

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Melissa R. Weintraub for the degree of Master of Arts in English presented on November 13, 2006.

Title: The Oregon State University Writing Center: History and Context.

Abstract approved:

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Lisa S. Ede

*The Oregon State University (OSU) Writing Center: History and Context* provides a detailed and multi-faceted view of the Writing Center from its start in 1976 through the present. The information was gathered from interviews, annual reports, archival sources, and scholarly research. Chapter One examines the scholarly conversation about writing centers, drawing on several major contributors to identify a number of themes that recur in research on writing centers and their history. Chapter One also describes the cultural historiographic approach employed in this thesis. Chapter Two offers an overview of writing center theory and practice, in order to provide a helpful context for Chapters Three and Four. Chapter Three explores the early history and pre-history of the OSU Writing Center and examines it in the context of the Center for Writing and Learning and of OSU. Chapter Four looks at the Writing Center itself, discussing the coordinators who have worked there and their contributions, the writing assistants and their training, the students, and the director's role in the Center. Chapter Five concludes this thesis by reexamining the writing center themes identified in Chapter

One in light of what has been learned about the OSU Writing Center. Various appendices provide supplemental data.

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The Oregon State University Writing Center:  
History and Context

by  
Melissa R. Weintraub

A THESIS

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Melissa R. Weintraub, Author

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## DEDICATION

In memory of Siskiyou (1992-2005), wondrous girl-dog,

and in honor of my other fur-kids:

Bear, Gemma, Taliesin, Kachina, Vida, Milo, Mr. Briggs, and Dalglish.

## **The Oregon State University Writing Center: History and Context**

### **Chapter One: Entering the Scholarly Conversation About Writing Centers**

*Like all history, writing center history is maddeningly but joyously complicated, and all models are susceptible to the complex temporal and cultural situatedness, and thus political identities, of the individuals and communities who construct them.*

—Peter Carino “Open Admissions and the Construction of Writing Center History: A Tale of Three Models” 43

When I was an undergraduate at Skidmore College, a small liberal arts college in New York state, in the mid-1980s, I had never heard of writing centers. There wasn't one at my school, and when I needed help with writing (which was fairly often), I visited my professors during their office hours. Now Skidmore has a well-publicized writing center, staffed by around twenty tutors\*<sup>1</sup>, and offers extensive hours.

Skidmore is hardly alone in having established a writing center in the past few decades. It is now quite common to find some sort of writing assistance available at many schools, including private colleges, state universities, and community colleges.

I first heard about writing centers from a Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC\*) instructor from whom I took a technical writing course in winter, 2000. He knew that the Writing Desk in LBCC's Learning Center was short-staffed, and he recommended me to the person who ran it. And so I began working individually with

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<sup>1</sup> An asterisk indicates the term is found in the Glossary.



students on their writing, learning as I went. This type of work, I learned, drew on many of the same skills I had used as a social worker.

I read all of the books about working in writing centers housed at the LBCC Writing Desk to help me understand what to do and why. Then I enrolled in a class at Oregon State University (OSU), Writing 411: the Teaching of Writing, to further my understanding. My enjoyment of this course and of the field of rhetoric and writing led me to enroll in the graduate program at OSU (while continuing my work at LBCC's Writing Desk). In 2002 and 2003, I worked in OSU's Writing Center\* (part of the larger Center for Writing and Learning [CWL\*]). It was fascinating to experience the differences—and the similarities—between the programs at LBCC and OSU.

Little did I know then that I would write my masters thesis on the history of OSU's Writing Center. I had not thought of the Writing Center as having a past, much less one as rich as it does. Yet I've discovered how and why it was formed, the changes in personnel and in practice that have occurred, and the various struggles it has encountered.

Briefly, the OSU Writing Center was started in 1976 and is housed on the lowest level of Waldo Hall, one of the oldest buildings on campus. The staff includes a director\*, a half-time assistant director, a coordinator\*, and an average of thirty-five student tutors called writing assistants\*, all of whom work with students\* of all years and in all fields year round (the first three are actually the staff of the CWL). Currently, the Writing Center is relatively strong in regard to financial and university support, but its history is wrought with examples of when both were lacking. Statistics

show that the Writing Center staff has helped many students, and logic suggests that it should remain open and be well-funded, but its existence has always been in jeopardy and likely always will be. Why is this the situation? Similar situations exist for most writing centers, and this is only one of the numerous themes that show up in writing center histories. The history of the OSU Writing Center, while unique, exemplifies many of the themes and tensions found in all writing centers.

By providing as complete and accurate a history of the OSU Writing Center as possible, this thesis will substantiate the various themes, elucidated later in this chapter, that exist in the literature about writing centers. In fact, one might say that only through histories can we see these themes and, similarly, most histories of writing centers bear traces of these themes. A vital facet of these themes is that various tensions—conflicting demands, ideas, or purposes—exist. These tensions occur within writing centers themselves; for example, a common tension is between the dual purposes of helping under-prepared students with basic skills and of helping all students become better writers. And tensions also exist between writing centers and their larger institutions, further complicating the situation. Moreover, the truism that we—those who work in, study, and/or are closely associated with writing centers—can only know where we are (that is, our impact and our status as individual writing centers and as a profession) if we know from where we've come is true. And in knowing both where we are and how we got there, we can gain the perspective to decide where we want to go. The questions of where the OSU Writing Center has come from, where it is now, and where it hopes to go will be touched on in this thesis,

along with how the OSU Writing Center fits in the larger writing center history and community. Therefore, understanding the scholarly conversation about writing centers is important.

### **Types of Writing Center Histories**

As a scholarly and pedagogical project, writing centers are a subfield within a larger discipline of rhetoric and writing, and thus the scholarly conversation occurs both within the writing center community and in the larger general composition field. In fact, the writing center community—and its journals and conferences—grew out of general composition’s journals and conferences. The research about writing centers is quite varied, and there are several different types.

The different types of historical research about writing centers are histories of individual centers, which are often anecdotal; histories of the writing center movement; meta-histories, which are historiographic studies; and explorations of the different pedagogies and philosophies of writing centers over time. These histories can overlap; for instance, the history of an individual center may include its pedagogy and philosophy. The following list of history types is not exhaustive, nor is the list of scholars mentioned as examples for each type below, although each scholar mentioned has made significant contributions to the scholarly conversation. And the following examples give background information which will be helpful in putting writing centers into context in Chapter Two.

Histories of individual writing centers explain how a particular writing center started and often include how it evolved. They may include the reasons why that center began (the need, that is), the pedagogy, the philosophy, and/or a typical day. For example, Neal Lerner has worked on the histories of specific writing centers, often relying on archival material for information. Most recently, he published “‘Laboring Together for the Common Good’: The Writing Laboratory at the University of Minnesota General College, circa 1932”—a history of a writing center that began in the 1930s at a community college. Lerner goes into some depth about the purpose and accomplishments of this writing center, referring to documents written by Francis S. Appel, the first director of the Laboratory, and by Malcolm S. MacLean, the first dean of the college. He shares a brief history of the center (which is still in operation), placing it in the context of the 1930s United States, but focuses mostly on that first year of operation.

In 1993, Joyce A. Kinkead and Jeanette G. Harris published *Writing Centers in Context*, descriptions of twelve very different writing centers (each written by that center’s director), which cover the structure of each center, staffing, students served, typical sessions, and histories of each center. (The start of each center is distinguished as its history.) That each center’s history is included in the thumbnail view of the center allows full, if condensed, overviews of multiple writing centers. Interestingly, this book can not be considered a single type of historical document; although most of the chapters cover the individual writing centers, as a whole, the book illustrates the

second type of writing center history because the editors explore how these schools exemplify the writing center movement.

Histories of the writing center movement examine all or a portion of the years that writing centers have been known to exist. Some seek to tell the chronology of the events, while others focus on using the history in the service of a point; that is, while some movement histories have little or no interpretation or speculation about the events described, others argue as to what the history demonstrates. Elizabeth Boquet, in her essay “‘Our Little Secret’: A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions” traces the history of writing center research and publications. She stresses the inherent contradictions in the ways that writing centers identify or present themselves. Different outcomes are at stake, she points out, from the conclusions drawn from these questions: are writing labs methods or sites? (466). Are they for remedial students only or for all students? Should they be auto-tutorial (students work alone) or one-to-one (students work individually with tutors) (473)? Boquet also discusses the impact of psychological, especially Rogerian, principles on writing center work in the 1940s—and how these enhanced the feelings of secrecy and of safety within labs (470). The dichotomy between how writing centers *present* themselves and what *actually* happens in them (that is, as labs or sites, for under-prepared students or for all, for individual or collaborative work) guides Boquet’s telling of writing center history.

Neal Lerner also relates a more general writing center history in “Punishment and Possibility: Representing Writing Centers, 1939-1970.” In this essay, he traces the history of studying writing centers and the ways that history was represented before

open admissions\*. His most salient points are that there is a lack of historical information about writing centers and that few books on composition studies cover writing centers (53-4). He further explores the struggle between writing centers as venues for remediation (“punishment”) and venues for collaboration (“possibility”) over time. Either way, he says, it is the conditions in which those in writing centers worked—always at risk for being closed, with few resources—that led to the lack of publications and of acceptance from 1939 to 1970 (54). Indeed, Lerner says,

For writing centers today the contrast between the center as punishment and the center as possibility defines day-to-day existence. [. . . T]his contrast also defines writing center history, and can provide contemporary writing center directors with a map of hazards to be avoided if they are to achieve the professional status for which they yearn. (55)

It seems, then, that histories can be more than just a chronology; Boquet and Lerner parallel writing center movement chronology with interpretations of the events and the lessons that can be learned.

A third type of scholarship about writing centers is historiography or meta-history, which examines the ways in which the story or stories of writing centers are presented. The best example of this is perhaps Peter Carino’s “Open Admissions and the Construction of Writing Center History: A Tale of Three Models” (used as the epigraph for this chapter). Carino examines three approaches or models to writing about writing center history. The first model is the evolutionary model, which describes writing centers as progressing (because of open admissions) from remedial to collaborative work. The second model, the dialectic model, Carino says, emphasizes

the struggles faced by the heroic writing center directors and staff. Sometimes, he writes, historians have used both, but even that approach is inadequate. To remedy the failings of the evolutionary and dialectic models, Carino argues for the third approach, which he calls the cultural model. It is more inclusive, incorporating both the evolutionary information of and the critical events in writing centers' histories, and considering them in the context of the times, the institution, and the relevant peoples' roles. His model, he says, reflects,

a desire and a need to construct an elaborately detailed and historiographically sophisticated model that would more effectively account for the complexity of writing center development than has previous writing center work [. . . by being] aware of its own role in historicizing, [of] the dilemma of representing history in language, and [of] the need for thick descriptions of the multiple forces impacting writing centers. (30)

Carino's model also examines the messiness of progress and acknowledges the significant contributions of certain people without "reifying their work as doctrine" (31).

Carino analyzes the start of the the Writing Lab at Purdue University and the role that Muriel Harris, undoubtedly one of the field's most important contributors, played in it by looking at how the evolutionary and dialectic models would describe the Writing Lab in 1976. Evolutionarily, the Lab was an add-on to supply remedial services but one careful to not usurp the role of the classroom, and dialectically, it

lauded Harris' persistence and vision. Both of these models fail, however, to examine Harris' position at Purdue in those early years. As Carino summarizes it,

Through the lens of the cultural model, the initial lab at Purdue is impacted by such diverse factors as a national debate on student writing ability, Harris' marital and professional status, a depressed job market for Renaissance scholars, the initial wishes of the Purdue English Department, and the individual talent and dedication enabling Harris to cultivate and determine the pedagogy and mission of the lab in a way that would satisfy her, meet the needs of students, and fulfill the expectations of those footing the bill. (41)

It is only by considering all of these influences or situations together that we can understand the early evolution of the Writing Lab at Purdue. Still, this understanding is incomplete, as this model, like all others, has limitations and is a more useful model for examining individual centers than for generalizing. (This thesis attempts to embody the cultural model, as I will explain later in this chapter.)

Other contributions to the scholarly conversation focus less on the history of writing centers and more on writing center work in general—particularly the concept of writing centers and their practices and philosophies. Stephen North's 1984 essay, "The Idea of a Writing Center," rails against the ignorance of the composition and university communities at large, which viewed writing centers as remedial. He specifies ways in which writing centers address non-remedial writing issues. (North wrote a follow-up to this article in 1994, called "Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center,'" in which he acknowledges that he may have idealized some aspects of writing centers—in



particular the relationships between students and tutor, tutors and teachers, and tutors and institutions—and amends his statements for more accuracy.)

Andrea Lunsford discusses the concepts of power and collaboration in her article “Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center.” In it, she challenges those working in writing centers to do more than just pay lip-service to the idea of collaboration by suggesting that the issues of control are often still at play on a subtle and unacknowledged level. Indeed, because many students who visit writing centers view the tutors as experts, tutors are already placed in positions of power. *Saying* that one works collaboratively does not, she says, necessarily make it so.

A third and related examination of the work done in writing centers is that of Nancy Welch, in *Getting Restless: Rethinking Revision in Writing Instruction*. Welch looks at the dissonance between the models and theories of writing centers, which are “designed to promote revision as opportunity, seek[ing] to offer a genuinely ‘collaborative’ and ‘liberatory’ experience of writing and learning.” Instead, revision “is felt and resisted [by students] as *death-work*” (emphasis original; 35-36). Indeed, she suggests, by expanding on Lunsford’s ideas, that writing centers, despite their claim to be rid of hierarchies and divisions, may “mask the underlying aggression that psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan [. . .] places at the heart of teaching and learning” (36). Welch explores the potential violence and loss in these encounters for both students and tutors, saying,

the writing center is not always a safe place for us [staff and students] to try out new ways of writing and being.  
*It’s not a place where we’re freed from institutions and their*

*influences and taboos*, nor is it a place where we can entertain alien viewpoints without threat to our sense of self and other institutional identities. (emphasis added; 50)

Certainly, we try to make writing centers safe—often by making the atmosphere friendly—for students and for tutors, but, as Welch points out, there is an inherent violence in revising writing, and we are always tied into the larger institution, as Carino and others also believe.

The writers discussed in the above section of this chapter have contributed excellent examples of the types of writing center histories, illustrating the breadth of these writings. Additional scholarship on writing centers and writing center history exists, of course, including studies and writings by Muriel Harris, Nancy Maloney Grimm, and Jeanne Simpson, among others.

### **Themes Presented in Writing Centers and Writing Center Histories**

What, then, does this conversation tell us about the history of writing centers? Several themes—many of them issues with which writing center staff struggle—emerge from the various types of research, some of which are found in the articles by Lerner, Boquet, and North, touched on earlier in this chapter. These themes include the task of remediation versus that of collaboration, the reputation of writing centers, the role of open admissions in writing center development, the vulnerability of writing centers, the variety of students worked with and how they are worked with, and the question of whether writing centers do what they say they do. As with the types of

research, the themes sometimes overlap, and the same historical article or book often illustrates more than one theme. All of these themes appear when one looks at the OSU Writing Center over time, as readers will see in Chapters Three and Four, and I will elucidate how each of these themes is manifested at the OSU Writing Center in the final chapter.

One major theme is the role of writing centers as sites for remediation versus sites for collaboration, both in fact and in reputation. Many writing centers have or had a remedial component. The “remedial” portion often includes self-study or working by rote, perhaps with tapes (or, now, online) to teach students of basic grammar and punctuation. Many of these offerings were developed to assist students who were less ready for college writing because they had either forgotten or never learned these skills. In 1945, the University of Iowa’s writing center introduced a remedial function into its existing writing center in response to the University’s concern about students not passing a communication skills exam (Kelly 12). (According to Lerner, strong emphasis on communication skills occurred in the 1930s and 1940s.) And many writing centers provide handouts or online information about punctuation and grammar; students can even download study materials, exercises, and quizzes from numerous writing centers’ websites, including the Writing Lab at Purdue University.

Although tutors do help students with grammar and punctuation, writing center staff tends to dislike being associated with remedial skills. First, it discourages students from visiting the writing center, as they feel stigmatized, stupid, or even

punished. As Lerner states in "Punishment and Possibilities," the University of North Carolina labeled students who did not do well in writing "delinquent," and a note to this effect was placed in their record until they had successfully completed the required work at their university's writing center (56). Furthermore, the remedial reputation is not an inviting one for skilled writers who want to improve an already good paper by getting some feedback and/or another point of view on it. How, for instance, can students escape feeling stigmatized when professors express surprise that students with few errors on their papers choose to visit a writing center, as North describes ("The Idea" 72-3)? This attitude of surprise and misunderstanding is almost definitely conveyed to students, some of whom may rethink their inclination to visit the writing center. And it has further reaching implications throughout the school in regard to budget and reputation, to which I'll return later in this section.

Most writing centers, even if they offer some remedial or basic skills components, focus more on the collaborative work they provide. Lou Kelly, in her history of the University of Iowa Writing Center, mentioned earlier, explains that the Center was a collaborative institution when it began and that it returned to collaborative work when the staff realized that the rote drills were not helpful and made students resentful.

Many of those who write about writing centers express frustration but not surprise at centers being misunderstood. As Stephen North puts it,

[m]isunderstanding is something one expects [ . . . ] in the writing center business [ . . . but w]hat makes the situation particularly frustrating is that so many such

people [from English Departments] will vehemently claim that they do, *really*, understand the idea of the writing center. (“The Idea” 71)

North, in both “The Idea of a Writing Center” and “Revisiting ‘The Idea of a Writing Center,’” tries to clarify what writing centers actually do and why. But the reputation of writing centers remains associated with their being remedial or “fix-it” places. In fact, some college and university professors, as North states in “The Idea of the Writing Center,” seem to believe that tutors will fix errors or will edit papers that are brought to them—and tell this to their students (71). Students are often, then, surprised to discover that they can’t just drop off their papers to be fixed and are expected to actively participate in the session!

In addition to clarifying the purpose of writing centers, much of the scholarly conversation, especially that which explores writing center practices, concerns the theme of techniques for tutors to use when working with students on their papers and on helping students become better writers overall. Simply put, what should tutors do and what should they not do? How should they approach conferences\*? Should they not write on students’ papers, encouraging the students to write instead? Should they even hold a pen or pencil, for instance? Jeff Brooks, in “Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work,” strongly recommends the hands-off approach, while Ilene Lurkis Clark, in “Collaboration and Ethics in Writing Center Pedagogy,” encourages tutors to evaluate each student’s needs individually; Nancy Grimm, mentioned below, goes a step further in recommending that tutors learn as much as possible about each student.

