign responsibility for such a narrow concept. According to North, responsibility lies squarely at the doors of teachers of composition and English Departments in general:

Consider, as evidence, the pattern of writing center origins as revealed in back issues of the *Writing Lab Newsletter*: the castoff, windowless classroom (or in some cases literally, closet), the battered desks, the old textbooks, a phone (maybe), no budget, and almost inevitably, a director with limited status — an untenured or non-tenure track faculty member, a teaching assistant, an undergraduate, a paraprofessional, etc. Now who do you suppose has determined what is to happen in that center? Not the director, surely; not the staff, if there is one. The mandate is clearly from the sponsoring body, usually an English Department. (437)

Composition teachers, then, need to be aware that even though writing centers have developed historically from a perceived need for writing remediation on the part of English Department or college administration, their own concept of themselves generally encompasses a far broader view of their *raison d'être*. They would prefer to align themselves with the "winds of change" that Hairston talks about — the newer paradigm that focuses on the total writing process: strategies for invention and discovery, considerations of audience, multiple drafting and revision, and a consideration of writing as a way of learning (24). Writing centers want to be places which implement these newer ideas about writing, not simply places where faculty sends the least successful students for help with the mechanics that they themselves have no time to teach. Viewing the center solely in such terms narrowly defines the center's function and limits its broader potential.

Teachers who conceive of writing center domain as addressing mainly problems in grammar, syntax, and punctuation can undermine the center even though they may profess to support it. This can happen when the center is introduced to the student as an implicit threat: "If you continue to get poor grades on your paper, I'll have to send you to the Writing Center." Teachers send a damaging message when they conceive of and use the center as a last resort, engendering negative student attitudes in those they refer and discouraging its use by students who do not wish to identify themselves as remedial.

My own referral of Sondra was not far removed from this limited concept, though I was relatively unburdened with preconceived notions that the center ought to be drilling mechanics to improve papers. What I wanted the center to fix was Sondra's anxiety about writing and her inability to generate and organize ideas. My interpretation of the center's offer of help via its brief flyer was based on the uninformed hope that something positive would happen there. I vaguely understood that the tutoring process would involve conversational interaction that, if successful, might allay Sondra's anxiety and help her express those thoughts she found so difficult to write down. I hoped that its tutors would be sensitive enough to view Sondra's problems holistically rather than as an exercise in skill improvement.

Sondra did find such a tutor in the center who provided the right combination of counseling and teaching. This role of the tutor, in fact, is one which Christina Murphy, Director of Texas Christian University's writing center, discusses in her article, "Freud in the Writing Center: the Psychoanalytics of Tutoring Well." For Murphy, "the tutor's role often is primarily supportive and affective, secondarily instructional, and always directed to each student as an individual in a unique, one-to-one interpersonal relationship" (13). She argues that like psychotherapy, the tutoring process begins in a basic desire to help another person by using language to reshape consciousness. As in therapy, the clients — students who come the center — are often anxious and vulnerable about opening themselves up to someone they perceive as potentially evaluative and disapproving. In both situations trust and acceptance are essential ingredients if the partnership is to successfully explore the making of meaning.

Murphy's viewpoint is consistent with William Perry's research on the connection between cognitive and psychosocial development in Harvard college students. Perry's seminal article, "Cognitive and Ethical Growth: The Making of Meaning," discusses the interpretive frameworks through which students give meaning to their education. These frameworks are formed in an orderly developmental sequence and shape the way students perceive the world around them and reflect that perception in their writing. Perry outlines four major stages of development: dualism, multiplicity, relativism, and commitment in relativism. Dualistic thinking is characterized by viewing knowledge as absolute and possessed by

"Authorities Who Have The Answers." Belief systems are not chosen; rather, they are unanalyzed backdrops to the student's experience. Multiplicity is the stage in which students view most knowledge as absolute, but see that in some fields or on some questions we don't have all the answers yet. There is a hedging admission of gray areas and increasing realization that authorities may not be infallible. As students move into the stage of relativism, they begin to discern patterns in the way authorities approach gray areas of knowledge. They may recognize such strategies as analysis of evidence or comparison of interpretations. Authorities begin to be interpreted as fellow seekers of understanding, different primarily in that they are experienced at making sense of the profusion of knowledge in their field. The final stage of commitment is characterized by a willingness to make choices and assume responsibility for them while fully recognizing the fallibility of those choices.

