Chapter 6, “Seeing Green,” has a different pace and format from the rest of the book. Representing class experiences from February to May, the chapter combines final interviews with the six featured students, conference and class discussions on the second assignment, and excerpts from student papers. Unlike the other chapters, in which we watch the class wrestle with the essay assignment, in this chapter we consider one student writer at a time. I was most interested in reading how students’ different discourse communities and literacy experiences affected their writing processes: Rob’s deep involvement in his church habituates him to write in “testimonial” form; Carl’s childhood debates with adults during family get-togethers show up in his deft analyses; and Toni’s experience in psychotherapy shapes her reactions to feedback on her writing. This chapter is a good example of the importance of making a space in our pedagogy for understanding the literacy experiences our students bring to class, the tacit rules and assumptions they operate within.

In the appendix and afterword Hunt and Palencia present final comments on their teaching and research experiences. In explaining how students worked within and against her assignments, each blames the occasional breakdown in understanding on one of the graduate student investigators (a “critical pedagogue”) on Hunt’s research team (149). Twice in the book Hunt criticizes graduate students who bring their politics into their teaching, but Hunt too has a politics, one that rests on a constellation of privileges that allow him to construct Palencia’s class, position its participants, and assess its outcomes. That his ability to do all this rests on the site of composition’s underclass—the adjunct/student instructor, the female compositionist—is a reality that needed to have been addressed within the book’s appendix, “Some Comments on Methods and Ethics.” The artifact of the assignment—and the community of practice that is built around it—is a key space for reflecting on how teachers create conditions for meaning making in writing. Despite its shortcomings, Misunderstanding the Assignment gives teachers of writing stories and descriptions to further problematize their own practices and assumptions.

Chico, CA


Reviewed by Rebecca G. Taylor, Gustavus Adolphus College

*Tutoring Writing: A Practical Guide for Conferences* is a comprehensive, useful book. The book is intended primarily for those who administer writing centers or teach courses that prepare tutors, and it’s most appropriate for those whose institutions offer a required first-year writing course. *Tutoring Writing* explains what
tutoring is (and what it isn’t) in theoretical and practical terms, reviews the most relevant research that supports such work, introduces elements of composition theory and stages of the writing process, offers practical conferencing strategies to facilitate tutorials at all stages of the writing process, outlines a tutor training course, and includes a bibliography of traditional and electronic resources. With perhaps less success and complexity, the book also considers the ways that race, gender, disability, and learning styles affect the tutoring process, and it reviews current technological innovations. Finally, McAndrew and Reigstad provide brief snapshots of “master” tutors at work in the field, including Donald Murray, Nancie Atwell, and Muriel Harris. In short, while some chapters are better developed than others, *Tutoring Writing* is a must-have for any writing center administrator, no matter the institutional context.

And I don’t make that statement lightly.

I direct a writing center and a Writing Across the Curriculum program at a small private liberal arts college; I also teach, mentor student teachers, and advise 30-40 undergraduate English and Education majors. We small college folks have too much to do and too little time to do it. (Wait a minute—that’s true for most of us in our field!) I stock my shelves with only those resources that provide maximum intellectual and practical payoff. Moreover, my writing center is staffed exclusively by undergraduate students who do not take a tutor training course; they receive six hours of pre-semester training each September, and then meet weekly with me for a one-hour staff meeting/training seminar. Our college offers no first-year composition courses. Instead, we have a writing-intensive First Term Seminar program, as well as a three-course WAC requirement.

I recognize that no book can be all things to all writing center administrators. I’m a bit outside the target audience for *Tutoring Writing*, which speaks most directly to tutoring large populations of first-year composition students. Still, I consider it the most useful book of its kind on the market. In the past, I’ve assigned or pulled liberally from comparison texts, including Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner’s *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring* (2000) and Leigh Ryan’s *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* (1998)—with proper documentation, of course. But since making the shift to McAndrew and Reigstad, I’ve not missed those other texts. In fact, working with *Tutoring Writing* has reminded me that the very best books are those that don’t actually “do it all.” Rather, they demand my participation and invite me to rethink, reimagine, and revise my own work as a writing center administrator.