Much of the debate about hands-on or hands-off is explored in the next chapter. Related to this debate is the theme of whether writing centers and their staff are really doing what they say they are, as Lunsford suggests. Do those tutors who follow the suggestion to not write on students' papers really *never* write on them? Do tutors *never* suggest wording when students seem to be struggling a lot (and/or provide "catch phrases" which help students out of corners)? Are tutors *always* able to focus on making each student a better writer—a goal advocated by many who work in writing centers—and not on making each paper better? And, when any of this is not done, do tutors "confess" to other tutors or to their supervisors that they've overstepped the recommended boundaries? Is this part of the secrecy to which Boquet refers?

In fact, much of the scholarly conversation expands on techniques and investigates different ways of working with students. Nancy Maloney Grimm, in her 1999 book *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*, examines the tendency to teach students who visit writing centers to write in academic ways—as if that is the only correct way to write (and this is similar to what Nancy Welch suggests). But, she says, this ignores the cultural and social history of each student. When working with students, writing center tutors should, instead, explain the conventions of academic writing but also discover the students' own ways of expressing their ideas. So she suggests that tutors get to know the students on a number of levels. Just as Grimm moves somewhat outside traditional composition and writing center theory in her recommendation, so too do other people in the writing center world. For instance, a panel called "Rethorizing Writing Center Practice: What Other Disciplines Can

Teach Us About Conferencing” at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC\*) in 2006 discussed ways of using skills from psychology, social work, and social justice in writing center work.

An additional writing center theme that enlarges the discussion is that of open admissions in the 1970s and its impact on writing centers and writing center work. According to Peter Carino, in “Open Admissions and the Construction of Writing Center History: A Tale of Three Models,” the perception by people in the composition community is that open admissions *led* to the creation of writing centers; Carino states that open admissions only *helped* in the growth of writing centers (33). Writing centers existed before the 1970s; Neal Lerner has found references to a writing center at Amherst College as long ago as 1895 (“Punishment and Possibility” 55), and, as previously mentioned, he wrote a history of a writing center that began in the 1930s. In fact, writing centers and an emphasis on communication skills were quite common in the 1930s and 1940s related to the growing numbers of children of immigrants and then veterans attending college (Lerner “Punishment and Possibility”). Furthermore, open admissions may not have been the only reason that writing centers and remedial services became more numerous; it’s possible that the fear sprouting from the publication of the *Newsweek* article “Why Johnny Can’t Write,” by Merrill Sheils, in December, 1975 was a corollary or even stronger influence on the increase of writing centers in the latter half of the 1970s. Individual writing centers, then, were created before, during, and after open admissions, even though the misperception that they

grew out of open admissions in the 1970s remains a theme in the writing center scholarly conversation.

The related issues of budget difficulties and of being viewed as expendable are another recurring theme many writing centers face. It's frequently agreed, with some humor, that writing centers are often in the basement of buildings or in other small, unfavorable spaces (Kinhead). And it's also agreed, with somewhat less humor, that writing center staff struggles to keep the space they have (Simpson, Braye, and Boquet). Lerner explores this and explains that because writing centers do not offer for-credit courses (in general) and rarely bring in money to the school (as do the credit-bearing courses in various departments), they are seen as expendable or are one of the first services cut when the school experiences budget changes or problems. Lerner adds that the frequency of writing centers being staffed by lower-level instructors (and by students) also lends to the centers' expendability ("Punishment and Possibility" 66). These are, of course, only some of the themes found in writing center scholarship.

### **The Venues of the Scholarly Conversation**

Another interesting avenue to explore, apart from the themes in the scholarly conversation, is where those conversations have taken place. Journals and conferences dedicated to writing center work have increased in number and stability over the years. And they owe their start, just as the initial scholarly conversation does, to general composition journals and conferences. The start of *the Writing Lab Newsletter (WLN)* exemplifies this. Michael A. Pemberton details this history in his article "The Writing



Lab Newsletter as History: Tracing the Growth of a Scholarly Community.” The idea began at a panel about writing center theory and administration at the 1977 CCCC. Many people attended the panel and shared ideas, and they wanted to continue the discussion. So, says Pemberton, Muriel Harris created the *WLN* as “a manifesto through which writing center personnel could find a voice” and sent it to the forty-nine people who had signed up as interested parties (22). The *WLN* not only helped these people communicate about writing center-related issues, it also kept them apprised of important events in individuals’ lives (babies, deaths, etc.). Over time, the tracking of personal events has been eliminated, as it would be impossible with the now over one thousand subscribers (23-24). But while the *WLN* has become more professional and profession-focused, it remains an accessible document, in part by publishing one or two articles by tutors in every issue, in a dedicated “Tutor’s Column.”

Other publications soon followed the *WLN*, including *the Writing Center Journal (WCJ)* in 1980, and numerous books (Pemberton and Kinkead 4-5). Further, writing center research has been included as a topic of presentation at the CCCC since 1979. The National Writing Centers Association (now the International Writing Centers Association\*) began in 1983, growing out of special sessions at CCCC (like the session described previously which inspired Harris to start the *WLN*) (Pemberton and Kinkead 4). The Association began hosting biannual and regional conferences. In addition, WCenter is an online discussion group in which members of the writing center community discuss issues and ideas, ask questions, and provide information (including some of the personal updates that are no longer in the *WLN*). It is a very active listserv,

with an average of ten messages and responses a day (and many more people reading messages than posting them).

Another example of the establishment of writing center research is the Writing Centers Research Project (WCRP\*) at the University of Louisville, which collects histories and data from every writing center it can and provides guidance on how historical information can be gathered by interested individuals. A project that began in 2001, it “conducts and supports research on writing center theory and practice and maintains a research repository of historical, empirical, and scholarly materials related to Writing Center Studies” (“Writing Center Research Project”). The collected statistics are available on the website. They also do oral interviews (the transcript of one with Lisa Ede was used for this thesis) and collect writing center materials and documents (such as this thesis). Thus the growth of research and forums dedicated to writing centers is plain.

### **What Histories Can Teach Us**

It has been demonstrated that there has been a proliferation of information—historic and otherwise—about writing centers, as well as increasing numbers of venues for sharing that information. But why should this information be collected? Why, for instance, does the WCRP collect the history, information, and material on every writing center that it can? What can we learn from the historical research of writing centers? First, rather than relying on stereotypes or untested assumptions, histories provide accurate information about specific writing centers’ function and development.

Histories may also tell us about pedagogies and tools that might be adapted for other centers. Because writing centers are influenced by their institutions, what doesn't work in one school may well work in another. Looking back can provide information about circumstances. Also, it's advantageous for those working in a particular writing center to know the circumstances of that center's start and development. As Michael A. Pemberton and Joyce Kinkead say in the introduction to *The Center Will Hold*, "One would like to say that it will be helpful for those who follow the pioneers to understand how we got here from there so they can enjoy the 'wisdom of the past.' Would that it had all been wisdom" (1). So we can learn from mistakes, as well. Further, writing center histories can be useful in tracing the careers of various writing center coordinators and directors who have risen in the fields of writing center work and of rhetoric and composition.

Furthermore, all of these types of histories and historical articles serve to teach readers more about writing centers, yes, but they also perform another important function: they explode myths about writing centers. When we look at the actual histories, we see, for instance, that remediation was not the sole nor even any purpose in even the earliest writing centers. Lou Kelly, in "One-on-One, Iowa City Style: Fifty Years of Individualized Instruction in Writing," describes how Carrie Stanley established the Writing Center at the University of Iowa in the 1930s as a place for students to get one-on-one help with papers. It wasn't until 1945 that the University forced the Writing Center to change its function to remediation for students who had not passed a communications placement test (12). And we also see by reading balanced

histories, what Carino calls cultural histories, that writing centers did not start with the open admissions movement in the 1970s, nor were they necessarily formed and maintained by fearless writing warriors who overcame impossible obstacles to bring aid in writing to the masses! We could even look more closely at the title of North's article "The Idea of a Writing Center"; how does the idea or, perhaps, *ideal*, match the reality of writing centers? Just as North revisited his ideas, we can revisit the myriad ideas, theories, and myths about writing centers. And not only *can* we, we *should*.

### **What *This* History Can Teach Us**

This thesis serves as a history and exploration of the Writing Center at Oregon State University. As such, it describes the Writing Center's beginning, its role within the larger Center for Writing and Learning, the duties and individual contributions of its several directors and coordinators, and the training and duties of the writing assistants who work with students. As a history, it is inherently important (Ede personal interview). As a history of the OSU Writing Center, it provides insight into the struggles of maintaining a quality writing center for over thirty years, highlights in which ways the OSU Writing Center is similar to others and in which ways it differs, and illustrates the common themes described earlier.

While increasing numbers of histories of writing centers are available and even sought (by, for instance, the Writing Centers Research Project), the history recounted in this thesis has a number of strengths. First, as a book-length study, it is more detailed than most histories. Most other histories either give a general overview, or they

examine one or two years or one or two characteristics in great detail. This history covers the whole of the thirty years of the OSU Writing Center's existence and examines all of the categories of possible study in detail (at least, as much as is possible). In this, it contributes to the scholarly conversation a complete and long-term picture from which interested people can access one or two specific facets or the whole history.

Further, this thesis is informed heavily by Carino's cultural model. That is, I consider the institution in which the OSU Writing Center exists; the way it is staffed and directed; its goals, philosophy, and pedagogy; and its particular struggles. To do this, I have included information about the CWL, the University, and the state of Oregon that had an impact on the Writing Center. Considering as much of the circumstances affecting the Writing Center as I've been able to gather has guided my recounting of its history.

My wish to include all context is both impossible and would make this thesis unwieldy. Further, because all histories or analyses are biased to varying extents, this thesis is no exception. I've worked in the Writing Center, so I'm not an uninvolved observer in this history; I am a participant-observer with a vested interest. As objective as I have tried to be in gathering information, conducting interviews, and in writing, my own information filter—my subjective viewpoint, that is—inevitably comes into play. Furthermore, the filters of my interviewees were operating, too. The fact that I knew both the CWL's director, Dr. Lisa Ede, who directed this thesis, and the assistant director, Wayne Robertson, for several years before I began this project may have had

an impact on what was said, the way it was said, and what I heard. Because much of the information in this thesis was obtained from oral histories, too, it can not be verified objectively. Finally, as we have seen in North's articles on "The Idea of a Writing Center," objectivity can be a difficult hurdle; it's tempting to idealize the Center and to place all the blame for all difficulties on external sources.

As indicated above, much of the information for this thesis comes from interviews with Ede and with Robertson, but I've also collected information from many additional sources. Some of the information is from interviews with the current Writing Center coordinator, with previous coordinators, the originator and first director of the Communication Skills Center (CSC\*) (later renamed the Center for Writing and Learning), and other relevant people. In some cases, I was unable to find or to connect with people who had worked at the CSC/CWL. I've been lucky enough to find some archival materials, newspaper articles, and maps. A significant portion of my information was gathered from twenty-five years of annual reports written by Lisa Ede (or an interim director when she was on sabbatical). The annual reports provide information about changes, challenges, and/or accomplishments in the various programs of the CWL over the previous year, along with numbers of writing assistants and statistics about the students who use the programs. Readers can assume that any information not otherwise cited came from these annual reports.

This information is incomplete for a number of reasons. First, little information remains about the earliest years of the Communication Skills Center. Second, peoples' memories are not always accurate or complete—especially when

looking back thirty years. It would have been impossible, for instance, for Lisa to tell me all of the ups and downs of the Center for Writing and Learning for each of her twenty-six years there. Also, the annual reports do not always provide the same information every year; for instance, little budget information was included after 1994. Data that was not relevant at the time was omitted and is unobtainable now. And though the statistics are as accurate as possible, the original numbers were tracked by hand, and some inaccuracies undoubtedly exist. Finally, similar to the interviews, the annual reports are inherently biased in favor of the CWL and the Writing Center. As Ede explained in interviews, annual reports played a key role in her effort to advocate for the CWL.

Whenever possible, I've noted when and where information is incomplete. And, while I've included considerable information about the history of OSU's Writing Center, I have omitted some details to avoid overwhelming readers. Some specific information, such as the breakdown of numbers of writing assistants and of students who used the center, is available in the appendices. Nonetheless, the body of this thesis does contain detail and information about aspects as minute as furniture, for example. I have done this to provide readers with as much information as is manageable, since readers have different interests. Further, the cultural model of examining a history calls for detail; that is, in order to provide a complete picture—to convey the culture—as much information as possible must be provided.

I have also developed a glossary to increase ease of reading. When there is an asterisk (\*) the first time a word appears, it indicates that the word (or acronym) is

available in the Glossary. In most cases, the terms are explained in the text, but readers are encouraged to refer to the Glossary as needed. Also, when dates span two years, for example 1992-93, readers should understand that this refers to the academic year (September to June), unless otherwise noted.

The contents of the following chapters are summarized below. Chapter Two, “An Overview of Writing Centers,” provides basic information about writing centers, including their staffing and administration, budget, and more. While it can not possibly cover every variation of writing centers, it provides the background information necessary to understand the specific history of the OSU Writing Center. In some cases, it follows up on information presented or mentioned in this chapter.

Chapter Three, “The History of the Oregon State University Writing Center as Part of the Center for Writing and Learning,” explores the early history of the Writing Center and its larger body, the Center for Writing and Learning. Because it is difficult to separate the reporting lines and the budget of the Writing Center from that of the CWL, the history of the CWL is examined, as well.

Chapter Four, “The Oregon State University Writing Center—Its Own Entity,” looks at the philosophy and pedagogy of the Writing Center itself. It further explores both the duties of the coordinator and their identities and individual contributions. Chapter Four also provides a description of a typical experience in the Writing Center and a breakdown of the make-up of the Writing Center’s writing assistants and of the students who use it. Further, it examines those elements of the



Writing Center and its pedagogy which have remained constant over the years and those which have changed.

The final chapter, “Revisiting the Oregon State University Writing Center in Context,” explores the OSU Writing Center in the context of other writing centers and the research done on them. In doing that, it follows up on the themes delineated in this chapter, analyzing how each has played out (and continues to play out) at the OSU Writing Center.

The combination of secondary research (in Chapters One and Two), primary research (in Chapters Three and Four), and analysis (in Chapter Five) delineates and illustrates those themes and tensions (remediation versus collaboration, reputation, open admissions, vulnerability, variety of students and styles of working, and whether writing centers do what they say they do) discussed in this chapter. As stated previously, these themes and tensions are widespread in the writing center world and are not specific to the OSU Writing Center. Thus, this thesis allows readers to capture a more complete sense of writing centers—of all writing centers and of OSU’s Writing Center—by providing information which explicates these themes and tensions. Tension, or struggles, are ubiquitous; without them, there is no need to grow, to examine, to change. Change is, in many ways, a constant in writing centers, as Chapter Two demonstrates.

## Chapter Two: An Overview of Writing Centers

*The idea of a generic writing center makes us uneasy because it is a truism of this field that writing centers tend to differ from one another because they have evolved within different kinds of institutions and different writing programs and therefore serve different needs.*

—Muriel Harris, “What’s Up and What’s In”

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This chapter examines various facets of writing centers, such as writing center names, practice and pedagogy, staffing and administration, reporting lines and budget, and location in the institution. Some of the topics introduced in Chapter One will be followed up here. As an overview, this chapter necessarily disregards the subtleties of different writing centers. I do not, for instance, discuss writing centers that exist only online. The purpose of the chapter is to provide a context for the discussion of OSU’s Writing Center.

### Writing Center Names and Their Connotations

Although commonly known now as writing centers (and referred to as such in this thesis), for many years writing centers were generally called *clinics* or *labs*. In his essay, “What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Our Metaphors: A Cultural Critique of Clinic, Lab and Center,” Peter Carino analyzes the connotations of these metaphors, as they have been the most common names since the emergence of open admissions and the increase of facilities offering one-to-one instruction in writing. His

exploration provides valuable information about how writing centers were and are perceived.

The term *clinic*, Carino says, is one of the older names. While the word was more commonly applied to economics or business “to elevate their [economics’ or business’] activities to the scientific status of medicine” (38), Carino notes a reference to a *composition clinic* in the journal *College English* in January, 1951. This reference states that the student’s “writing is diagnosed and [the student] is given whatever treatment he needs” (39). The main problem with this metaphor, says Carino, is that deficiencies are placed on students, thus “degrad[ing] students by enclosing them in a metaphor of illness” (39). Students’ “illnesses” were treated with the use of worksheets (on mechanics, punctuation, etc.). Carino further argues that this metaphor, is that it fails to recognize that “learning is a negotiation of new habits, values, expectations, turns of mind, [and] strategies of representation” (40). The term *clinic* is no longer used in regard to writing centers and appears to have died out during the early 1980s (40).

The term *writing lab*, on the other hand, had different if almost equally derogatory and problematic connotations. This term, says Carino, became popular in the late 1960s just as the idea of writing as a process, discussed later in this chapter, was taking hold. The main problem was that often labs, as places to “experiment,” were used, instead, as places “to do the dirty work of grammar [. . . thus] free[ing] classroom teachers to concentrate on the new process pedagogy” (41). Because most of the visitors to writing labs were sent there for remediation, students who went felt marginalized and punished (40, 41). We can surmise that it was hard for these students

to learn when feeling as if they were experimental animals and being punished, marked as different and deficient. Some writing lab staff did work actively, though surreptitiously, on writing with students, collaborating with students on students' writing. But some others—grateful for a chance to be working in any capacity in a university during an economic recession and eager to focus on their own writing with the hope of career advancement—left students on their own “to work on drill exercises, audio cassettes, or computer terminals” (42-3). (This style of writing center work was mentioned in the previous chapter.)