According to Perry, the ability of students to make meaning of experience — and to express that meaning in their writing — depends on which of the stages of development they are in. He suggests that students' growth is enhanced when the college environment encourages empathetic discussion and reflection of ideas, information, and choices and de-emphasizes rote learning, lecture teaching, and "objective" testing. Creating "disequilibrium" in students, thus stretching them to consider ideas in a position beyond their current level of operations, is a necessary part of the process of growth. Such disequilibrium about fundamental assumptions requires, however, the counterbalancing influence of support and concern for the anxiety created by the abandonment of old positions. Perry would contend, then, as does Murphy, that cognitive development is connected with psychological and social development. The interpersonal relationships optimally developed in a tutoring environment can foster instructional results in the sense that they provide an appropriate environment for the emotional risk-taking that is necessary to move from one stage to the next. Classroom teachers, of course, can also create such environments; the tutorial setting simply offers one kind of optimal opportunity to provide the focused dialogue necessary for movement from one stage to the next.

How receptive are composition instructors to thinking about affective as well as cognitive factors in teaching writing? It would seem from some of the research that this model of the tutoring relationship is one which is not broadly shared by faculty. Malcolm Hayward of Indiana University of Pennsylvania formally surveyed his faculty's perceptions of the center and their reasons for referring students. He found that for faculty members the two most important reasons were problems with grammar and punctuation (10). His formal survey supports what seems to be consistently reported informally: that despite increased acceptance of writing centers as campus fixtures in the past decade and despite repeated communication efforts by directors, English faculty continue to narrowly define the center and to refer students accordingly. In interviewing area directors, I found that those whose centers had been established longer (over 10 years) reported greater change in faculty attitudes; yet they and other directors writing in the literature indicate that such attitudes persist to some degree at virtually all institutions.

The directors I interviewed were universal in their desire to promote a broader concept of writing centers, one that encompasses current perspectives on teaching writing. Their consensus seemed to be that if the centers are to align themselves with the goal of producing stronger, more independent writers rather than simply improve papers, they need to address writing issues beyond mechanics. They also need to establish themselves as places where all students can benefit from talking about their writing in a non-judgmental environment encouraging dialogue. Directors, therefore, need a strong core of faculty who conceptualize the center in

the same way and communicate this concept to students in their class discussions and referrals. Faculty support and conceptual alignment is particularly crucial for directors of newly established centers, since initially, at least, faculty referrals account for the majority of students who visit the center.

Wendy Bishop, former director of the writing center at the University of Alaska suggests in her article "Bringing Writers to the Center" a number of ways in which instructors can communicate writing center information to students to help improve their attitudes towards referral. She offers several guidelines:

1. Instructors should have a clear idea of the benefits of center services and should explain these benefits a number of times throughout the semester.
2. Instructors should accompany their students on a field trip to the center to decrease students' anxiety about the first visit. Students all too quickly learn not to value the center if their instructors are never seen in the vicinity of the center and never seem to talk to the writing center staff.
3. Instructors should consider offering some form of reasonable class credit or encouragement to overcome students' natural impulse to claim they don't have time (i.e. reason) to visit the center.
4. Instructors could experiment with first-visit alternatives: inviting tutors into their classes, offering to have groups of students visit the center together, etc.
5. When possible, instructors should encourage publication of student responses to a center visit or allow for class sharing of visit experiences to alleviate fears and to encourage future visits. (39)

All of the directors I interviewed agreed that the way in which students were informed about or referred to the center was extremely important in shaping their receptivity towards tutoring and their feelings about themselves as recipients of tutoring. Two of the directors reported that a majority of the students who came to the center were self-referred, a change from the earlier years of their center's operation. They judged the success of their programs, in fact, largely by the number of self-referrals, citing word of mouth endorsement as one of their most successful recruitment tools.