This year, I assigned the first four chapters of the book to my staff; we used them to frame our pre-semester training sessions. “Theories Underpinning Tutoring Writing,” “Research on Tutoring,” “What Tutoring Isn’t,” and “The Writing and Tutoring Processes” helped us to establish a common understanding of what we do and why we do it, as well as a common vocabulary for discussing our work. The book describes—in accessible language—the hierarchy of rhetorical issues (“higher order” and “lower order” concerns). Chapter 1, “Theories Underpinning
Tutoring Writing,” introduces social constructionist theory, reader response literary theories, theories of talk and writing, collaborative learning, and feminism (1). For each theoretical “strand,” the authors invoke the key theorists (Vygotsky and Bakhtin for social construction, Bleich and Rosenblatt for reader response, and so on), summarize their viewpoints, and connect those viewpoints—albeit briefly—to various tutoring practices. Chapter 2, “Research Supporting Tutoring Writing,” offers plenty of examples of research projects that might help us convince skeptical audiences that tutoring and conferencing affect students’ writing in positive ways. McAndrew and Reigstad categorize empirical research projects (qualitative and quantitative) that consider actual effects of tutoring, conferencing, and peer group work on writers. This chapter is essentially a bibliography, organized loosely by bulleted points to help focus our attention.

Chapter 3, “What Tutoring Writing Isn’t,” is my staff’s favorite. Here, beginning tutors learn to counter many of the models they may have in their heads when they begin tutoring: the editor-journalist model, the cheerleader, the therapist, the corrector, and the expert. This chapter explains why such models impede our ability to help writers develop their own ideas and extend their own rhetorical skills. In my context, this chapter is crucial, as many of the talented undergraduate writers on my campus—particularly those in the humanities—choose to work at the writing center because they believe it will prepare them for a career in journalism or professional editing. Perhaps my students share a belief in what McAndrew and Reigstad refer to as “the myth of the nurturing, caring editor working side-by-side with an author” (15). McAndrew and Reigstad debunk this myth quickly. Likewise, the chapter urges tutors to avoid giving false or generalized praise, which really helped my tutors, who tend to suffer a bit from the infamous “Minnesota Nice” complex.

Once they’ve helped us think about what tutoring writing isn’t, McAndrew and Reigstad move into more specific discussion of the nature of tutoring and conferencing. Chapter 4, “The Writing and Tutoring Processes,” delineates higher order concerns (HOCs) and lower order concerns (LOCs). HOCs are defined as “the features of a piece of writing that exist beyond the sentence level; they include clarity of thesis or focus, adequate development and information, effective structure or organization, and appropriate voice or tone” (25). LOCs are “the features within a sentence, at the level of individual words and punctuation; they include sentence structure and variety, punctuation, grammar and usage, and spelling” (25). Indeed, in her foreword to the book, Wendy Bishop notes that this terminology in particular “made so much sense to my students and to me, facilitating our talk, demystifying writing” (vii). I thought of Bishop often as I wrote this review.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are the most concrete, rooted in descriptions of actual tutoring practices. The chapters provide practical suggestions for a wide range of invention activities (including brainstorming, clustering, looping, and freewriting), as well as possible activities to help writers with incomplete drafts, those who need to develop a new thesis or provide more support for an existing thesis, and those...
who need to work on inappropriate use of voice. Still, when I first read these three chapters of *Tutoring Writing* in November, I agreed with my experienced tutors: these seemed less useful and complete than the chapters from Emily Meyer and Louise Z. Smith’s *The Practical Tutor* (1987), which were included in last year’s training packet.