The term most commonly used in contemporary settings, according to Carino, is *writing center*. Carino does not see this term as pejorative, as it “evokes the communal aspect of the center as a microculture in which camaraderie replaces the competitive atmosphere of the classroom” (43). Further, Carino states that *center* can be a,

move toward empowerment, not only by claiming to central to all writers but also through such activities as the training of teaching assistants, faculty workshops for writing across the curriculum, credit courses, grammar hotlines, and tutoring for standardized tests such as the NTE and GRE. (43)

Granted, not all writing centers offer this array of activities. Too, Carino cautions that even this metaphor may have difficulties. It may be seen merely as a new name for the old writing clinic or writing lab and not as a process-oriented program (43). Also, while *center* implies inclusion as a core part of the university, it may appear, then, as less welcoming or safe for students—less of a place insulated from the stresses and politics of the university (44). The separation between the university and the writing center—

what Boquet would call secrecy (“Our Little Secret”)—may be lost. In sum, no matter what writing centers are called—and there doesn’t seem to be a perfect title—they often continue to be associated with remediation, as was discussed in Chapter One.

Many variations exist among writing centers, but scholars agree that one-on-one meetings and collaborative learning should be the goals. Writing center staff do help students with mechanics, but that is not the main focus. Many centers offer handouts on grammar, punctuation, and usage (as well as other topics) to allow students to practice and/or learn these skills. Ideally, though, the focus in conferences is on the papers as a whole, the larger issues, such as concept, organization, audience, support, and more, as opposed to sentence-level issues (until later drafts). And most people associated with writing centers agree with Stephen North that the goal is “to make sure that writers, and not necessarily their texts, are what get changed by instruction,” or, more concisely: “our job is to produce better writers, not better writing” (“The Idea” 76).

### **Practice and Pedagogy**

But how do writing center staff members help students become better writers? One way is by teaching students who seek help about the way writing comes about. The big word in writing from the 1970s to the 1990s was *process*\*—a movement emphasizing what happens to and with writers while writing, that is, the different phases that writers go through when writing. A complaint among those writing about writing centers during this period was that *process* has become a catch-phrase, losing

some its nuances of meaning (65; North “The Idea” 77). Nonetheless, *process* remains useful as a definition of the different phases writers go through in order to write. These usually involve prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing (Murray, Perl). While, for simplicity's sake, most books and articles explain these ideas as a linear progression, research has shown that people move all around these different phases while writing (Perl 34). If writers get stuck, sometimes they go back to prewriting by brainstorming, freewriting, or outlining. Some writers, while reviewing what they have written (perhaps to see where to move on to) make some changes, which could be revision (moving a paragraph or section to a more effective spot or adding evidence) or editing (correcting a comma or rewording a sentence). Still, teaching student writers that writing is a process—that even for “good” student writers, even for professional writers, the work does not emerge fully formed onto the paper, perfect in all ways, like Athena emerging from Zeus’ head—is vital. Writing center tutors, therefore, tend to talk with students about what writing is—and what it isn't.

The most important words in the previous sentence are “talk with”; Stephen North says that “[t]he essence of the writing center method [ . . . ] is this talking” (“The Idea” 82). Writing center work involves discussion between tutors and writers starting where the student writers are, whether it is brainstorming about a topic, revising a first draft, or editing a final draft. Nearly always, discussion involves helping students understand the writing assignment.

Most of the talking focuses on the work at hand, but some may digress into seemingly unrelated areas, such as background, family life, and more. In *Good Intentions:*

*Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*, Nancy Grimm suggests that these “off-topic” conversations are vital to the work of writing centers, that it is important for tutors to connect with the students with whom they work and to try to understand how those students’ culture, socioeconomic status, family lives, and values affect their writing.

While not everyone agrees with Grimm about the importance or practicality of trying to achieve this level of awareness, most do agree that the human interaction between tutors and writers is central to effective conferencing; knowing what is going on with students is important because this can affect their writing (and concentration, memory, etc.).

Working in a writing center requires various skills: interest in students, interest in writing, and effective listening and questioning. Most of these skills can be taught, and many writing centers provide training for the people who work there—some formal and some experiential. Some writing centers, such as at the University of Iowa, offer a semester-long class specifically for training potential tutors before they begin tutoring on their own (Kelly 17). Others, including OSU’s Writing Center, depend more on “on-the-job” training, beginning with observation and soon moving into one-on-one work.

As was mentioned briefly in Chapter One, some centers have strict rules about the role and actions of tutors. Irene Clark says that many “writing center policies seem to be characterized by a large number of ‘nevers’” (91). Others are more flexible, allowing tutors to find their own ways that work best with students, at least to a certain extent.

One of the more common suggestions, endorsed by Jeff Brooks, is that tutors should never write on students' papers. The reasoning is that students are more likely to take responsibility, to "own" their papers, if they are the only ones making changes and corrections. They are, it is suggested, less likely to sit back and let the tutor do the work; this approach can be helpful if students seem to be resisting involvement. It has the merits of, again, more fully involving students and encouraging conversation about their writing, and it keeps tutors from getting too enthusiastic about making a paper what it could be instead of helping students themselves see what it could be. Brooks states, "[w]hen you 'improve' a student's paper, you haven't been a tutor at all; you've been an editor" (83).

Yet others suggest more flexibility in deciding what is appropriate assistance. Clark challenges the concerns many express (humanities professors, in particular, she says) about tutors intervening too directly in students' writing and about plagiarism (89). This model, Clark observes, assumes an individual, rather than a social model of writing. She agrees with Jerome Bruner that the ultimate goal of writing centers is to make students not need them anymore; however, she insists that to accomplish this, tutors need to be more "active" in response to each student, especially early on (92). Clark even states that, "[s]ometimes the suggestions of a phrase or two can be wonderfully instructive" (93).

Many centers also encourage the reading aloud of papers; Brooks suggests that students read their own papers aloud to the tutor (85). In practice, this may be done by students or by tutors; often, students are shy about reading their work aloud. In other



cases, they may have read it aloud already and would benefit more from hearing it in another voice. Reading aloud is beneficial for numerous reasons: finding syntactical errors, fragments, run-on sentences, and other mechanical errors; hearing if the organization makes sense or if the paper shoots into different directions; and discovering sections that don't hold readers' interest.

Recently, writing centers have been employing computers and other online technologies to extend and diversify their services. Eric Hobson examines the uses and concerns surrounding computer and online use in "Straddling the Virtual Fence," and he urges caution. One way of using computers in writing centers is for tutors and students to sit at the computer to work on the students' paper, allowing students to make changes at the time. Another way in which computers are used is via online writing labs (OWLs\*); one purpose of this is to allow students to e-mail papers to writing centers and receive written feedback by a tutor. Hobson says that this service is very useful to non-traditional students but, again, cautions that it may not be as effective as meeting in person. The concept of the OWL encompasses not only feedback on specific papers, but more general information about the center itself and grammatical explanations and exercises. The OWL at Purdue University (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>) is both an excellent example and resource. Hobson suggests the need to reexamine writing centers' mission in regard to technology.

Various theories support writing center work. One of the most important of these is collaborative learning. Kenneth Bruffee, an early advocate of collaborative

learning, suggests that writing is, put very simply, thought made public (90-1); therefore, he says, the duty for tutors and writing instructors includes,

engaging students in conversation at as many points in the writing process as possible and [ . . . ] ensur[ing] that that conversation is similar in as many ways as possible to the way [they] would eventually like them to write. (91)

Collaborative learning with tutors, he adds, enables students to converse with peers in an academic context, to, as it is said, enter the conversation. These conversations, says Lisa Ede, are inherently social. She points out that the idea that writing as a solitary activity is a cultural construction, about which those who work and who run writing centers must educate others. Otherwise, she warns, if writing is seen as inherently individual, then writing centers might seem to be going against what is natural (collaborating on what is usually a solitary activity) and, as a result, be further marginalized (“Writing as a Social Process”). Andrea Lunsford, in “Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center,” explores the need for writing center staff to be aware that they are not taking control of students’ work in conferences while believing that they, the staff, are collaborating simply because they are meeting individually with students. She admits that true collaboration is “damnably difficult,” explaining that “[c]ollaborative environments and tasks must *demand* collaboration [ , and s]tudents, tutors, teachers must really need one another to carry out common goals” (emphasis original; 111). She further points to seven reasons that collaboration encourages student learning, including that it helps students to learn abstractions, to

transfer and assimilate information from different fields, and that it leads to overall greater accomplishments (111).

As writing centers become more established, other theoretical perspectives common in the field of writing are increasingly applied to writing centers. For example, as mentioned earlier, Nancy Grimm supports a postmodern approach. Alice Gillam suggests an approach based on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, and is supported in this by Laura Rogers and Carolyn A. Statler. Whichever approach one takes, however, Lil Brannon and C. H. Knoblach strongly encourage tutors to be able to explain their pedagogy—based on experience and evaluation (39). Furthermore, Steven North suggests that those who work in writing centers “test their assumptions” about what works to make sure their methods are truly effective (“Writing Center Research” 24).

### **Staff and Administration**

Writing centers have different types of staff, including undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, professional tutors, and volunteers, all of whom may bring or use different pedagogies. Many writing centers have a mixture of types of tutors, as can be seen in Joyce Kinkead and Jeanette Harris' book, *Writing Centers in Context*, which describes twelve different schools' writing centers. For instance, at the time that this collection was published, while the University of Southern California's tutors were only either graduate or undergraduate students, and those at Utah State University's Rhetoric Associates Program were only undergraduates, tutors at the University of

Toledo were made up of peer-tutors, graduate students, composition instructors, journalists, and reading teachers (231). Harvard University specialized somewhat: most of the tutors were undergraduate and graduate students, but there was one English as a Second Language (ESL) tutor and a faculty member to assist with senior theses (229).

Kenneth Bruffee in “Peer Tutoring and the ‘Conversation of Mankind’” and Harvey Kail and John Trimbur in “The Politics of Peer Tutoring” discuss the issue of peer tutoring. Although Bruffee acknowledges the concerns of some faculty and staff about the use of peer tutors—such as it being “the blind leading the blind” (93)—he endorses their use, as do most writing centers. Some of this endorsement is merely practical: students might be more likely to accept help offered by peers than by teachers (who could symbolize the formal classroom) (Bruffee 87). And although the practical and financial aspects of “[paying] their tutors in credits rather than money” (North “The Idea” 84), done by some writing centers, are important, the benefits to both students and tutors are even more important. As Muriel Harris puts it,

As a corollary to the tradition of active involvement in learning, of making the student a participant instead of a passive listener, writing centers have a tradition of offering a kind of experience for tutors that is not offered elsewhere in the academic setting. Through training courses, at conferences, and at work, tutors are developing skills and talents that enhance their own writing skills, their understanding of the learning processes, their interpersonal skills, their awareness of writing processes, and their employability. (“What’s Up and What’s In” 33)

By collaborating in this way, tutors learn not only how to talk with students about work in progress, they learn new information (especially if a student’s paper is on an

unfamiliar subject) and develop stronger interpersonal and communication skills. Many students are less intimidated by a peer than by a teacher (even one who will not be putting a grade on the work) and thus may be more open to suggestions and more able to discover their own solutions to rhetorical problems. Peer tutors may be particularly effective at modeling helpful writing behavior, as well. For example, while all tutors and teachers encourage students to consult a reference book when confused (instead of feeling as if they should try to memorize all grammar rules), the act of a peer tutor actually doing it may have a stronger impact on students.

Although writing centers rely on tutors for the actual work in the center, writing centers are most often run by administrators who are not writing assistants. The administrators, who may be graduate students, instructors, or tenure-line faculty, choose and train tutors, ensure that writing centers are adequately staffed, see to the daily operations, and, often, manage the budget. Most writing centers are usually administrated by a director or a coordinator, whose role and duties can vary widely—along with title, status, and job security.

### **Reporting Lines and Budget**

In many writing centers, reporting lines\*—which relate to the writing center's place in the institution—and budget are areas of difficulty. These difficulties range from marginalization to lack of control to inadequate funding and more. And while nearly almost all writing centers struggle with one or more of these problems—it is one of the themes discussed in Chapter One—few share identical situations.

The reporting lines are the means of bureaucratic control within the institution. Variation in reporting lines exists. Some writing centers are under the auspices of the English Department (its chair or director of the first-year writing program), while others are associated with other departments, provosts, deans, programs, or administrative units (Kinkead and Harris). All of these locations have benefits and drawbacks.

In cases in which the writing center administrator reports to the chair of the school's English Department, "the writing center and writing program should share the same or complementary goals" even if their approaches are different, according to Mark Waldo (74). However, he reports, often difficulties exist between the two; for instance, the writing center may be expected to function as a site of remedial instruction. He also expresses concern about the development of a hierarchy—with the writing center staff at the bottom—when writing centers are part of English Departments. Sometimes restrictions antithetical to writing centers are placed by the English Department. According to a table comparing all the schools in Kinkead and Harris' book, a few writing centers housed in English Departments serve only students in that department. More often, though, there is a mix, as Muriel Harris describes about the Purdue University Writing Lab,

From the English Department's perspective, the lab is intended primarily to serve students enrolled in various courses in the department's extensive writing program, though we welcome students from all across campus and seek out opportunities to work with a variety of courses in various disciplines where writing is emphasized. ("A Multiservice Writing Lab" 3)

Harris subtly suggests that writing centers may actually work more broadly than the department to which they report believes they do. As Steve Braye says in a co-authored discussion about the relationship between the writing center and the departments and with the institution itself: “Is the administration/Eng. dept./colleagues/etc. friend or foe? In all likelihood, they are both” (Simpson, Braye, and Boquet 168).

When the writing center reports to a unit other than the English Department, other issues are of concern. Jeanne Simpson, in “Perceptions, Realities, and Possibilities: Central Administration and Writing Centers,” addresses six common but generally faulty perceptions about central administration—that central administration wants to keep writing centers “powerless and marginalized” (189), holds “all the power” (189), is unpredictable with funding, makes inappropriate choices about important curricular and tenure/promotional decisions, and more. One of her main points is that college and university administrators tend not to focus on the details of the writing center itself, but rather view writing centers as “space, student use, personnel dollars, productivity, and a program that requires assessment and evaluation on the basis of institutional mission and priorities” (190). Further, she says, that while specific funding for writing centers may be limited, central administration ensures that extra or emergency money is available where and when it is needed for any program within the entire institution (usually), including writing centers.

In regard to budget, whatever the program or department, different parts of the institution inevitably vie with each other for the money. Sometimes, as Braye points out, English Departments and writing centers compete for assistance (Simpson, Braye,

and Boquet 168). Even when it is part of the English Department, the writing center may have limited funding; according to Harris, the Purdue University Writing Lab has “a very meager budget for expenses provided by the English Department [ . . . and] it is a constant struggle to stay within this budget [ . . . ]. The major department expenditure is the salaries of the instructional and clerical staff” (“A Multiservice Writing Lab” 22). And Edward Lotto, from Lehigh University, states that when his writing center reported to the dean’s office, it tended to receive less money, as departmental needs were prioritized; now that he reports to the vice-provost, “[t]his direct connection helps keep the needs of the center above the fray at the budget table every fall” (93). Thus, funding appears to be both unpredictable and a source of concern among most writing centers.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter is intended to give readers an overview of what writing centers are and of some of the variation found in them. The descriptions I have provided inevitably simplify the more complex reality; as Muriel Harris points out, the specifics of writing centers are dependent on their institutional cultures, and, therefore, wide variation does and must exist (“What’s Up and What’s In”). Clearly, Harris understands Carino’s cultural model for writing centers. In the next two chapters, I turn to the history of OSU’s Writing Center.



### **Chapter Three: The History of the Oregon State University Writing Center as Part of the Center for Writing and Learning**

*Context, in terms of writing centers, is not a simple concept. In addition to the institutions in which they are situated, writing centers often have smaller contexts—specific programs or departments of which they are a part. These smaller contexts, like the larger ones, vary widely. [. . .]. Thus many, perhaps most, writing centers exist within multiple contexts, all of which help to define the resulting programs. Often, these different contexts exert opposing forces on a writing center program. As a result, programs must frequently compromise between the various forces that surround them, treading a sometimes torturous path among conflicting needs and demands in order to serve each constituency fairly and effectively.*

—Joyce A. Kinkead and Jeanette G. Harris,  
*xv-xvi*

The Oregon State University Writing Center is within the larger Center for Writing and Learning (CWL). It's both difficult and unhelpful to separate it from that context and, too, from the bureaucratic powers that control most of the money. In order to understand the history of the Writing Center, then, one must first look at its place in the CWL.

This chapter will explore the beginnings of the Writing Center (then known as the Writing Lab\*) as part of the Center for Writing and Learning (then known as the Communication Skills Center [CSC\*]). (In general, when talking about the years prior to the name changes, I will use the titles CSC and Writing Lab, and after the name changes, I will use the titles CWL and Writing Center.) It will also examine the various reporting lines of the CWL over the years—that is, the bureaucratic bodies to whom the director reported—as well as its budget. Interactions with other departments and

ways of advertising services will also be examined. Finally, this chapter will explore the more recent changes with OSU's current strategic plan and how it impacts the CWL and its Writing Center.

### **Supplemental Writing Services at Oregon State University: The Beginning of the Writing Lab and the Communication Skills Center**

The Oregon State University Writing Lab arose from need. According to Tim Perkins, who later developed the CSC and ran the Writing Lab, several English instructors in the early- to mid-1970s offered extra office hours to help students with the mechanics of writing. Margaret Lawrence was an English instructor at OSU and a "classical grammarian" who performed "emergency grammar and mechanical surgery on students" (Perkins). It is unclear whether other English composition instructors did this as well. What we do know, thanks to a report by James Sweeney, an Education graduate student in the 1970s, is that this assistance was a formal program in the English Department called the OSU Writing Clinic (Sweeney 13). Indeed, a 1976 brochure for the new CSC states, "The OSU Writing Clinic is now the Writing Skills portion of the Communication Skills Center" (*The OSU Communication Skills Center*).

According to Perkins, the timing for opening the CSC was not unusual. The CSC was instituted just before and during open admissions, at the time of the "first real TV generations" (who seemed to read less), and around the time *Newsweek* magazine ran the article "Why Johnny Can't Write" (which seemed to precipitate a crisis in schools and colleges [Ede *Situating Composition*]). Further, an OSU report on the

results of a Communication Skills Testing Program based on testing done in 1971-72 recommended that “[a]ll students at the University should have access to a reading/study skills center” which should be run by a “qualified director” (Ahrendt and Orzech 38). Finally, Margaret Lawrence retired in 1974 after directing the Writing Clinic for four years (and teaching for twenty-five) (Castano). Thus, the confluence of the national writing crisis, Lawrence’s retirement, and the results of the 1972 study at OSU made it the right time to combine the recommended study and reading skills with writing skills into a single resource center.