Some of the methods they suggested as useful in communicating directly with students included sending tutors, upon invitation, to classes to talk about the center's services; putting bookmarks with a brief description of the center and its hours in all Freshman Composition texts in the bookstore; and offering free mini-workshops to all students, covering such topics as Writing Resumes, Preparing a Bibliography, and How to Succeed in Exams. One center used a video presentation of a sample tutoring session to demonstrate to classroom centers an idea of the process. North's article also attests to the effectiveness of doing ten-minute live tutorials as class presentations. He reports that the instructors often learn as much about the center from these sessions as the students (441).

STAFFING

Besides being aware of how they can cooperate more effectively in informing and referring students, another aspect of writing centers that composition teachers need to know about is staffing. Instructor attitudes towards tutors are an important element in staff

morale and effectiveness. One survey of instructors at Cleveland State University found that a majority of instructors felt that tutors should be regarded as assistants to the instructor, a view which coincides with the notion of assisting with the lesser issues of writing. Only one instructor in the survey felt that tutors were partners in the teaching of writing, even though in many cases both instructors and tutors were graduate students with comparable professional backgrounds. Tutors in the survey felt that they were viewed at the bottom of the university hierarchy and maintaining staff morale was a considerable problem for the center. Interestingly enough, however, the same survey revealed that a large majority of students said that they had learned more about writing from the writing center than they had from their instructors (Rodis 49). It may well be that the fear of divided student loyalty accounts in some measure for negative instructor attitudes towards tutors. Yet it would seem that the advantages of a shared responsibility would outweigh such fears.

Establishing a sense of partnership and professional respect between teachers and tutors was an issue of concern to all the directors I interviewed. Four of the five centers used professional staff or a combination of professional staff and peer tutors. One, the most recently established center, used graduate teaching assistants. One center used only its own English faculty as tutors, which had the advantage of bridging the communication and credibility gap between English department and writing center. Another center used professional tutors with no faculty status. Two centers used professional tutors, some of whom were also part-time faculty. None of the centers I visited used peer tutors to work directly with students, preferring the greater credibility of faculty, teaching assistants, and/or professional tutors.

There is, nonetheless, a good deal about peer tutoring in the literature about writing centers and many centers operate successfully by relying heavily on peers. While some composition teachers may object to peer tutors as a case of "the blind leading the blind," Kenneth Bruffee presents a strong theoretical basis for peer tutoring in writing centers in his article "Peer Tutoring and the Conversation of Mankind." Bruffee contends that "if thought is internalized conversation, then writing is internalized conversation re-externalized" (7). The task of the writing tutor is to involve the student in conversation at as many points in the writing process as possible. This conversation should explore ideas in the social context in which normal discourse occurs: a "community of knowledgeable peers" (8). Peer tutors, therefore, are uniquely capable of helping other students to practice the kind of conversation that is valued in the academic world and validated by the "interpretive community" of one's peers (6).

Bruffee admits that neither peer tutors nor the students they tutor may alone be masters of the normal discourse of a given knowledge community. He maintains, however, that by pooling their resources, they are likely to master it if their conversation is structured by the requirements of the assignment and by the formal conventions of academic discourse. The student brings to the conversation a knowledge of the subject, while the peer tutor brings an understanding of the conventions of academic discourse and standard written English. If the student does not bring knowledge of the subject to the conversation, then the tutor needs to contribute by helping the student work out a method of acquiring such knowledge (10). Tutorial conversations between peers can result in interchange that is "emotionally involved, intellectually focused, and personally disinterested," which leads to writing that has the same qualities (7).

Other professionals besides Bruffee also support the notion that peers can be as effective or even more effective, in some cases, than classroom teachers. For instance, Paula Beck writes in her article "Peer Tutoring at a Community College" that because tutors are likely to share ideas and experiences in common with the

students they tutor, they may create a learning environment that is more relevant and stimulating. She suggests that peer tutors can be more successful than faculty tutors because they are "more accessible models whose skills tutees can hope to emulate" (439). An informal poll of students at her community college indicated that tutees overwhelmingly preferred peer tutors to faculty tutors. Further, another poll of classroom teachers indicated that students tutored by peers were judged to have improved as much in their writing as those tutored by faculty.