But, when my tutors and I first read McAndrew and Reigstad, I was buried in the usual autumnal work: grading, chairing committee meetings, working on curriculum reform, tabulating writing center usage statistics, advising for a new registration period. I confess that I cursed *Tutoring Writing* at the time, wishing it could be “enough” to assign the chapters and hope my tutors could learn the conferencing techniques simply by reading about them. I recognize how unrealistic (and perhaps wrong-headed) my expectations were. Of course such reading must be accompanied by careful modeling of the strategies that McAndrew and Reigstad describe. Our writing center is the heart of the writing program; it’s the home base for all Writing Across the Curriculum activities. It’s the primary resource for all entering first-year students who are simply unprepared for the demands of college-level literacy tasks. It’s the support network for the international students who find themselves enrolled in writing intensive courses at an institution where ESL instruction is not an option. As I reread this book, then, I recommitted myself to making each staff meeting fresh, modeling the techniques discussed in *Tutoring Writing*, and taking the time to discuss, demonstrate, and critique the strategies that McAndrew and Reigstad introduce.

My tutors and I did not read chapters 7 and 8 together. Chapter 7, “Tutoring in Different Places,” offers a cursory nod to those who tutor in workplace settings, at home, or in WAC programs. I found it a little too short to be useful. Chapter 8, “Tutoring Different People,” was also disappointing in its treatment of gender and disability issues in particular. Still, I appreciated the chapter’s provocative discussion of the ways that ability levels can affect the tutoring dynamic, particularly in peer tutoring situations. Likewise, the section on ESL writers provides a good introduction to contrastive rhetorics and argues for the importance of recruiting and maintaining a culturally diverse staff at the writing center. Supplemental texts may be necessary for those of us who wish to ensure the topic of diversity receives thorough and sophisticated treatment at the writing center. I used Ilona Leki’s *Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers* (1992); we also spent a good deal of time at the college’s Diversity Center, speaking with students and staff members of color about their experiences on campus.

*Tutoring Writing* is a strong text. Those of us who are well versed in writing center theory and practice and/or composition theory may be frustrated by the book’s brevity, but will certainly appreciate its extensive bibliography and helpful frameworks. Those who come to writing center work without first completing the Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition will gain a strong introduction to existing scholarship on writing centers and composition theory in general, as well as an invaluable array of conferencing strategies to explore. And for all of us, it
is a book that invites further engagement with the dynamic and exciting work of one-on-one conferencing.

St. Peter, MN


Reviewed by Linda S. Bergmann, Purdue University

When I first encountered *WAC for the New Millennium* in the fall of 2001, it seemed, as it still does, a comprehensive survey of the state of the movement. The editors have assembled contributions from distinguished compositionists associated with Writing Across the Curriculum and produced a substantial review of the field. In the first chapter, summarizing the contributions, Susan McLeod and Eric Miraglia reiterate the concepts that tie together the disparate ideas and initiatives that constitute WAC and describe how enduring WAC programs collaborate with other pedagogical initiatives and adapt to needs and resources of specific institutions. They identify WAC as a *movement*—a loosely-bound collection of programs, practices, and ideas—offering positive experiences for students and better understanding for scholars of how writing functions in various disciplinary situations.

This collection demonstrates how deeply-rooted WAC has become since the 1970s and 1980s. In those days, Writing Across the Curriculum, described in Art Young and Toby Fulwiler’s *Writing Across the Disciplines: Research into Practice* (1986) and embodied in workshops by teachers like Elaine Maimon (who wrote the introduction to this book), embraced a body of ideas and practices that brought active, participatory, collaborative learning into courses traditionally organized simply to transmit information. *Writing Across the Disciplines* shows WAC being invented through trials and errors in crossing disciplinary boundaries. By 1990, there were enough programs to warrant Fulwiler and Young’s *Programs that Work: Models and Methods for Writing Across the Curriculum* (1990), which served as inspiration and roadmap for new WAC programs throughout the 1990s. With the publication of David Russell’s *Writing in the Academic Disciplines, 1870—1990: A Curricular History* in 1991, WAC acquired a history and a more defined and identifiable presence in the profession, a presence nurtured by WAC conferences, the journal *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*, and the emergence of benchmark programs for imitation.

A decade later, *WAC for the New Millennium* demonstrates how WAC has matured as a discipline, developed a body of practices, lore, research, and theory, and connected with other academic movements. The essays consider how WAC