At the time, Perkins was an instructor in the English Department at Oregon State University. He was well known at the school, as he had been a prominent athlete as an undergraduate there (Hogg personal interview) and had returned to teach after earning a master’s degree in English from Western Washington University. During the summer of 1975, Perkins attended a summer teaching institute at OSU run by Stewart Knapp, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. Perkins suggested the idea of combining a writing lab with the existing Study Skills\* and Reading programs to Knapp, who had been involved in implementing the Math Center, and together they wrote a proposal (Perkins). That proposal included all aspects of what would become the Communication Skills Center, including location, purpose, and organization. They were awarded a grant to develop this new unit (Perkins).

In fall, 1976, the CSC opened on the second floor of one end of the McAlexander Fieldhouse, near the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). (Please see Appendix A for a map.) Although space might have been available in Moreland

Hall, where the English Department was located, or where the Reading Program ran, or even in the Counseling Center, where Study Skills originated, Perkins states that he wanted a neutral site “by instinct,” only later realizing that it was smarter and more appealing to students to reduce department ties and, perhaps, control.

So, with the ROTC students practicing on the first floor of one end of the armory, according to Perkins, they “set up carrels [and opened the CSC . . . ], making it all up as we [went].” A number of services were offered; along with reading improvement and study skills, “Writing Skills” provided self-help materials (with a charge for workbooks) and assistance from tutors for, as a flyer for the new CSC states,

Spelling, Punctuation, Grammar and usage, Sentence content and variety, Paragraph unity, Thesis development, Introductions and Conclusions, Logic and evidence, Tone, Individual writing programs [and] Technical report writing, Research paper writing, English as a second language, [and] Dialect complications. (*The OSU Communication Skills Center*).

Also at the time, several schools at OSU (the Colleges of Agriculture, Business, Education, Forestry, and Home Economics) had all of their students take an English Diagnostic Test (EDT\*), which was administered by the Writing Lab. The students’ scores determined whether they needed to take a writing class or to work on skills (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation) in the Lab using taped programs and workbooks (Lundeberg). In general, these students worked individually, but tutors, as indicated above, were available to answer questions. Although the numbers of colleges that required students to take the EDT (for which the colleges were charged money)

decreased over the years, the EDT remained until 1990, when the Writing Intensive Curriculum (WIC\*) was introduced (Ede personal interview).

Because it had combined with existing programs, the CSC also offered reading classes: Basic Reading, Rapid Reading (which led to the development of a Technical Reading class focused on how to read scientific texts, textbooks, and how to take notes) and Vocabulary (Lundeberg). Study Skills, too, were incorporated into the CSC, a program that had begun in the Counseling Center and often involved the coordinator, Michele Sakurai, visiting various groups and dormitories (Sakurai). Perkins was in charge of the Writing Skills portion of the Communication Skills Center, and he was the CSC Coordinator (*The OSU Communication Skills Center*).

The early tasks in the Writing Lab included hiring tutors to work with students on their papers and to assist with the independent EDT study, scheduling appointments, and developing the weekly tutor meeting and tutor training (Lundeberg). In addition, the staff created materials for Writing 90, which covered basic skills. Perkins was involved in all aspects of the CSC, including budgeting, public relations (making sure that information about the CSC was included in the school bulletin for 1976, advertising via bookmarks in the bookstore, speaking at orientation meetings), and even making coffee (Perkins).

Students were hired as tutors through the federal work-study program\* (Lundeberg). As part of the selection process, students took a test developed to ensure they were qualified to work in the Writing Lab and provided a writing sample. In

addition, Perkins says that one or two instructors worked in the Writing Lab each term; it is unclear whether these instructors volunteered their time or were paid.

Perkins reports that OSU was supportive of this endeavor, stating that Stewart Knapp and Richard Astro, then the chair of the English Department, were especially encouraging. He attributes some of the support to his being known at OSU and posits that it would have been “harder for an outside person to come in—at least to get [the Center] started.” Perkins states that the CSC put “tentacles throughout the institution” by advertising itself, getting involved with assisting incoming freshman athletes in the summers prior to their matriculation, and in his having a split appointment with the English Department. Further, various television stations and newspapers ran stories on the CSC in the fall of 1976 (Sweeney 15).

Perkins reported to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies Stewart Knapp. (He had a split appointment with the English Department, where he taught half-time during the first year the CSC was open.) After that, the CSC position was increased to full time, and Perkins no longer taught in the English Department (Sweeney 16).

The budget for the CSC came from various sources: the grant that initiated the program, Michele Sakurai’s salary from Student Services, the Rapid Reading Course (through Continuing Education), running Writing 90, and the EDT required by the various departments (Perkins). In addition, they applied for and received research money (Perkins). Perkins reports that they carefully documented what they did; unfortunately, these reports do not appear to have survived.

Initially, the purpose of the CSC was to help students with writing and with basic skills and to “provide the tools to make success available to all students,” as Sakurai says. But it was more complicated, and Perkins states, “[it took] two to three years to understand the dynamics/issues [of the CSC],” leading to change over the three years that he was there. Thus, it makes sense that Lundeberg, who began shortly after Perkins left, reports the philosophy was two-part: to help students improve their writing and “to provide an opportunity for other students to do the teaching” (she suggests that working in the Writing Lab “helped tutors as much as [it helped the] students coming in”).

Perkins further states that there was a clear need for pedagogical change during his tenure, with increased freewriting and revision and changes in the ways people taught writing. Because writing center research was so new and so little was published on it at that point, Perkins and his staff were able to receive grants to measure and evaluate the teaching of writing as part of the national movement, as well as to build their own resources at the center (Perkins). Unfortunately, the results of their measurements and evaluation no longer exist. Still, the CSC at OSU had been born.

### **The Communication Skills Center as a Work-in-Progress**

#### Director and Location Changes in 1979

In 1979, Perkins left OSU for Northeastern University in Boston, where he developed the “East Coast equivalent” of the Bay Area Writing Project: teaching teachers how to teach writing. Barb Hogg (who had joined the CSC in 1978 as a part-

time clerical worker and who eventually became the assistant director) and Michele Sakurai remained in their respective positions of clerical assistant and Study Skills coordinator. Roberta Lundeberg likely became the Writing Lab Coordinator at that time, although the exact date is unknown and she says her title was not formalized (Lundeberg). Lisa Pederson, who had been a research assistant unclassified in the CSC in spring, 1979 (while obtaining a masters degree at the University of Oregon) became the director of the Communications Skills Center in September 1979 (Castano). During her tenure, several changes occurred, as documented in an annual report written by Pederson. First, the CSC developed a procedures manual, which, she states in the report, “will be a great help to the entire staff, especially new members” (6). Second, staff developed a training program for tutors, drawing on the skills and experience of various programs to address issues such as Non-Native English Speakers (NNES\*), ways of tutoring, policies and procedures, and grammar concerns. Third, they developed a procedure for faculty to refer students to the CSC. The CSC staff also began to gather statistics of use and increased the Center’s promotional efforts (6). Finally, the CSC moved to Waldo Hall, a great improvement in atmosphere and space, which also enabled them to organize their materials better. (Please refer to the map in Appendix A to see the rooms of the CSC/CWL in Waldo Hall. Further discussion of the space used by the CSC will be explored more in Chapter 3.) In June, 1979, Pederson left OSU.

While these shifts were occurring with the CSC, various changes were also being considered in the English Department.



### Development of Composition and Rhetoric in the English Department

In 1979, the English Department, under Chair Robert Frank, underwent some changes. It was in the process of developing a composition and rhetoric program, but there were not yet enough courses for a full schedule in the field. Thus, reports Frank, they were looking to hire a professor who could introduce some courses on composition and rhetoric into the curriculum; ideally, this person would have experience in teaching in other areas as well (Frank). In addition, the professor who had directed the first year writing program, Ed Smith, was retiring, and a replacement was needed. According to Lisa Ede, who eventually was offered and accepted the position, the coordinator of composition position had typically been held by a junior professor or a tenured professor who didn't publish much. The faculty felt at that time that it should instead be run by someone with expertise and training in rhetoric and composition (personal interview). Since the English Department did not yet offer a masters program, composition (Writing 121\*) was taught by non-tenure-line instructors and several other faculty members; the coordinator of composition, therefore, worked with the faculty on how to teach this course effectively and with consistency within the department. Because this coincided with Lisa Pederson's departure from the CSC and thus the need for someone to direct the CSC, the English Department cobbled together the positions of coordinator of composition and director of the CSC into a tenure-line position (Ede personal interview).

Frank also recognized that the CSC would benefit from a director who had a PhD—preferably in composition and rhetoric, although that was fairly rare then—and

who at least had experience in composition and rhetoric. This would not only “professionalize” the position (and the composition and rhetoric program, as well as the CSC), but also provide continuity to both programs. He states he was also looking for someone with “a history as a scholar, [. . . who] had a track record or promise as an outstanding teacher, and an effective colleague,” which was what he looked for, really, in all of his applicants.

Although Frank doesn’t recall the exact number of applicants, he believes it was likely between 80 and 150 people (a tenure-track position in literature would have netted between 300 and 500 applicants). Ede filled the requirements: she was a scholar with teaching experience who had run a first-year composition program, and, although her PhD was in Victorian Literature, she had significant training in composition and rhetoric, thanks to her participation in a year-long National Endowment for the Humanities seminar in rhetoric and composition.

During her visit to OSU to apply for the job, Ede was not formally interviewed by anyone from the CSC; she would not, she says, have even seen the CSC had she not asked. Although Ede expresses some amazement at her naiveté when taking the job, it appears that the English Department, too, did not truly understand the level of work and involvement the CSC would require when they combined these positions (of director of the CSC and the coordinator of composition). Indeed, during her interview with the English Department faculty, Ede was only asked questions focused on her responsibilities in English, “and it was clear they knew little, if anything, about the CWL part of my job” (Ede personal interview).

Thus, after Pederson's departure in June, 1979, Lisa Ede took over as director of the CSC part-time. In addition to coordinating first year writing and directing the CSC, Ede was contracted to teach eight classes during the school year. The normal teaching load for tenure-track faculty then was three courses per term; Ede's contract called for one course release time to direct the CSC (Ede personal interview). Ede was the first director of the CSC to hold a tenure-line position in the English Department. (Perkins had only been an instructor, and Pederson was not involved with the English Department.) Although Ede had no direct experience in writing centers, she had a great interest in the developing field of rhetoric (Ede personal interview), and, as stated above, had already participated in an intensive seminar in that field.

Although Pederson had left quite detailed notes, Ede was not trained by Pederson at all. In fact, when Ede arrived, she was at first unable to locate anyone with direct experience working at the CSC. Eventually, she connected with the people who had worked there the previous year and rehired them (Hogg, Lundeberg, and Sakurai). (They were in nine-month, year-to-year positions.) After beginning the job, Ede realized the magnitude of what she had taken on, admitting that she had been "shockingly inattentive to the dual nature of the position I was being asked to fill." Due to the amount of time the CSC required, she taught, it turns out, only one course during 1980-81, thanks to the intervention of Robert Frank, who was very supportive (Ede personal interview).

At the CSC, while Lundeberg coordinated the Writing Lab and Sakurai ran Study Skills, most other duties fell to Ede, including chores as mundane as ordering

supplies, because there was inadequate administrative and secretarial support. Barb Hogg worked with Ede from the time Ede started the job, but because Hogg was then a graduate student, her hours were limited. Mostly, Hogg helped with accounting and ordering, although she did not entirely take over these tasks for a number of years (Ede personal interview). In the first few years, Ede also had to manage the finances of the CWL, in addition to administrating the CSC at the start. She felt, she reports, “quite hopeless and overwhelmed, and I cried a lot in my [Waldo Hall] office” during the first months after beginning the job (Ede personal interview).

#### The Evolution of the Communication Skills Center Under Lisa Ede

Ede began to make changes in the CSC, some of which were based on theory and some on circumstance. For instance, Ede was concerned that some of the CSC’s budget depended on money from the Rapid Reading course and the EDT. Although she had pedagogical concerns about both of these services and their value, she also worried that they were not a dependable source of income (Ede personal interview). (See the budget section in this chapter for more details). Ede felt that a “recurring budget would provide stability and allow decisions on programs [to be made based] on sound pedagogical understanding and not just on the budget” (Ede personal interview). It is interesting to note that Pederson, in her memos to Ede about the programs, emphasized which services (both existing and suggested) made money; for instance, Pederson wrote that the Reading Technical Material classes “should be a real \$\$-getter” (Pederson “CSS” 2) and that “the possibility of a vocabulary class for

[foreign] students [. . .] should be pursued—they're [the English Language Institute] even willing to pay!" (Pederson "Program Development" 1).

The EDT contributed to the CSC's budget (generally between \$2,500 to \$4,000 a year), but it reinforced the image of the Writing Lab as a place for remediation, and students who failed the EDT were required to do decontextualized exercises in grammar, punctuation, and usage. Writing centers already struggle with this perception by others, and Ede disliked its being reinforced. Further, she felt it departed from the primary mission of the Writing Lab, which was not and is not to remediate, but rather to teach students to think and act like writers (Ede personal interview). The EDT was phased out by various departments over the years and was eliminated eventually when the Writing Intensive Curriculum (WIC) program was instituted in 1990 (Ede personal interview).

The Rapid Reading course, too, states Ede, was not in line with the CSC's philosophy; she felt the traditional reading comprehension course fit better. Further, she was skeptical about the benefits of the Rapid Reading course; while students might indeed learn to read faster and thus complete their assigned reading, how much were they truly understanding and remembering? Thus, that class was eliminated in 1992.

Although Ede says she had no formal writing center philosophy when she arrived, she was familiar with current research on rhetoric and on the writing process, and she consciously tried to adapt this research to the Writing Lab. Over the years, her philosophy (explored more fully in the next chapter) has become increasingly "explicit, conscious, and theorized"—and specific to writing centers (Ede personal interview). In

general, it's based on collaborative and peer learning. To reflect the Writing Lab's emphasis on collaboration and peer learning, Ede expanded the training for the writing assistants using this philosophy.

The level of growth and learning that writing assistants gain as a result of their experience working with student writers was a surprise to Ede when she started. She was also surprised at the different type of relationship she had with them as compared with students in her classes. She states that,

it became clear quickly what an amazing experience it was to work with all [the] undergraduate writing assistants, [. . .] to be part of their lives and education in a non-traditional way and to form a genuine community in the Writing Center that is different than in the classroom. (personal interview)

In fact, similar to what Lundeberg said, Ede believes that the work done in the Writing Center is worthwhile just for what it gives the writing assistants, as long as no harm is done to the students who seek services (and it appears no harm is done given the feedback from students) (Ede personal interview). The smaller number of writing assistants through the 1980s made the intimate community Ede speaks of stronger. At that time, she says, she knew the names, faces, and work of all the writing assistants. Because the number of writing assistants has increased to between thirty-five to forty in the 1990s and on, it's harder, she says, for her to keep track of each. While she celebrates the numbers, the diffusion of this intimacy appears to be a loss (Ede personal interview).

### Shifts in Names and the Impact of the Writing Intensive Curriculum Program

In 1990, several changes occurred: the names of CSC and Writing Lab were changed and the WIC program began. The names were changed in 1990 due to concern about the remedial connotations of the titles, in particular, the words *skills* and *lab*. Further, Writing Lab sounded medical, says Ede, adding that *lab* sounds “like a place you go to get something done to you” (personal interview). Many writing centers were shifting away from the term *lab* around that time (Ede personal interview). These name changes coincided with the shift from *tutor* to *writing assistant* at the CWL (explained in Chapter 4). For pragmatic reasons, it was easier to change all these names at the same time.

The birth of the WIC program allowed Ede to strongly encourage the colleges still requiring the EDT to eliminate it, arguing that WIC was more productive than the EDT. The WIC program assists those faculty across OSU who teach writing intensive courses, and thus includes faculty in every department that offers a major; all students are required, as part of their baccalaureate core curriculum\* requirement, to take a WIC class in their major (Tolar Burton). The program assists faculty by training them to respond effectively to student writing and by providing ongoing education, helping them to determine if a class meets the WIC guidelines, and by providing both beginning and advanced seminars (“About WIC”). The WIC director has assisted specific departments to publish (online or on paper) writing guides for students in their discipline (fifteen different guides by spring 2006); these guidelines were an OSU WIC innovation (“About WIC”).

The WIC program began as a result of changes in OSU's general education requirement, voted on by the faculty ("About WIC"), and various faculty, including Ede, were involved in the discussions about and development of it. Ede was the interim director the first year WIC was open, prior to a permanent director being hired. Thus, there was already a close connection between the CWL and the WIC program, which benefitted both programs. For instance, because the WIC program had a solid budget, being associated with it provided more stability for the CWL and allowed the hiring of the long-asked for classified position (administrative assistant). In fact, until the recent move to central administration, WIC covered the full cost of the administrative assistant (it is now shared equally). Further, until the move, the WIC program gave \$5,000 to CWL annually to assist with the CWL's expenses. The CWL and WIC continue to share office space, some supplies, and an administrative assistant. In addition, both directors are tenure-line professors in the English Department, each of whom has a half-time appointment as professional faculty in Academic Affairs, allowing them to administrate the CWL and the WIC program. This further enables them to consult with each other and explore options that could benefit the OSU writing community. The connection between the CWL and WIC is vital because, when instituted, the WIC program and the Writing Center were expected to impact each other synergistically (Ede personal interview).

In sum, 1990 brought a number of positive changes into being (the processes had begun in the late-1980s) for the CWL. The title changes more accurately reflected the purposes of the Center for Writing and Learning, the Writing Center, and writing



assistants and removed the negative connotations in the old titles. And the WIC program not only gave Ede an excellent argument for eliminating the EDT, it enhanced writing throughout OSU and provided practical support for the CWL.