Thom Hawkins points out in "Intimacy and Audience: the Relationship Between Revision and the Social Dimension of Peer Tutoring" that peer tutors are both "insiders" and "outsiders" and can provide a vital writer-audience link often missing when students write only for teachers. Tutors facilitate the transition to insider: "Students want to have power over their environment, to be in control of what happens to them and they sense that they must learn to manipulate language the way their teachers do before they will be able to play the academic game the way insiders do" (65). Deborah Arfken further points out in "A Peer Tutor Staff: Four Critical Aspects" that "Peer tutoring is especially effective because it creates a personalized learning situation for students who often feel anonymous in classrooms with increased student-teacher ratios" (111).

These endorsements of peer tutoring presuppose that peer tutors are not only selectively chosen but also well trained through a program that gives both rationale for and practice in collaborative learning. With the rapid growth of writing centers in the last ten years, many directors feel that the only way to meet the needs of students using centers is to develop strong peer tutor programs using sophisticated training procedures. There are essentially two types of training programs: those that take place within a college course and those that exist outside a classroom framework. A survey by Linda Bannister-Wills of Loyola Marymount University indicates that most tutor training programs include coursework (133). There are a number of advantages to requiring credit-bearing courses, including enhanced motivation of tutors and greater opportunity for directors to control selection.

Bruffee's own "Brooklyn Plan" is structured within a credit-bearing course and represents the first well-known program to train tutors by focusing on writing and thinking processes. Bruffee's tutors write often (four papers, eight peer critiques, and two author's replies), and complete several writing criticism tasks (450). Although they both write and tutor throughout the term, they concentrate more on writing and peer critiques the first half of the term. The second half focuses on tutoring and "evaluating the judgmental process itself" (456). The program at Flagler College also takes place within a course. Director Vincent Puma identifies and selects potential tutors prior to their enrollment freshman year and screens them during the first week of classes. Selected students are enrolled in a credit-bearing writing/rhetoric course, Honors English I, which is centered around three questions: What is writing? How is writing learned? How is writing taught? After this semester of training, they are enrolled for credit in Honors English II, where they staff the writing center as part of the course requirement (2).

Joy Rouse, director of the writing center at Miami University of Ohio, reported on her center's model for recruiting and training peer tutors in a recent issue of *The Writing Lab Newsletter*. The process she uses involves identifying potential tutor groups (Teacher Education, English, Communications, Journalism) and targeting them for outreach recruiting efforts. Those interested fill out an application, take a tutoring test (to demonstrate ability to respond to writing samples), interview with the director, and take part in role-playing sessions. Applicants must provide the center with written recommendations from two professors they have written extensive papers for. If the applicants demonstrate tutor potential during the interview and application process, they will be hired as apprentice tutors (2).

As part of the apprenticeship, new tutors must take a class in Methods of Tutoring, where they learn about active listening skills, the learning process, and approaches to tutoring college students. They learn about nonverbal communication, asking open-ended questions, paraphrasing what the tutee is saying as a means of clarification, and summarizing (as a check to make sure the tutor understands what the tutee is saying). Tutors are then placed in small groups of 3 or 4 for video-taping projects, which involves each tutor being taped while working with a tutee and then meeting with the rest of the group for a viewing and discussion session. Tutors are also required to observe at least two sessions with experienced writing tutors and to later discuss with the mentor tutor what went on during the sessions. Rouse reports that plans are currently being formulated to develop the "mentor" program so that after training, new tutors would remain in teams and be able to get together during the semester (3).

Other directors of writing centers do not train and reward tutors via credit bearing courses. At small schools, in particular, it can be difficult to establish such a course. However, directors with adequate budgets have found that money is also an excellent incentive and that capable tutors are often willing to undergo rigorous training if paid adequately. Ball State University's writing center, for example, has been successful in using out of class methods of training and monetary payment. Director William Miller reports in the *Writing Lab Newsletter* that he requires students to meet three requirements: a 2.75 overall GPA, pass tutor qualification tests, including a 500 word essay, and secure recommendations from two English faculty members. Miller states that faculty inclusion in the selection process is crucial to the success of his center. He has established a system of workshops for faculty and English honor students to familiarize them with what happens in the writing center. Faculty and students are paired in mock tutoring sessions, and faculty input is solicited in making tutorial selections from workshop participants (1).