### **The Reporting Lines for the Center for Writing and Learning**

The CWL has been under several different larger bureaucratic bodies, as can be seen in the following chart, which shows the different bodies and the people to whom the directors reported:

Table 3.1: Programs and their Representatives Reported to by the Communication Skills Center/Center for Writing and Learning Director

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• <b>Academic Affairs 1976-1986</b>		
• 1976-79	Dean of Undergraduate Studies	Stewart Knapp
• 1979-85	Dean of Undergraduate Studies	Judi Kuipers
• 1985-86	Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs	Mimi Orzech
• <b>College of Liberal Arts 1986-2001</b>		
• 1986-94	Dean of the College of Liberal Arts	Bill Wilkins
• 1994-2001	Dean of the College of Liberal Arts	Kay Schaffer
• <b>Academic Affairs and International Programs 2001-present</b>		
• 2001-04	Assistant Provost for Academic Programs	Bob Burton
• 2004-present	Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs & International Programs	Becky Johnson

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Sources: Ede's Annual Reports, Ekland (e-mail).

Each change has, of course, impacted the CWL. Some of the effects were positive and some negative depending, basically, on how committed the person to whom Ede reported was to the CWL, and the financial resources that he or she had (Ede personal interview). In general, the more central the unit reported to, the more resources available; thus, when the CWL moved to Academic Affairs in 2001, there were fewer channels through which the money and resources had to travel, and more were available (though the budget was quite low when the CSC was in Undergraduate Studies from 1976 to 1987).

From its inception until 1986, the directors of the CSC reported to the dean of Undergraduate Studies in Academic Affairs; as stated previously, Stewart Knapp, who was dean in 1976, was in part responsible for birth of the CSC and was very supportive of the enterprise. A number of programs with little in common apart from being support for students and/or for faculty, such as the CSC, the Women's Center, and the College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP), were under the auspices of the dean of Undergraduate Studies. Because the Women's Center and the CAMP are not crucial to—and in many cases not used or even known about by—many of the students, the CSC was marginalized by being associated with these programs. Added to the inherent marginalization that writing centers tend to experience, Ede states the CSC was “doubly marginalized” (personal interview).

In 1985, the dean of Undergraduate Studies position was eliminated. During 1985-86, Mimi Orzech, assistant vice president for Academic Affairs, was the person to whom Ede reported. Orzech was likely familiar with and supportive of the CSC; as

mentioned earlier, in 1972, she had evaluated the results of a communication skills testing program and found that OSU first year students were weak in study skills, textbook-reading, and library research. She and her co-author, Ken Ahrendt, recommended the establishment of “a center to provide corrective and developmental reading improvement and study skills assistance” (Ahrendt & Orzech 36). Because Orzech was only temporarily in this position, though, she couldn’t provide much material support.

In 1986, the CSC was moved to the auspices of the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) by Graham Spanier, then vice president of Academic Affairs, who wanted to reduce the number of programs and people reporting to him (Ede personal interview). As Ede writes in the annual report for that year, “[t]he staff of the CSC viewed this as a positive change. Since the CSC is basically an instructional unit rather than a support service, our interests and goals are more consistent with those of CLA rather than those of Academic Affairs” (3). There may have been an element of wishful thinking in this statement, Ede adds ruefully (personal interview).

Ede initially reported to Bill Wilkins; later, Kay Schaffer became the dean of the CLA and oversaw the CSC. While Wilkins and Schaffer were supportive, the main concern of the CLA is the needs of the academic departments in the college. Because the CSC did not provide credit-bearing programs for students, it was not a priority. And not being a priority made the CSC susceptible to having its budget cut because most of the money was allocated to the academic departments. In addition, the CLA was experiencing a series of budget crises and reductions and faced extreme difficulties

even meeting its basic obligations. Ede states this was a “brute reality” (personal interview). During these years, the CSC was frequently at risk of being closed; the dean sometimes spoke of it as an option to manage the limited funds.

In 2001, the CWL returned to the reporting auspices of Academic Affairs, specifically into Academic Programs. Leslie Davis Burns, then the interim vice-provost for Academic Affairs, was responsible for this move (Ede personal interview). Ede had appealed to Burns for the CWL to be moved to Undergraduate Academic Programs in an extensive memo in January 2000, citing the severe budget problems the CWL faced—problems that threatened the delivery of its programs. A follow-up meeting permitted discussion of these issues, and Ede writes in a summarizing memo that Burns and “Andy [Hashimoto . . . ] continue to believe that as university services focused either directly [ . . . ] or indirectly [ . . . ] on increasing student learning it makes the most sense for the CWL and WIC to be located in Undergraduate Academic Programs” (Ede “Memo” 1).

This move was beneficial in a number of ways. First, the budget was more stable, allowing for growth, and the CWL did not have to compete with academic departments for funding. Second, a more accurate job description, that of Professional Faculty (not Instructor), was established for Wayne Roberston, the current Assistant Director of the CWL, and for Moira Dempsey (the coordinator of the Academic Success Center [ASC\*], which was part of the CWL until 2004). Further, both were given raises, and their positions increased from nine to twelve months (Ede personal interview). Robertson states that being under central administration “is a huge

advantage. It's where we fit. We don't fit in CLA; only twenty percent of the students [are] from there.”

At present, there is a significant emphasis on assessment\* in Academic Affairs —on measuring what programs are doing and whether they are accomplishing the goals they set out. According to the website of the Office of Academic Affairs,

The assessment process must demonstrate that the outcomes important to the objectives of the program and to the performance of its students and graduates are being systematically measured and used to enhance the educational programs. (“Goals & Metrics”)

To assist in this, the CWL staff met weekly during 2004-05 (in addition to weekly staff meetings). They began by revising the Writing Center's Mission Statement (discussed in Chapter 4), by setting up learning outcomes and ways of measuring them, and by developing ongoing evaluation plans (Ede “Assessment Report”). Ede reports that she agrees with ongoing assessment and finds it helpful (personal interview).

Currently, Ede reports to Becky Johnson, the vice-provost for Academic Affairs and International Programs, who is supportive. Johnson also oversees the WIC program and the ASC, as well as the library, CAMP, International Programs, institutional research, ROTC, and the OSU Press. She was also instrumental in expanding Academic Success into an independent program, directed by Moira Dempsey, who had been running the smaller but related program under the CWL since 1994-95.

Although the reporting lines only changed three times, shifts occurred more frequently due to changes in the staff as various people retired or their job descriptions changed. Budget crises, too, kept the staff of the CWL from ever relaxing in regard to funding, until more recently. Thus, the changes in reporting lines—and the monies they controlled—had an impact on the CWL.

### **The Budget of the Center for Writing and Learning**

It is difficult to summarize the particulars of the CWL's budget, as most year's budgets were cobbled together from diverse sources. The annual reports list only "items of budgetary note" and not the complete budget (Ede personal interview). For instance, until the CWL returned to Academic Affairs, the .50 full-time employee (FTE) of Ede's salary connected with her position as Director of the CWL was funded by the English Department. The English Department, in other words, paid all of Ede's salary, so none of this money appeared as part of the CWL's budget. However, in 2001, when the CWL returned to Academic Affairs, Academic Affairs began to fund half of Ede's salary. Only then did the true cost of Ede's position as director appear in the CWL's budget (Ede personal interview). It is only in the last few years that the budget has become "transparent" or visible. Too, it is only in the last few years, since the move back to central administration, that most of the the CWL's budget problems have eased.

As a program in a public university, the CWL's budget is linked to the university's—and the state's—budget. Since Ede arrived in 1980, budget cuts have

been a reality of life. There were a series of budget crises in the 1980s, and the passage of the 1990 Ballot Measure 5, which limited property taxes, only exacerbated these difficulties. The expectation at the time was that Oregon would institute a sales tax to help compensate schools for the financial losses (“Oregon Measure Ballot 5”); however, as of summer, 2006, a sales tax has yet to be instituted. Patty Wentz, a staff writer on environment, minority issues, and religion for *Willamette Week*, writes, “Far from building support for a sales tax, however, Measure 5 seems to have sparked a kind of recurring anti-tax fever.” In regard to OSU itself, “As a result of Ballot Measure 5, [ . . . ] state general fund assistance was reduced by \$12.5 million” (“OSU Libraries”). Thus, nearly all public schools and universities in Oregon are under continual financial pressure. In addition, the state budget cuts in regard to PERS (the Public Employees Retirement System) and, with more impact on employees, increases to PEBB (the Public Employees Benefit Board) make each employee at OSU cost more to the University, since benefits cost about half of each salary (Ede personal interview). Thus, money that would be slated for programs and departments goes instead to salary and benefit costs.

As is the case with many writing centers, the budget for the CWL has always been a problem. Although this problem eased four years ago with the move to central administration, concerns about finances remain, as explained above. But for many years, particularly while in the CLA, the only recurring budget was minimal and had to be put together each year. When the CWL left the CLA, its recurring budget was only \$3,768. Ede states that the budget has been the biggest problem for her in all of

her years as CWL director, and that she has written many emergency budget reports (personal interview).

### The Center for Writing and Learning's Recurring Budget: An Overview

As noted earlier, it has been difficult finding complete material on the CWL budget through the years. This is because, in part, no specific information exists about the CSC budget between 1976 and 1979, although it is known that the start-up money for the CSC came from a grant. Thus, while some of this information came from the annual reports, much of it was obtained from interviews. It isn't possible, therefore, to trace a detailed budget history, and the one presented here is less chronological than focused on recurring problems and their solutions.

Since 1980, a partial budget has been available in the annual reports and/or in the CWL office. In the 1980s, a consistent income of \$1,900 per year was received from the English Learning Institute, which rented space from the CSC. Student fees, which were earned from non-credit classes such as Rapid Reading, brought in between \$5,610 and \$7,363. The money earned from the classes made it a source of income, but not always a reliable one because the amount of money varied greatly. (Though the CWL was budgeted to earn a certain amount of money per year, it didn't always do that; in some cases this became apparent early on, so Ede compensated by spending less.) Ede points out in numerous annual reports that the EDT, which brought in money from the departments, cost less when administered by the CWL than it would have elsewhere. When the EDT was phased out, that caused a reduction in income,



which was in part compensated by the CLA. Consequently, the only actual consistent recurrent money was the \$3,768.

Obviously, the CWL could not and did not function on only the recurring \$3,768 and the money earned from classes. State funds supplied various monies, although these, too, fluctuated. Further, the CWL sometimes provided special programs for different divisions on campus, such as the athletics department, for which they received money—up to \$10,000. As mentioned previously, until the recent move to Academic Affairs, the WIC program gave \$5,000 to the CWL annually and paid for their shared administrative assistant. In 1980-81, the state-funded support was \$32,555; when the other income was added, the starting budget for that year was \$42,205. In general, state funding increased (with some variation) during the 1980s, and in 1989-90, the CSC received \$58,776 from the state and, with the additional funding sources, had an actual budget of \$71,538. This was higher than the following year, when it decreased to \$58,411. So, despite the overall increases, there were continual budget problems. More recently, the budget has increased: Ede proposed a budget of \$230,000 for 2005-06 and received about \$220,000 (Ede personal interview).

The largest expenditure in the CWL is salaries, which are fixed (that is, they do not change radically each year) (Ede personal interview). Salaries for the Writing Center coordinators, until recently, were low, starting at about \$23,000 in 2000 (Robertson). Further, all of the positions were nine-months, including Ede's (although she has been paid most summers for a couple of weeks or a month.) (When the

Writing Center began staying open in the summer, the coordinator was paid additional money). In the early years, Ede says that she didn't know if money would be available for the CWL staff from year to year (personal interview).

The budget covered salaries and basic supplies, such as “office supplie[s], general operating [expenses], lab [Writing Center] supplies, books and periodicals, equipment maintenance, and the computer center” (Ede “Annual Report 1983-84” 14). It did not, however, finance larger, one-time purchases, such as typewriters and computers, and special monies had to be obtained for these. In some cases, the object itself was given to the CSC. Ede tells of a meeting with Bob Frank in which she mentioned that the CSC did not have an electric typewriter like the one in his office; at that point, Frank rose, picked up his typewriter, and carried it to the CSC.

### Supplemental Money

The CWL has received additional money over the years from various sources, including grants, emergency funds, special funding for expensive supplies. Table 3.2 lists some of these one-time funds, along with their years, amounts, sources, and reasons. Due to inconsistent budget reporting, this is an incomplete list.

Table 3.2: Non-recurrent Funds for the Center for Writing and Learning by Year, Source, and Reason <sup>a</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Amount (\$)</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>For</b>
• 1984-85	13,413	Undergraduate Studies	Projected deficit
• ---	7,951	English Department	Clerical specialist
• ---	4,000	Undergraduate Studies	Computer purchase
• 1985-86	2,500	Undergraduate Studies	Equipment
• ---	100	English Department	Printing support
• 1986-87	3,400	Academic Affairs	Temp. clerical spec.
• ---	565	English Department	Temp. clerical spec.
• ---	807	Academic Affairs	Admin. stipend
• ---	1,259	English Department	Computer equipment
• 1988-89	1,000	CLA	Computer
• 1989-90	1,300	WIC	Services & supplies
• 1991-92	1,207	CLA	Summer pay (1 wk) for Ede
• ---	1,500	Academic Affairs	Furniture needs
• 1992-93	2,363	CLA	Equipment
• ---	2,415	Academic Affairs	Portable computer equipment
• 1996-98?	34,114	Info. Serv. Tech. Res. Grant	Equipment, training, Web
• 1998-99	25,000	E-Board	Work-study pay, satellite desk (library), <i>Craft of Writing</i> series implementation, credit-bearing ASP course
• 2002-03	?	Academic Affairs	.49 GTA* position for ASC

Source: Ede's Annual Reports.

<sup>a</sup> Not all information was available.

Grants awarded are listed in Table 3.3 below:

Table 3.3: Grants Received by the Center for Writing and Learning <sup>a</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Amount (\$)</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>For</b>
• 1990-91	?	Provost's Office	Faculty Development Grant (for travel to CCCC)
• 1992-93	3,865	WIC Development	Writing Center Summer Session
• 1994-95	34,000	Technology Resources	Purchase of 3 Power Mac computers
• 1997-98	?	State of OR E-Board	OWL Development, purchase of 4 new computers
• 2001-02	8,000	Access Grant	Writing assistant pay

Source: Ede's Annual Reports.

<sup>a</sup> Not all information was available, indicated by question mark (?).

### The Budget's Impact

The budget has affected staff significantly. The small salary allocated for the Writing Center coordinator limited the selection to regional candidates, says Ede (personal interview). For instance, Jon Olson applied because his partner had been hired in the English Department. Ede reports that the position also drew limited numbers of applicants because of the low salary (only two viable applicants in 2000). Nonetheless, for a variety of reasons, the CWL has been able to hire excellent coordinators, and only one left due to the salary.

Until 2001, the only writing assistants paid were work-study students with the \$3000 earned from the non-credit classes. This amount of money increased some when the CWL was under the Assistant Provost for Academic Programs, Bob Burton (Ede personal interview). It was not until 2004-05, however, that the CWL got a budget specifically to pay writing assistants regular student wages. Although the \$20,000 included in the budget was reduced by several thousand dollars the following year, it is still a significant increase.

While the budget and its fluctuations affect the coordinators and impact general staffing, Ede, perhaps, is most affected. It is she who needs to balance the budget and who has written numerous memos asking for emergency money to keep the CWL open. She has also participated in various meetings in which the CWL's budget was an issue. She recalls one memorable meeting in the 1980s with then-President Robert MacVicar in which she went to the meeting, armed with statistics, to persuade him to keep the CSC open. She knew that MacVicar would probably decide whether or not to keep it open during the actual meeting (Ede personal interview). He kept it open.

#### Concerns About the Continuation of Funding and Support

While it is true that the budget increase in 2001 was due in part to the move to central administration, this increase might not have happened if the university had not developed a new strategic plan\* (discussed in more depth later in this chapter). Because the plan focuses on retention, money has been made available to support the CWL.

Further, Academic Success, which had begun as Study Skills in the CSC, expanded into its own program with an annual budget of \$450,000 (Dempsey “RE: Question”). Concern exists, however, about whether the University will maintain this level of support or shift it with the next strategic plan, as units like the CWL that do not offer credit-bearing courses are often more vulnerable than traditional academic departments, such as English Departments (Ede personal interview).

It is clear that the budget is the most unstable and unpredictable component of the CWL. Its precariousness means that Ede can not rely on receiving adequate funding each year, or on maintaining it through the year. Even the recent positive changes do not guarantee secure future budgets.

### **The Center for Writing and Learning’s Interactions with Academic Departments at Oregon State University**

#### Interactions with the English Department

The CWL and the Writing Center interact with numerous departments across the university, although they are more well-known and work more closely with some than with others. As may be expected, the association with the English Department is the closest—although it is not always smooth or ideal.

From its inception, the Writing Center has been associated with the English Department, as Tim Perkins was an instructor in that department when he began directing the CSC and had a split-appointment between the two for the first two terms (Perkins). However, he says that there was mixed support from the faculty. While some

faculty members felt the Writing Lab was necessary and were relieved to not have to spend a lot of time teaching and/or correcting mechanics themselves, others were “dismayed” when they realized that the CSC could not fix students’ writing difficulties “in three days” (Perkins). Indeed, Perkins says that some faculty members became angry and blamed him when students continued to turn in papers with errors.

Nancy Leman, an instructor in the English Department from 1971 to 1987, states that when the Writing Lab became available, some faculty took advantage of it, even making visits there mandatory for English Composition. This course, taught by all English Department faculty, varied greatly in content and strictness in regard to errors, which led to a mixed usage of the Writing Lab by different classes. Some faculty mentioned it in their syllabi; others did not (Leman). After 1979, faculty could easily refer students by using the form provided to them. Leman also reports that there were developmental courses (such as Writing 230, Effective Writing) available, as well as classes designed for students whose first or home language was not English (Leman).

Leman appears to have had mixed feelings about the Writing Lab. While, she states, Writing Lab support was necessary because faculty only had two office hours a week to meet with their twenty-five English Composition students and with students in other classes, she feels that office hours focused more on the “philosophical [aspects and the] structural development of the idea [in the essay]” (Leman). Further, she states, though a second opinion on essays was beneficial, she wasn’t sure the writing assistants knew enough about writing to be truly helpful.

Michele Sakurai, who ran the Study Skills program from 1974 to 1981, reports that there was a strong relationship between the English Department and the CSC. Because the writing classes were so large, much of the critique on papers occurred as written feedback from professors, which may have been less effective for students, and not in individual discussions. And she felt that some students “fell through the cracks because they didn’t know the theory behind [these] critique[s].” Still, she states that the CSC was “a tool of survival for English and writing professors.”

Roberta Lundeberg, coordinator of the Writing Lab between 1979 and 1985, states that the English Department as a whole was very supportive, in that the department paid half of Ede’s salary and that the faculty seemed to see the Writing Lab as a “valuable tool.” Lundeberg expressed disappointment that more professors did not encourage students to use the Lab, stating that some faculty worked closely with the Lab, while “others didn’t seem to know it existed.”

Wayne Robertson, the Writing Center coordinator from 2001-05 (and currently the half-time CWL assistant director) states that he has always felt a good relationship between the Writing Center and the English Department. He is known in the department, as he did his masters work and was a graduate teaching assistant (GTA\*) there. Further, he states, many of the writing assistants have been recommended by English faculty (although not all writing assistants are English majors), and this leads to a certain level of trust about the quality of the Center because the faculty know who is working there.



A close connection exists between Writing 121 and the Writing Center. Prior to 2005-06, the Writing 121 coordinator (who manages that part of the writing program and trains the GTAs who teach it) had been Chris Anderson, a tenure-line professor in writing and rhetoric, who understood the purpose of the Writing Center and its importance in writing classes (Ede personal interview). In fall, 2005, Sara Jameson, a 2004 graduate of the writing and rhetoric masters program at OSU, was hired as the interim coordinator for composition. Jameson's understanding about being a GTA and a writing assistant—and her strong encouragement of use of the Writing Center—may be in part due to her having been a GTA, a writing assistant, and a writing instructor at schools with writing centers (Jameson). She writes,

The “standard” WR 121 syllabus for new TA's for fall 2005 did require the students to go to the writing center for either the first or second essay (we split it up so as not to overwhelm the WC with so many students at once). Now, in winter term, the TA's can write their own syllabi, and they might not all require the writing center. I think some will continue to require it, and I think all will give extra credit for students who go.

Jameson indicates that when she was a GTA, she required her students to use the Writing Center, but not all of the other GTAs did; thus, requiring GTAs to send their fall term students to the Writing Center is a recent change.

While it is positive that the Writing Center is informally linked to Writing 121, Dennis Bennett, the current Writing Center coordinator, states that he has mixed feelings about a closer relationship with the English Department: he would like a tighter connection with the department as a whole, but he would not want to report to

it or to be under its budget. Still, he believes increased “collaboration” would be useful, such as a “for-credit companion course for [those students struggling with] Writing 121” (Bennett).

### Interactions with Other Departments

As stated previously, the CWL and its Writing Center were known to various departments because of the English Diagnostic Test. It is unclear, though, whether these departments were fully aware of the other services offered by the CWL. Sakurai says that the Writing Lab was, perhaps, a tool for faculty in other departments, who, she states, “assumed [students] knew how to write,” leaving the students to figure out the mechanics. And Lundeberg states that many professors—especially those in departments other than English—misunderstood the difference between editing and/or proofreading and the Writing Lab’s goal of making students better writers. According to Robertson, this misunderstanding continues. Some faculty, even those in the English Department, seem to view the Writing Center as a place where students can bring their papers to be fixed (Robertson). The visits to classes, now made by Wayne Roberston and by Dennis Bennett, help alleviate misunderstandings. Lundeberg adds that if someone who worked in the Lab had a relationship with a professor, that professor was more likely to know about the Lab. Similar to what Lundeberg expressed, Roberston states that there are few true “partnerships” with entire departments; instead, he has developed relationships with some faculty members

in nearly every department over the years, usually because of the WIC program (Roberston).

The WIC course is an additional requirement in the baccalaureate core curriculum. Because the WIC program requires writing in one's major, more faculty are having to read and grade students' writing. They are trained in the program by the WIC director, Vicki Tolar Burton, and some of the training includes a talk about the Writing Center (Robertson). Thus, some faculty in every department are familiar with the Writing Center.

An additional source of knowledge dispersal to other departments about the CWL is the CWL staff. For instance, Lisa Ede sits on various committees and interacts with numerous people. Despite the staff's active promotion of the CWL, many faculty don't seem to remember to tell students about the CWL's services, and thus they must be advertised directly to students, as well.

### **Advertising the Center for Writing and Learning in the University**

An ongoing issue for most writing centers is the need to get out the word about its services to faculty and students. Students often feel shy about going to a writing center, because it means they need help, that they can't do it on their own, that they are somehow "less than"—or so they believe. Some faculty set up incentives for students to visit the Writing Center: extra credit, a requirement, and more (Weintraub; Jameson). All of this relates, too, to other supportive services, such as the Academic Success Center.

Thus, it's important to remind students and faculty of the CWL's existence. When he opened the CSC, Tim Perkins made bookmarks available in the OSU Bookstore. He states that he was unable to run ads in *the Daily Barometer*, OSU's student-run newspaper, because of the cost. Indeed, running ads in *the Daily Barometer* has been an intermittent activity. First, it currently costs \$23 per day for a fifteen-word, two-inch ad ("The OSU Daily" 3). Second, while many people on campus look at the daily newspaper, it's unknown how many read or even notice the ads. Lisa Pederson, interim Director of the CSC, did place ads in the *Barometer*, spending about "\$400/term in advertising costs" (Pederson "CSC Programs"). However, it appears this was not as simple as just submitting an ad to run; in her memo to Lisa Ede, Pederson explained how the costs were figured for ads and warned Ede to make sure that the charges were accurate (Pederson). It is impossible to truly gauge the effectiveness of the ads.

In addition to sporadic ads in *the Daily Barometer*, the CWL has advertised through the use of flyers and table tents in the Memorial Union, which is frequented by most students (Ede personal interview). Further, staff from the CWL have gone to orientation and open house events both on- and off-campus, events designed to inform or remind students of all the opportunities available to them (Ede personal interview). And classes are always advertised. Examples of some of the ads used through the years are available in Appendix B.

Another way that the CWL and the Writing Center have been publicized is through articles in *the Daily Barometer*, *the Oregon Stater* (OSU's alumni magazine), *the Gazette-Times* (Corvallis' local newspaper), and *the Mid-Valley Sunday* (combined Corvallis

and Albany Sunday newspaper). The articles seem to come in spurts, with several in different publications around the same time. When Ede arrived in 1980, *the Daily Barometer* wrote a profile on her. Little newspaper coverage is recorded until 1984-85, when *The Barometer* published four articles providing information about the CSC (and about the Math Science Learning Center), one of which was titled, "Students 'unaware' of Communication Center's Resources." In 1989-90, Lex Runciman, then coordinator of the Writing Center was interviewed in an article titled "Writing 121 to thesis material: Lab open to all levels of writers." In December, 1998, *the Oregon Stater* published "Former Writing Assistants Write Back...", which featured excerpts from recollections by sixteen writing assistants who had worked in the Writing Center in the late 1980s and the 1990s, sharing how the experiences there impacted their lives. In 1997 or 1998, *the Gazette-Times* featured a story on writers in Corvallis and their programs and resources; Moira Dempsey, the coordinator for Academic Success and for outreach, was interviewed. And *the Mid-Valley Sunday* published "Programs help OSU students discover the 'write stuff'" in October, 1998. In June, 1999, *the Daily Barometer* ran an article relating the ASC and student retention at OSU. More recent *Daily Barometer* articles have profiled the Writing Center, interviewing the coordinator and several students; the new Academic Success Center under Moira Dempsey; and Wayne Robertson's film, *Writing Across Borders*. This free publicity, reports Ede, is always welcome.

But the most effective method of getting the word out about the CWL and the Writing Center appears to be classroom visits. Thus, all of the coordinators have

visited classrooms, explaining the purpose and procedure of the Writing Center and giving a variety of presentations (Ede personal interview). Wayne Robertson, as Writing Center coordinator, presented one-hour workshops on “Introduction to College Writing” and on writing resumes and cover letters, as well as shorter talks (Robertson). Dennis Bennett, current Writing Center coordinator, continues in this path. In addition, as noted earlier, the Writing Center coordinators have been involved in training WIC faculty since that program began (Robertson).

The current CWL director, assistant director, and Writing Center coordinator all agree that “word of mouth” appears to be the best advertising—although this depends on the fact that “the service needs to work” (Robertson). Because she represents the CWL at OSU, Ede attends various meetings and “tries to be a good working member of the community and to advertise the Center.” Her presence and indeed the long-term presence of the CWL at OSU seem to increase the CWL’s stability; the longer “the Writing Center exists, the more it becomes part of the institutional landscape and memory” (Ede personal interview).

### **The Present and the Future**

As noted earlier, the Writing Center has been affected by the most recent university strategic plan. Goal 2 of the plan is to “[p]rovide an excellent teaching and learning environment and achieve student access, persistence and success through graduation and beyond [. . .]” which involves,

creat[ing] a dynamic and vibrant learning environment inside and outside the classroom that deeply engages students in the life of the university by connecting them to our primary activities of teaching/learning, scholarship, and outreach. (Oregon State University 8).

One of the ways OSU intends to measure progress is to increase student retention, especially between the first and second years (8). Two of the initiatives are to “[p]romote teaching as an academic discipline and provide training, resources and support through two new Centers on campus to enhance teaching, learning, and advising [the Academic Success Center and the Center for Writing and Teaching]” (8) and to,

[a]lign curricular and co-curricular programs and support services to respond to the shared and unique needs of our students, promote student development, encourage a broad and diverse educational experience, and support student success. (9)

A way of increasing student retention is to make students more able to succeed in college, as Michele Sakurai stated about her work in the 1970s. Thus, the CWL has become both central to and supportive of this effort. First, more money has been budgeted to it, allowing for decent salaries and raises for the Writing Center coordinators (Ede personal interview). Second, the ASC has broke off from the CWL (where it was called the Academic Success Program) into an independent program. Its budget is substantial, and a space in Waldo Hall (near the CWL) was renovated for its use. Robertson was hired there half-time, and the CWL and ASC still share a number

of undertakings, including the Supplemental Instruction Study Tables\* (SISTs) (Ede personal interview).

While the strategic plans are always taken into consideration by Ede when planning changes or events for the CWL, apart from the increased income to pay writing assistants and increased professional staff (one-and-a-half full time employees), the actual Writing Center has not been particularly affected by any of the strategic plans. Ede, however, has both realistic and idealistic hopes for the Writing Center, which has always been the largest and most well-developed of the CWL's programs (and for several years its only program). First, she would like better facilities—to design a space herself, which would be “central, bright, and inviting”; there has, in fact, been discussion about building a center for all student and faculty support services. Ede would also like to see more community literacy outreach and to have the Writing Center host events such as poetry slams, parental readings, and opportunities for faculty to talk with students about their own composing processes. The present facility does not have adequate space for this, so a new building would be beneficial (Ede personal interview).

Ideally, Ede would also like to implement the Brown University Writing and Rhetoric Fellows Program, in which students are chosen to sit in on a class, working with both the professor and students. Because Fellows are familiar with the course, expectations, and assignments, they are able to assist students with course content as well as writing skills (Ede personal interview). Although it is unlikely that either the new building or the Fellows Program will come to fruition, consideration of the



benefits they would bring is useful in evaluating the best use of the current space and in designing the best possible training for writing assistants.

## **Conclusion**

Several characteristics discussed in Chapter Two are illustrated in this chapter. The shift in name from Writing Lab to Writing Center and from Communication Skills Center to Center for Writing and Learning occurred when these sorts of changes were being made in writing centers nationwide. Similarly, the OSU Writing Center's pedagogy is similar to that practiced elsewhere, with a focus on individual meetings with peer tutors (writing assistants) who strive to help students think like writers. While writing assistants may not follow Grimm's suggestion to learn many specifics about each student they work with, they do respect individuality (in particular with NNES, as we'll see more in Chapter Four). Further, the difficulties with the budget and the CWL's place at OSU are ongoing, as is the case at so many schools. The OSU Writing Center differs somewhat from the norm in that its director is a tenure-line professor who was hired specifically for her expertise in rhetoric. Although both the tenure-line position and the degree in rhetoric are more usual in the present decade than they were in the 1980s, most writing center directors are not in tenure-line positions (Griffin et al.).

It's clear, as well, that the Writing Center is an integral part of the CWL and must be considered as part of this larger whole, as Carino's cultural model suggests. Although the Writing Center is in some ways insulated from the outside world, in that

everything that affects the CWL does not necessarily affect the Writing Center, it still rides the waves of the CWL's changes and budget shifts. The CWL is, thus, one of the Writing Center's larger cultures, and the Writing Center can not be understood apart from it.

#### **Chapter Four: The Oregon State University Writing Center— Its Own Entity**

*History consists of myriad converging stories. Moreover, history, like evolution itself, [ . . . ] is filled with accidental happenings. Other combinations of people, places, times, and whatever would have led to a very different present.*

—Maureen Goggin, *xix*

As much as the Writing Center is a part of the CWL (and some years it has been the only part of it), it is also its own entity. For the students who visit, and perhaps also for the writing assistants, its surrounding structure is relatively invisible; they may not even realize that the Writing Center is part of the CWL. And while the Writing Center aligns with the philosophy and purpose of the CWL, it has its own mission. Further, it has its own pedagogy, which is shared with and used by the writing assistants (and often with the students when they learn how the Center runs). Thus, it is important to study the development of the Writing Center by examining its mission and philosophy; exploring some of its procedures; and considering the physical space, coordinators, writing assistants, training, and student make-up.

Both continuity and change figure in the development of the Writing Center. Although there have been three directors, seven coordinators, and too many writing assistants to determine accurately, the collaborative approach has prevailed. Although the training style has shifted sometimes, the emphasis on in-service training, as opposed to a required, credit-bearing tutor training course, has been consistent. Most of the significant changes, which are detailed in this chapter, have reflected either

increased use of the Writing Center or changes in technology. Thus, as certain aspects of the Center have changed over the years, much has remained consistent—not static, but fundamentally the same.

### **Philosophy and Pedagogy of the Writing Center and its Correlation with Oregon State University's Mission**

The current mission of the Writing Center, formulated in 2004-05, is,

to support Oregon State University students, staff, and faculty in all facets of the writing process, to facilitate the growth of individual writers, and to foster strong academic and creative writing communities. The Writing Center fulfills this mission through mentoring and training a corps of undergraduate and graduate student writing assistants who work directly with students and with other Writing Center constituencies. Through both its campus and online services, the Writing Center also works with students at a distance and members of the Oregon community and beyond. (Ede "Assessment Report" 1)

Although this is a reformulated mission, it is not significantly different than the previous mission statements developed by the Writing Center staff, in conjunction with the director of the CWL. All have addressed the purpose of enhancing peoples' ability to write, whether beginning or experienced writers. Too, all encourage the growth of both students and trained writing assistants. This particular mission statement explicitly integrates technology and emphasizes the importance of a community of writers.

This mission statement also aligns with Oregon State University's current mission statement (written in 1999 and revised in 2002) which seeks,

to stimulate a lasting attitude of inquiry, openness and social responsibility. To meet these aspirations, we are committed to providing excellent academic programs, educational experiences and creative scholarship.  
 (“Mission Statement”)

Indeed, over the years the CWL has always tried to align itself with the various mission statements and long-range/strategic plans (Ede personal interview). And the OSU Writing Center fits with these educational experiences and creative scholarship mentioned in the university mission statement. By emphasizing collaboration and peer teaching and learning, the experience is very different from sitting in a classroom listening to a lecturer, and even from engaging in a class discussion. And writing assistants find ways to work with all sorts of students—and with each other—which encourages creativity and new ways of thinking and behaving. Ede states that the OSU Writing Center is a “genuine community [ . . . ] that is different than in the classroom” (personal interview).

The Writing Center does not, of course, exist for the sole purpose of providing a good experience and a unique community for writing assistants, but rather it exists to serve and support student writers. To accomplish this, the balance of activities and their purpose at the Writing Center have changed over the years. While there was always an emphasis on collaborative learning, there has been a shift from more of an “alternate form of instruction”—a service to students, in which they participated in self-study in areas in which they were weak in order to pass the EDT—to a place for “collaborative [ . . . ] and peer learning” (Ede personal interview). The aim is to help students improve their writing ability and to gain confidence in themselves as writers;

these “students” include the writing assistants, who almost inevitably gain self-confidence by assisting. Robertson concurs with these ideas and adds that another purpose is “to make writing a social process—that’s the very heart of it, and everything else [making writing fun, engaging, of personal value, strategic, and rhetorical] comes from that.” Dennis Bennett adds that all students should see themselves as writers who understand the writing process. Another purpose of the Writing Center is to support those students who might otherwise be forgotten (their professors have large classes or perhaps they are too shy to seek help during office hours) to increase their chances of success in college.

The OSU Writing Center fulfills its purpose in a number of ways. First, the writing assistants help students do the best work these students can with the given tasks, taking each assignment both as an individual task and as a way to teach students how to approach the writing process. This approach requires flexibility, since writing assistants help students with all sorts of writing assignments, whether or not the writing assistant is familiar with that particular field or style. Flexibility is vital because faculty look for different qualities in their assignments (often based on the field of study) (Bennett). Basically, writing assistants aid students with whatever assignment students bring to the Writing Center, helping students to both interpret the assignment and to respond effectively to it.

Further, the social process that Robertson speaks of is created by the Center’s informal atmosphere. Although there is a routine, described later, writing assistants are flexible and friendly, making the Writing Center a “comfortable [and] non-threatening

environment” in which students and writing assistants alike can improve their writing (Hogg personal interview). This can be hard to measure exactly, although the tracking statistics (feedback from students about their reasons for coming to the Writing Center and their feelings about the appointment, discussed in greater depth below and later in this chapter) attempt to get at this. Barbara Hogg states the Writing Center is successful with individuals: that students leave understanding more about writing, and often this is “felt” by the staff (personal interview).

Overall, students have expressed satisfaction in the services received at the Writing Center. These statistics were obtained from responses by students to certain questions after each appointment on what are casually called “Yellow Cards\*,” and the compiled numbers and statistics appear in each year’s annual report. On average, 85% of students who had used the Center between 1984-85 and 2004-05 reported they would use it again, 4% to 6% said they were not sure, and 1% (but up to 7%) said they would not. In addition, since 1994-95, students have been asked how helpful they found the appointment. Between 67% and 89% indicated the session was “very helpful,” 8% to 15% reported it was “helpful,” and generally 0% to 1% said it was not helpful.