In summary, with the explosive growth of writing centers, budgetary realities, and the increasing body of theoretical literature on the value of peers as an interpretive community, peer tutors have become an important part of many writing center staffs. Composition teachers should be cautious in making negative assumptions about their qualifications and should be aware of the kind of training tutors receive on their particular campus. Peer training can be another area of cooperation between English faculty and writing center, and it is in the interests of both to strengthen tutor selection and training.

STRUCTURE AND SERVICES

A third area composition teachers need to know about writing centers is their structure and historical development within the university because these two factors are usually closely related to the kinds of services centers offer. The directors I interviewed outlined very different histories for their centers, resulting in different present-day structures. Four of the centers I visited were established initially through the English department, though only one remains solely under English department funding and control. Of these four, three have grown and developed partially through grant money and partially through college funding outside the English Department. They describe themselves as having "sympathetic deans" who are committed to providing the "hard money" that ensures program consistency and professional staffing. The fifth center I visited grew initially out of a vocational education grant and until recently operated completely separately from the English Department.

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages associated with the different structures. One center, for example, was

housed within the framework of a broad-based learning center, which incorporated tutoring in all subject areas and ESL activities. The learning center consolidated in one spot individual departmental labs in English, math, and accounting and added paraprofessional and peer tutoring in all other subject areas. The merged labs were able to share the cost of equipment such as word processors and videos, and the director was able to appropriate an impressive physical facility in one of the most accessible spots on campus. These impressive resources, the director felt, sent an important message to students: that the college considered these services important and mainstream. Some researchers have suggested that organizing a writing center under the structure of a learning center that embraces developmental English programs and broad-based tutoring services can undermine the concept of a writing center for all writers. The director, however, felt that his center's success in attracting large numbers of self referrals to all its labs would indicate that a learning center framework need not be a barrier to a writing center's appeal to all students.

The longest established center, which originally started out as an English department writing lab, now receives most of its funding from extra-departmental sources, mainly through the Dean's office. The director has full-time faculty status, though most of the professional tutors do not. She stated that in moving away physically and financially from the English department, she was able to establish a far better location for the center and provide funding for a wide array of services. A combination of grant and college money allows her to provide direct tutorial assistance for over 3,300 students annually, hold open workshops for all university students, teach non-credit courses for students preparing for the qualifying exam for secondary teachers of English, teach developmental English courses, and teach computer-assisted writing to multiply handicapped students. Her center also functions as a resource center for faculty, with staff helping in the design of more effective writing assignments across the curriculum and visiting classrooms to address a variety of writing-related subjects. It also offers small group conversation classes to foreign students, visiting faculty, and their families.

Observing the physical set-up and ongoing activity of this center, which has evolved over a period of over 20 years, provided a clear contrast to the most recently established center I visited, which has only been in operation for a few years. In the latter case a tiny room has been set aside for tutoring next to a word processing facility. The only sign posted outside the door announcing its function and hours is on a file card, one which could be easily overlooked by a student stumbling around to find the place. The director, whose responsibilities are to organize and supervise the staff of graduate teaching assistants, has no space for an office there. The tutoring staff has room for only three cramped desks and chairs; it is clearly much like the out of the way "closet" that North writes about, indicating by its scarce physical resources the limitations of its services. Effective tutoring nonetheless takes place here, judging from the interactions of students and tutors I observed.

On the other hand, the physical environment in the former case is far more extensive, bespeaking the center's longevity and success in eliciting support and funding. The facility is housed in a large section of one of the most visible buildings on campus, right next to the library. It is clearly marked by a prominent sign and uses several large rooms to carry out its activities. The director and assistant director have desks in the same room in which a large part of the tutoring goes on. Shelves lined with reference books and current journals in the field line some of the walls, along with files containing sizable amounts of material on writing. Bulletin boards announce special workshops on writing and other information of interest to students. Easily accessible stands hold eye-catching brochures addressing special student problems in writing. The profes-

sional tutors employed have their own desks and chairs in individual areas. They also have access to larger work tables in this main room. Three other rooms are comfortably furnished and set-up for small group work and/or conferences. The rooms are arranged invitingly, with an atmosphere of quiet busyness and informality.

During my time observing the center's activities the staff's easy, informal camaraderie seemed to reflect a general atmosphere of warmth and support. Students were greeted upon their entrance with a smile and a welcome. There was much activity, with a sizable number of students regularly coming in and out to make or keep appointments. The comfortable interchange I observed, however, seemed in no way to detract from serious attention to the work at hand.