Both the large number of positive responses and the low number of negative or neutral ones need to be considered in context. For instance, the flush of excitement of making progress on a paper may wear off when students begin working on their papers alone again. Or students may feel uncomfortable being completely honest about their intentions or reactions when filling out the yellow cards. Students who

report negative experiences may also be influenced by factors external to the Writing Center, such as being required to visit the Writing Center by a professor and/or expecting that their papers will be edited for them by the writing assistants and being surprised at having to participate in the session.

From its inception to the present time, the staff at the Writing Center have been clear that it is not an editing service or a “fix-it” place, which has sometimes caused frustration for students and for faculty. Writing Center staff agree that the goal of helping students become better writers is more valuable and enduring. Instilling this philosophy in writing assistants is a central purpose of writing assistant training. Thus, we can speculate, if not prove, that part of the reason the Writing Center is effective in fulfilling its purpose is that the staff and writing assistants share this philosophy and goal.

In sum, this mix of people, past and present, have created the OSU Writing Center. The passing on of this approach to writing center work has created a continuity, even as the larger environment (OSU and its mission and plans) has changed. As Maureen Goggin says in the epigraph at the start of this chapter, different people would have made a different history. Thus, despite the different specific mission statements, different University strategic plans, different coordinators, different writing assistants, and different ideas introduced, continuity has been maintained due to the focus on collaboration and on teaching students to think as writers do.



### **What Happens in the Writing Center**

It is difficult to describe the routines for writing assistants and for students in the Writing Lab thirty years ago, as there is little documentation on exactly what they were. It is likely, however, that many of the features described below existed from the start: students being “checked-in,” an assessment of what each student was seeking, one-on-one help (as needed in regard to the work for the EDTs and on papers), and encouragement to return as needed.

Since at least 1980, assistance at the Writing Center has been available by appointment and on a walk-in basis (Ede personal interview). In general, students are placed with whomever is available, unless they request a certain writing assistant. Some students have regular appointments with specific writing assistants. Students who have never been to the Writing Center can learn what to expect during their appointment either while making the appointment on the phone or in person, or by visiting the web pages, which detail what they will find and what is expected of them.

One of these details is the suggestion for students to bring two copies of their paper, so the writing assistants have the option to look at and mark on one while students read the other aloud (“Tips”). However, students rarely do bring two, and although not all writing assistants ask students to read aloud—or read aloud for students to hear—it is a frequent practice. Reading aloud permits the writing assistants to see if students change any wording, i.e. self-correct. It also allows for both students and writing assistants to hear how the paper flows. Further, it engages both students and writing assistants. Prior to reading the paper, however, writing assistants talk with

students, asking them what they are struggling with, what they need help with, and anything else that seems relevant. They then work together for either a half-hour or an hour (depending on the length of the paper), going over as much of the paper as possible or focusing on a troublesome section. Sometimes, they work together at the computers available in the Writing Center.

When busy, the Writing Center is a noisy, active place. Several tables are set up in the main work room adjoining the waiting area. If these are filled (or too noisy!), the writing assistants and students can use a room on the other side of the waiting area or even the conference room (if it's not in use for a meeting). It's not unusual to see a writing assistant working with a student while working at the reception desk, where writing assistants take shifts answering the phone, setting up appointments, and greeting students.

Writing assistants use a variety of tools to help students. The provided pencils are constantly disappearing. Handouts about grammar, punctuation, and citations issues are available in a file cabinet, and a collection of books—reference, text, and style, among others—are in a bookcase behind the desk. Additionally, writing assistants often model effective writing and student behavior by using a dictionary, thesaurus, handbook, or other book to address questions and concerns.

Following their appointments, students are asked to fill out an information and evaluation form, mentioned earlier. Until 2004, students completed a form known informally as a yellow card; currently, they provide information online. Both processes generate statistics on use and satisfaction. Sometimes students schedule another

appointment, depending on when their paper is due and/or how they are feeling about both the paper and the appointment. When students are referred by a faculty member, sometimes the writing assistant fills out a “blue form”<sup>\*</sup> reporting what they worked on, and students submit this form to their professors.

When not meeting with students, writing assistants generally sit in the waiting area and talk. Sometimes they try to do schoolwork, but usually the conversation is too interesting. Writing assistants who are in plays have been known to practice their lines, and others have been seen napping on one of the two couches. This casual conversation and general feeling of ease contributes to the feeling of community mentioned by Ede.

During the final week of classes (“dead week”<sup>\*</sup>), a different atmosphere prevails. There are no scheduled appointments, and no one covers the desk, which generates about 100 extra hours to accommodate students on a walk-in basis only (this policy was implemented around 2001) (Robertson). After signing in, students wait—sometimes a long time. Because students often bring long papers, appointments usually last as long as needed. In addition, the coordinator helps out more than usual during this week, as well.

This is, of course, a general view of the routine in the Writing Center, as it has been since 1980. Variation occurs because, as the pedagogy dictates, flexibility is necessary; thus, writing assistants evaluate each students’ needs and work with them accordingly.

### **The Space of the Communication Skills Center/Center for Writing and Learning**

The CSC, as previously described, began in the Armory (the McAlexander Fieldhouse), where conditions were not ideal. In 1979, it moved to the first floor of Waldo Hall, where several rooms were available for its use (Pederson “Yearly Summary”). Built in 1905, Waldo Hall is one of the older buildings at OSU, and, while changes have been made, it has not been modernized much. Over the years, the Writing Center has expanded in the northern half of the first floor. (Maps of the CSC/CWL are available in Appendix A.)

In 1980-81, room 122 was changed from a classroom to an office and resource room, moving the clerical workers (Barb Hogg and various student workers) from the hallway. This room was further divided by an acoustic divider, and in an interview, Ede reports that the resource section was frequented by writing assistants, CSC staff, and OSU faculty. This divider also served to separate students using tapes from those working individually with writing assistants, which helped reduce the noise.

In 1986, the CSC began drafting plans for expansion, as more space was needed, especially for the Writing Lab, which had been forced to turn away students needing help due to a lack of space for conferences. When Ede learned that the Radiation Safety offices would be leaving Waldo Hall, she requested use of their vacated space. The following year, the CSC was given the requested space, which was next to the CSC, reducing the overcrowding in the Writing Lab and providing room for classes and office work. The Writing Lab expanded into two rooms, separating the

students working with writing assistants from those working alone (with tapes and/or workbooks). The main office for the CSC is down the hall, and the coordinator's office is across from the Writing Lab's entrance.

In 1989-90, in anticipation of the establishment of the WIC program, plans were made to place the WIC director's office in a former darkroom across a small hallway from the CWL's main office and to reorganize the Writing Lab to make it more efficient to manage the expected increase in use due to the WIC program.

As computers were incorporated into the Writing Center in the early 1990s, the use of the space changed again. The computers were placed where the students used to work with the EDT tape players. (Recently, three computers were placed against the wall in the room that holds the computers to allow writing assistants and students to fill out the information/evaluation forms mentioned earlier.) As more students began using the Writing Center, however, space was at a premium. In the 2001-02 *Annual Report*, Ede states that,

the Writing Center has to find additional space to hold appointments. In the center, there are 5 workstations where writing appointments are held. During busy times of the day, appointments regularly overflow into the conference room. At times when the conference room has been reserved for meetings, however, students are forced to use less than acceptable places to work in [e.g. the hallway]. (3)

Additional space was found by developing a satellite\* Writing Center in the Information Commons in the library (discussed more fully later in this chapter). When

Academic Success broke off from the CWL in 2004-05, the assistant director of the CWL and the Writing Center Coordinator were able to have adjoining offices.

The size of the CWL has not changed in a number of years, and it does not appear that there is any more room (at least adjacent) in which to expand, despite the growing numbers of writing assistants and users. In the future, increased demand for conferences will be addressed via greater staffing in the Information Commons and in other satellite locations.

### **The Writing Center Coordinators**

As can be seen in the following table, since the CSC opened, there have been seven Writing Center coordinators. All (apart from Kit Andrews) have stayed at least two years; most have remained longer. There are differing amounts of information on each coordinator; as a result, some of the coordinators are discussed more fully than others. Much of this information was gathered from individual interviews.

Table 4.1: The Writing Center Coordinators

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• 1979-85	Roberta (Sager) Lundeberg
• 1985-90	Lex Runciman
• 1990-92, 1993-97	Jon Olson
• 1992-93	Kit Andrews
• 1997-2000	Matt Yurdana
• 2000-05	Wayne Robertson
• 2004-present	Dennis Bennett

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Sources: Ede's Annual Reports and Lundeberg (personal interview).

In general, all Writing Center coordinators have the same responsibilities:

- hiring and training writing assistants;
- scheduling writing assistant hours;
- developing training and meeting agendas;
- running weekly meetings;
- handing problems of all sorts with an “open-door policy”;
- conferencing with students in the Writing Center;
- being a liaison with the faculty;
- giving presentations about the Writing Center in classes and in other groups;
- giving WIC training presentations;
- being the connection with various extra-OSU projects (such as tutoring 5th graders);
- being the point person for technology;
- answering WritingQ\* questions;
- ensuring that the OWLs are completed in a timely manner

### Continuity in Coordinator Responsibilities

As stated above, the basic responsibilities of the Writing Center coordinator have changed little over time. One of the primary responsibilities has been hiring and training writing assistants. In fact, it seems that a large portion of their time is spent on writing assistant-related activities. When writing assistant funding was limited to work-study, most writing assistants were hired via job announcements in the Financial Aid office. As increased funding became available, Writing Center coordinators developed faculty referral sources.

Once hired, either as a for-credit, work-study, or regular student wages writing assistant, all assistants are trained. The training began formally under Roberta Lundeberg, who was coordinator from 1979 to 1985. She had new tutors observe her

work with students at first, and later she observed them—i.e. they shadowed her and then she shadowed them. This practice is still used, as learning how to help students involves watching how it is done well. In most cases, though, experienced writing assistants are shadowed instead of the coordinator. Wayne Robertson states that when choosing writing assistants to be shadowed, he looks for writing assistants who ask effective questions, who help students to delve deeper into their papers, and who are able to sit in silence with students, allowing the students to think and to make decisions (personal interview).

In addition, the training includes weekly meetings. When the meetings first started, they focused on various topics, including how to work with students, discussions of how tutors should handle various incidents, and on reviewing grammar. The focus of the meetings has not changed substantially over the years, although there is less focus on grammar and more on working with NNES writers and students with disabilities. The meetings are run by the coordinator and all writing assistants are expected to attend. Lisa Ede, too, participates in the meetings.

Writing assistants are also expected to read a packet of material during the first two weeks of the term (and sometimes during the course of the term, as well), although it's unclear whether this was practiced from the start. Often the reading is discussed in the weekly meetings, and those students working for credit sometimes explore some of the articles in their journals (required during their first term of work in the Writing Center). The readings used to come in a packet form; now writing assistants are required to read all of *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. In addition, the



Writing Assistant Handbook, created by Bennett, is online at the Center for Writing and Learning Online Portal\*, and it contains a welcome, a training handbook (adapted from Western Oregon University's *Writing Center Internship Workbook* by Katherine M. Schmidt, PhD), a training grid with the necessary resources attached, information on keeping a journal (in general, one entry for each day worked, either blogged on the portal site, word processed or hand-written), and syllabi for new and for returning Writing 406/506 students (Projects in Writing for undergraduate and graduate students). The Portal and its blogging feature permit discussion to occur both in the weekly meetings and online.

A benefit of the weekly meetings is that they contribute to building a sense of community among the writing assistants. This sense of community was mentioned in Chapter 2 (both Ede and Hogg commented on it), and although there are many more tutors than in previous years, community—and its inherent support—still exists. Further, this community includes all those connected with the Writing Center. Although writing assistants may not have much contact with Ede while actually working in the Center, her presence at and participation in the meetings contributes not only to the sense of community, but to the continuity of the philosophy, purpose, and pedagogy of the Writing Center mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Training occurs on an informal and often individual basis, as well. Coordinators have always been available to writing assistants, with an “open door” policy. Writing assistants are encouraged to ask questions when they need help, even in the middle of an appointment with a student. As Dennis Bennett puts it, “I spend a

lot of my days being interrupted. [ . . . I] have an open door policy [and am] always available for consultation [with writing assistants, faculty, and students].”

Indeed, another consistent duty for coordinators has been acting as a liaison with faculty. In some cases, this is in regard to problems; other times, the coordinator works with faculty who want to encourage or require their students to come to the Writing Center.

Coordinators also connect with faculty by giving presentations in classes. As stated in the previous chapter, sometimes these presentations focus on the services the Writing Center offers; others cover various topics, such as an introduction to college writing, writing resumes and cover letters, conducting and using peer feedback, etc. Robertson reports that this contact is beneficial: he estimates that a quarter of the students in the classes he visits come to the Writing Center. As noted earlier, since the start of the WIC program, the coordinators now regularly participate in training sessions for those faculty taking the WIC seminar.

In addition to the preceding responsibilities, Writing Center coordinators typically work a few hours a week in the Writing Center. Sometimes they work with students with certain difficulties (for instance, Robertson worked with a deaf student). In addition, as Robertson puts it, having coordinators conference with students facilitates their relationship with writing assistants, as the assistants see them doing the same work and realize that the coordinators truly understand the challenges writing assistants face. Sometimes, too, the coordinator must work with students because the Center is very busy (such as during Dead Week) or because not enough writing

assistants are there to cover the schedule (due to student walk-ins, an influx from a certain course, or to writing assistants canceling their shifts).

In fact, scheduling, another ongoing coordinator duty, can be one of the more difficult aspects of the job. The coordinator must ensure that there are enough writing assistants available both in the Writing Center and at the satellite Writing Center in the library (discussed later). This requires working around each writing assistants' personal schedule. Bennett calls scheduling the "bane" of his job; he hopes to simplify its demand by developing a software program to facilitate the process.

Finally, coordinators also work individually with writing assistants as needed. When writing assistants want to do a special project (either because they are working for credit or simply because they are interested), the coordinators provide assistance and supervision. Further, they read all the journals and projects done by the for-credit students (although Ede also reads and grades them). As the number of writing assistants has increased over the years, the demands on coordinators have similarly increased. In addition, all of the coordinators pursue particular interests not always specifically focused on the Writing Center, which is explained in the following section.

### The Individual Coordinators and Their Specific Contributions

All of the coordinators came to the Writing Center with their own interests, and all seem to have either expanded on or developed other interests while working there. Some of the interests directly benefitted the Writing Center, such as the development of the webpages, while others indirectly affected the Writing Center.

This section explores these interests and provides information, obtained from personal interviews and from the annual reports, about each coordinator.

Roberta Lundeberg grew into the capacity of the Writing Lab Coordinator, starting as a tutor in 1979 (and probably becoming the coordinator later that year) and staying until 1985 (when she completed her masters degree), handling the mixture of duties required. In a personal interview, she stated she didn't feel that she was asked to do anything that was not under the aegis of her position and that everyone did what was needed. She had gotten into writing center work by accident, beginning while she was a graduate student (getting a Masters of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education, English, and Anthropology) at OSU. Her neighbor, she reports, knew Interim Director Lisa Pederson, and Lundeberg was interviewed and hired. She was the only graduate student among five tutors and worked with the EDT students and in Study Skills. Over time, she began hiring tutors (and the number of tutors had increased to twenty by the time she left) and developed the tutor training program. Lundeberg now works for the OSU Extension Service, running their 4H Horse Program (Lundeberg).

When Lundeberg left in 1985, Lex Runciman was hired as Coordinator for the Writing Lab. Runicman has an MFA from the University of Montana and a PhD from the University of Utah. Runciman was a writing instructor in the English Department before being hired as the Writing Lab Coordinator, and his experience benefitted the CSC. He was able to make changes, such as revising materials, including the faculty referral form, and developing new ones, including a promotional handout. An additional change Runciman made was to introduce the term *writing assistant* to replace

*tutor*. According to Ede, the idea for this was based on an interaction with his daughter, who associated *tutor* with remedial work, not collaborative learning (personal interview). (Runciman wrote an article called "Defining Ourselves: Do We Really Want to Use the Word Tutor?" which was included in *Where Are We Going? Where Have We Been? The Writing Center Journal Tenth Anniversary Issue*.) Further, Runciman and Ede developed workshops for courses in business and political science.

In 1987, both Runciman and Ede worked with other faculty to develop OSU's WIC program, which was instituted as part of a new general education curriculum in 1989. Although the WIC program was never part of the CSC, Ede and Runciman were involved in planning it through the following year, in part because the plan included establishing the director of that program in the physical location adjacent to the CSC. The following year, Ede was acting director of WIC while candidates for the permanent director were interviewed. Runciman was hired as the WIC Director, beginning that job in July, 1990. At present, Runciman is a professor of English and the Director of the Writing Center at Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon, and he publishes widely.

After Runciman became WIC director, Jon Olson was hired in 1990 as the Writing Center Coordinator, although Olson and Runciman worked together frequently on preparing the Writing Center for the WIC program and on training and supporting professors in the various departments which were implementing WIC. Olson has a PhD in English with an emphasis in rhetoric and writing from the University of Southern California.

The following year, Olson continued to work closely with Runciman on the WIC program, but also encouraged writing assistants to get involved in the Conversant Program\*. This program, coordinated by Barbara Hogg, matched native speaking students with international students. The purpose was to talk informally and to both improve the foreign students' grasp of English and the American students' understanding of other cultures.

A temporary shift in positions occurred during 1992-93 when Lex Runciman accepted a teaching position at Linfield College and Jon Olson became Acting WIC Director. Kit Andrews was Acting Writing Center Coordinator for that year. Andrews was a graduate of OSU who had been a writing assistant. After he completed his PhD at the University of Oregon and a stint in the Peace Corps, he was looking for a temporary position. The timing worked well in that a one-year position was open in the CWL at that time (Ede personal interview). Andrews is currently an Associate Professor at Western Oregon University in English, Writing, and Linguistics ("Andrews").

Jon Olson returned to his position as Writing Center Coordinator in fall 1993 when a permanent WIC Director, Vicki Tolar Burton, was hired (she started in August 1993). Throughout his time as Writing Center Coordinator, Olson had a strong interest in developing the use of and access to technology in the Writing Center. Under his leadership, the Writing Center acquired computers and started an e-mail writing hotline (WritingQ\*) and developed its first presence on the World Wide Web.