The impressive physical set-up and array of services offered by this center could probably not be offered without extra-departmental funding. Yet the director expressed her sense of the importance of maintaining her identity with the English department. Both formal and informal ties with English faculty, she felt, are important in maintaining credibility for the program. She stressed the importance of reinforcing partnership and cooperation by informal ties with the English department as well as formal ones. Opportunities for using casual contact with English teachers to communicate information about the center's work are one advantage of being part of the department. The disadvantage of dual funding is that the chain of command is split and can make conflicting demands on the director.

It would seem, then, that all centers, no matter how they are structured, are vitally concerned with their links to the English department. It would also seem to be in the interests of composition teachers to be responsive to the efforts of colleagues in the writing center and to view them less as an isolated service and more as an interactive partnership.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

When asked about directions for future development of the center, the directors I interviewed responded differently. One expressed an interest in structural realignment within the university. Three discussed material needs (more space, more funding for tutors, etc.) None addressed an important issue raised by North about writing center development. Taking a rather dismal view of past misunderstanding, he contends that centers ought to move away from their association with English departments. He states, "We are not here to serve, supplement, back up, complement, reinforce, or otherwise be defined by any external curriculum. We are here to talk to writers" (440). This declaration of independence is necessary, he feels, so that centers have the freedom of self definition. The business of writing centers, he believes, is to engage with writers in the process of writing rather than focus on correction of textual problems (443).

North recognizes that in order to get funding, most writing centers have had to justify themselves as classroom adjuncts, reinforcing the "fix-it shop" concept. However, he maintains that the only way to get beyond this concept is for centers to firmly establish themselves as qualitatively different places actively engaged in and simultaneously researching the tutoring process and the act of writing. He conceives of the center as an ideal environment for the development of new pedagogies based on research into what actually happens in individual tutoring. In short, he makes a case for writing centers to stake out their own territory and envisions them as "centers of consciousness about writing on campuses, a kind of physical locus for the ideas and ideals of college...commitment to writing" (446).

It seems unlikely that most writing centers can easily adopt such an independent stance given their histories, structure, and funding

sources. Yet North's is an intriguing vision of development that may not necessarily be incongruous with a cooperative relationship between classroom teachers and writing centers. Four out of the five centers I visited reported a shift over the years in teacher attitudes towards more contemporary models of writing and a willingness to view the center as offering a different kind of writing context. They also report strongly increased administrative funding and support as numbers of students using the centers double and triple. It seems likely that faculty and administrative support will gain momentum if writing centers can successfully do the following:

1. Clarify their conceptual alignment with writing as process and define the roles they would like to play in accordance with this alignment.
2. Test their assumptions about tutoring and its effectiveness in developing more independent writers by encouraging further research of those assumptions.
3. Work with English faculty to develop the notion that developing better writers rather than better papers is a mutual goal, one that suggests moving away from the "fix-it shop" idea as the sole rationale for writing center existence. At the same time, centers need to be sufficiently politically astute to accommodate and work cooperatively with the English department.
4. Educate faculty about the important role they play in establishing student attitudes toward referrals.
5. Communicate directly to students the advantages of using writing centers as a resource. Centers have to be clear in defining what they can and can't do and then deliver effectively the services they can provide.

Certainly, students who experience first-hand a positive tutoring encounter will be likely to return and provide the backbone of a center's clientele. Also, witnessing first-hand the positive effects of a holistic approach to tutoring, as I did with Sondra, may convince faculty and administrative skeptics that writing centers can have a measurable impact on student writing. However, the work of the writing center does not always lend itself to easy measurement or immediate change. Part of the center's task, therefore, is to provide a strong voice in defining the terms in which making meaning through writing should be measured. For their part, composition teachers need to learn a great deal more about writing centers than how to fill out a referral sheet. If they are committed to maximizing campus opportunities for students to develop their writing, they need to consider the center's potential as a supportive milieu where all student writers can talk about their work. They also need to think through their own relationship to the center and its staff and consider where boundaries merge. A classroom need not be the only campus setting where growth in writing takes place.

DIRECTORS

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