In addition, Olson applied for and received a \$34,000 Technology Resource grant to buy three Power Mac computers.

During Olson's tenure, the number of workshops offered by the Writing Center also increased, as did their locations. More workshops were taken into dormitories and other places, and also whole classes came as groups to the Writing Center. Further, the Writing Center stayed open during the summer term for the first time starting in 1993.

Olson left OSU in 1997, moving to Pennsylvania State University, where he is the Director of the Center for Excellence in Writing. His commitment to writing centers remains strong: he was the President of the International Writing Centers Association from 2003 to 2005 and remains on the Board as Past President ("Jon Olson"; "About IWCA").

Matt Yurdana was hired as Coordinator in 1997 and worked in the Writing Center until 2000. He has an MFA in poetry from the University of Montana. Yurdana built on Olson's technological work, "restructur[ing] and expand[ing] the CWL and Writing Center's web pages so that they [were] more useful and comprehensive" (Ede "Annual Report 1997-98" 7). He also applied for a grant to develop the Online Writing Lab (OWL). Yurdana also furthered the image and accessibility of the Writing Center in other ways: redesigning the CWL and its programs' logos (in Appendix B), refurbishing the Writing Center (oak instead of metal and plastic), and instituting a satellite Writing Center Desk in the OSU Library.

In addition, Yurdana created an ongoing series called *The Craft of Writing*, which "present[s] a variety of OSU faculty and other well-known academic and

professional writers to talk about how they draft, revise, publish, utilize, and think about writing in their field or discipline” (Ede “Annual Report 1997-98” 8). The first writers to present included novelist James Welch, environmental scientist Jane Lubchenco, essayists Kathleen Dean Moore and Chris Anderson, and poet Robert Wrigley. The talks were well-attended by undergraduate and graduate students and by faculty. The series has presented several speakers every year since its inception and currently exists as an Associated Students of Oregon State University (ASOSU\*) sponsored organization with the Writing Center Coordinator as advisor (Ede personal interview).

Yurdana seemed to be the coordinator most strongly affected by the low salary mentioned in Chapter Three, as he was the only income source for his family (Ede personal interview). When efforts to obtain a substantial raise for Yurdana failed, he took a job as a technical writer at Hewlett-Packard and left at the end of the winter, 2000 term (Dempsey “Statement in Lieu” 1).

Wayne Robertson had been a passionate and committed writing assistant during the fall and winter terms (1999 and 2000) of that year, working for credit as a graduate student in English, majoring in composition and rhetoric. In need of someone to coordinate the Writing Center for the spring 2000 term, Ede asked Robertson if he would be willing to do so while finishing his graduate degree (Robertson). He agreed, realizing that it was a valuable opportunity. Because he was a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA), Robertson could not be paid for his work; that term, he reports, he took classes, taught two sections of writing, and worked



approximately twenty hours a week in the Writing Center. He put off completing his thesis until the summer and defended it in September 2000. Robertson applied for and won the permanent position, beginning in fall 2000, at a salary of about \$23,000 for a nine-month appointment (Robertson).

Robertson, who first worked at and then ran a school teaching English in Japan for over three years, is interested in how people from other countries approach writing—and what they find difficult about writing in the United States. To that end, he made a film called *Writing Across Borders*, in which he interviews students from various countries; makes suggestions for faculty working with international students; and explores the ways in which testing, teaching, and classroom procedures are obstacles for international students. The project, which extended over three years, was funded by the CWL and WIC and won a 2006 Bronze Telly Award, an award that recognizes excellence in various television commercials and programs and for videos and films (“The Awards”). The film is available in DVD format at the OSU Bookstore (<http://www.osubookstore.com/>) (Robertson).

In 2004, OSU adopted a new strategic plan. One of the foci was student retention, which manifested as improving student support services. To this end, Academic Success became a free-standing program, well-funded by the university. Wayne Robertson began working half-time in the ASC and, in 2005, was promoted to assistant director of the CWL (which also, as mentioned before, began receiving more money for salaries and for writing assistant pay). A full-time coordinator was needed for the Writing Center, and thus an assistant coordinator was hired in 2004. The

combined shift in the overarching reporting to the vice provost of Academic Affairs and the new university strategic plan enabled the CWL to hire more staff. Robertson reports he is very happy in his current split position because, "I get to write my job day-to-day." Further, he is allowed to take risks and to follow up on ideas. In addition to his paid job, Robertson served for two years as the member at large of the board of the Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association (PNWCA)\*, for which OSU hosted the spring 2006 conference. He is currently a member at large on the executive board of the IWCA (Robertson personal interview).

Dennis Bennett was hired as Assistant Coordinator in August 2004 and promoted to Coordinator in July 2005. Bennett has experience in technology and writing center work from Washington State University, where he worked in the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology doing assessment and instruction. At the time, he was also working on a PhD in Literature, although he has yet to complete his dissertation and oral exams. Bennett was hired by the Student Advising and Learning Center at WSU, and enjoyed that "technology-rich, writing-intensive environment" enough to decide to put off completion of his PhD. From the start, Bennett took over most of Robertson's day-to-day tasks, but he also used his technological experience to initiate several important projects. First, he updated the CWL and the Writing Center websites, which he now maintains. He also created an online application to track appointments, converting the old "yellow card" that was filled out by the writing assistant and the student. Perhaps most significantly, Bennett developed an online "portal," a website for writing assistants and staff (including Bennett, Ede, and

Robertson) to discuss readings, difficult sessions, training, and more. Finally, Bennett was elected the board of the PNWCA as the member at large in spring 2006 (Bennett personal interview).

All of the coordinators, then, have brought different types of experience and expertise to the Writing Center. Furthermore, each has built on what was developed by the previous coordinators, lending stability and continuity. Most, too, have continued their involvement with writing center work, writing, and/or teaching, as well.

### **The Director in the Writing Center**

Since beginning as director of the CWL, Lisa Ede has been actively involved in the Writing Center. Although she doesn't conference with the students who come in with their papers, she works closely with the coordinators and with the writing assistants.

As previously stated, Ede is active in the weekly training meetings. Sometimes she facilitates the discussion, and other times she participates in the activity. Thus, Ede has worked closely with each coordinator over the years. While she is their supervisor, her style is more of a colleague, an equal. She also respects the individuality of the coordinators, allowing them to pursue other interests, such as teaching, integrating technology, and filmmaking.

Ede reports that although she has gotten along well with every coordinator, there have been challenges with working with each. She states the challenges fall into

three general categories: control and collaboration, status issues, and negotiating work issues. For instance, one coordinator in particular wanted to earn more money by teaching in addition to his work in the Writing Center. Another, Ede felt, was overextending himself by working too many hours with students in the Center. Others expressed frustration that Ede is in a tenured position, while they were not. In one case, a coordinator behaved inappropriately, and Ede had to take disciplinary action. Finally, one coordinator struggled with Ede over Ede's level of involvement in the Writing Center; according to her, he felt that she should be more distant, like a department chair, and let him handle all aspects of the Writing Center, including the training of and the weekly meeting with the writing assistants. In all of these situations, Ede states she attempted to negotiate with each coordinator, establishing a solution that she hoped was acceptable to both her and the coordinator (Ede personal interview).

Ede reports that she also works with the writing assistants, in particular those working for credit. She reads and comments on the journals (and now the blogs on the portal) that all first-term writing assistants earning credit keep. She also suggests projects for later for-credit terms, often reading multiple drafts and, finally, providing a grade for each student. Her mentoring has also contributed to the success of writing assistants: one writing assistant was the 2005-06 student representative to the Board of the Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association; another former writing assistant runs the Writing Center at Yakima Valley Community College, while another is the

Writing 121 Coordinator at OSU; still others have published articles and spoken at conferences (personal interview).

Ede has also published widely, about both writing center work and about rhetoric and collaboration. Some of Ede's numerous journal articles have been published or republished in books, including "Writing as a Social Process: A Theoretical Foundation for Writing Centers," originally published in a 1989 edition of *the Writing Center Journal* and republished in 1995's *Landmark Essays on Writing Centers*, edited by Christina Murphy and Joe Law. She also wrote "Writing Centers and the Politics of Location: A Response to Terrance Riley and Stephen M. North" in 1996 and "Some Millennial Thoughts about the Future of Writing Centers" (with Andrea Lunsford) in 2000, both published in *the Writing Center Journal*.

Ede's interest in collaboration has led to writing and/or editing numerous articles and books collaboratively with Lunsford and with others (*Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing* in 1990, *The Selected Essays of Robert J. Connors* in 2003, and *Essays on Classical Rhetoric and Modern Discourse* in 1984). In addition, her textbook, *Work in Progress: A Guide to Academic Writing and Revising*, specifically encourages students to visit writing centers (providing helpful guidelines for these visits) and is going into its seventh edition and will be published under the new title *The Academic Writer: A Brief Guide for Students*. Her most recent book is *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location*, published in December 2004.

A much cited and referenced article is "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy," published in

*College Composition and Communication* in 1983. Ede and Lunsford won the CCCC Braddock Award for this article. Among other awards, Ede also won the National Writing Centers Association Award for outstanding scholarship on writing centers in 1990. Further, Ede is on the editorial board for several leading journals in the fields of rhetoric and of writing centers, including *The Writing Center Journal*. She also presents at numerous conferences every year, and has been invited to give keynote and other talks (Ede "Performance Evaluation" 5). Ede's significant amount of scholarship, publication, and renown has likely contributed to decision to keep the CWL open and funded.

Ede's involvement with the people of the Writing Center (staff and writing assistants), as well as her scholarship about writing centers, illustrate her clear commitment to furthering both the people involved and the knowledge about writing centers.

### **The Writing Assistants**

The following figure shows the number of writing assistants who have worked at the Writing Center for at least one term between 1980-81 and 2004-05 (zeros indicate that the information was unobtainable).

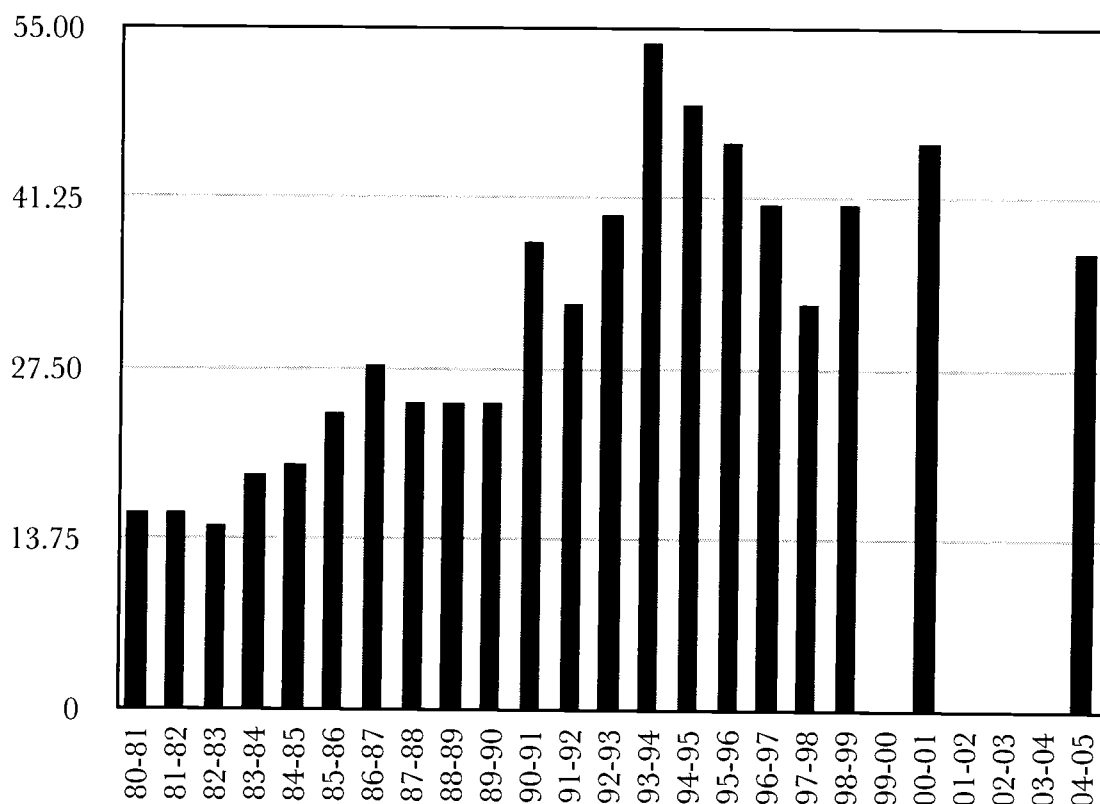


Figure 4.1: Graph of the Number of Writing Assistants per Year. <sup>a</sup>

Source: Ede's Annual Reports.

<sup>a</sup> Data was unavailable for the years that list zero writing assistants.

The overall numbers do not reflect the variations in schedules: some writing assistants worked only two hours a week, others worked ten; in addition, some worked only one or two terms, and others worked every term. Still, the numbers increased quite steadily as the Writing Center grew, from five in 1979 (Lundeberg) to around 16 in 1980-81 to a peak of 53 in 1993-94. A possible reason for the increase may be the “effort to extend writing instruction through evening hours in residence halls, workshops with a variety of classes, and computer networking” (Hogg “Annual Report

1993-94” 7), as these may have required more writing assistants or perhaps the alternative spaces and/or computer work may have appealed to other types of writing assistants. For the last ten years, the numbers have been somewhat lower, with a dip in 1997-98, followed by a relatively steady increase. Currently, the general number of writing assistants ranges between thirty-five and forty (Ede personal interview).

Writing assistants have included undergraduate and graduate students working for credit, work-study, or regular student pay. Some students and members of the community have also volunteered in the Writing Center. Certainly, the increase in money available to pay writing assistants attracts more applicants. In addition, Ede describes the opportunity in all classes she teaches, sometimes inviting students to apply to be writing assistants, and other faculty, especially in the English Department, recommend students who they feel would be good writing assistants. In fact, in 2000, the primary way of finding writing assistants was faculty endorsement. Potential writing assistants are then contacted by the Writing Center staff, offered an interview and a tour of the Writing Center, after which they submit a writing sample if they are interested in applying. The combination of faculty input and active recruiting provides “a larger and more qualified base of assistants to choose from” (Ede “Annual Report 2000-01” 5). Although the screening process was not quite as extensive in previous years, the record has been good: Ede reports that she has only regretted two or three writing assistants hired in twenty-five years, and Robertson states that his choices improved as he “trusted his gut” more over the years (Ede personal interview; Robertson).



A minimum requirement for writing assistants is that they are good writers. However, Ede acknowledges, being a good writer doesn't necessarily make one a good writing assistant, and "some people who are less strong [writers] can be effective writing assistants." She continues, "All writers encounter difficulties, and empathy and a genuine desire to help others" is vital (personal interview).

Although some of the students who visit the Writing Center believe or expect that the writing assistants are experts in all types of writing and know all of the mechanics, that is neither the case nor a requirement. Robertson states that he doesn't expect himself or the writing assistants to "know all"; rather, he wants them to read and learn about collaborative and Writing Center work. Further, he wants writing assistants to understand and to hold to the values of the OSU Writing Center, discussed earlier in this chapter, in regard to how to work with students and what to do in a session: "to talk about writing, and [to] ask the right questions and get the student [to] be their best in a session," which, he believes, develops over time, taking at least one term to really understand. Still, he reports, he and Bennett both encourage flexibility and breaking the guidelines when necessary.

Robertson believes that nearly half of the writing assistants who work for two or more years "will do something beyond, above just being a writing assistant, depending on their interests," related to the Writing Center, such as work on the website or develop materials. He further states that being a writing assistant is excellent professional training and that these students "create effective change in whatever they do. [. . . They are] our greatest contribution to the state [of Oregon]," as many go on

to graduate schools and/or to teach, using the philosophy of student teaching and learning as a foundation (Robertson).

Although many writing assistants are undergraduate English majors, others are majoring in a wide variety of departments. For example, in 2001-02, the forty-one writing assistants came from sixteen different majors, including economics, biology, political science, history, graphic design, forestry, chemistry, psychology, and, of course, English.

The training received by writing assistants has been discussed earlier in this chapter (in *Continuity in Coordinator Responsibilities*), and some information about the early training is also available in Chapter Two. In general, training has always been a priority, one which is regularly tweaked and adjusted and added to by the coordinators. In addition to changes implemented by the coordinators, suggestions and feedback from writing assistants are welcomed, and samples of journals and projects (required for those writing assistants working for credit) are available for newer writing assistants to look at and read. The training by shadowing the coordinator or an experienced writing assistant, which began during the 1970s, is still used. And after their initial training, writing assistants are monitored subtly; the coordinator listens to the interactions around him when he walks through the Writing Center (Robertson), following up individually if necessary. In addition, writing assistants may provide feedback to each other or to the coordinator if they have concerns or suggestions.

In sum, because writing assistants are not expected to know everything and are expected to model good studying and writing behavior by looking in reference books

and asking for help as needed, they don't feel as if they are entirely responsible for the students with whom they are working. This access to help creates an atmosphere of safety for writing assistants, allowing them to learn how to teach and to be taught simultaneously. And because writing assistants feel comfortable, they are better able to work with students effectively.

### **The Students Served**

Increasing numbers of students have been served at the Writing Center, as the figure on the following page demonstrates. The numbers, with each contact equivalent to a half-hour session, were generally between 3500 and 4300 student contacts a year through the 1980s and 1990s. These numbers reflect overall contacts, not numbers of students; that is, they do not account for students who visited the Writing Center more than once or regularly. The numbers began climbing in the early 2000s, then jumped to over 6000 in 2001-02, with the highest number being 6969 in 2002-03.

Students across campus use the Writing Center, as the tables in Appendix C demonstrate. In the 1980s, most of the student contacts from all the schools increased over time steadily, particularly in Business, which quadrupled the number of student contacts in the Center more than doubled during that time. The number of pharmacy contacts between 1980 and 1989. The number of engineering and of science student contacts increased from only four in 1980 to over 140 by 1989. Many of the schools—agriculture, education, home economics, forestry, and University Exploratory Studies Program (UESP)—stayed consistent.

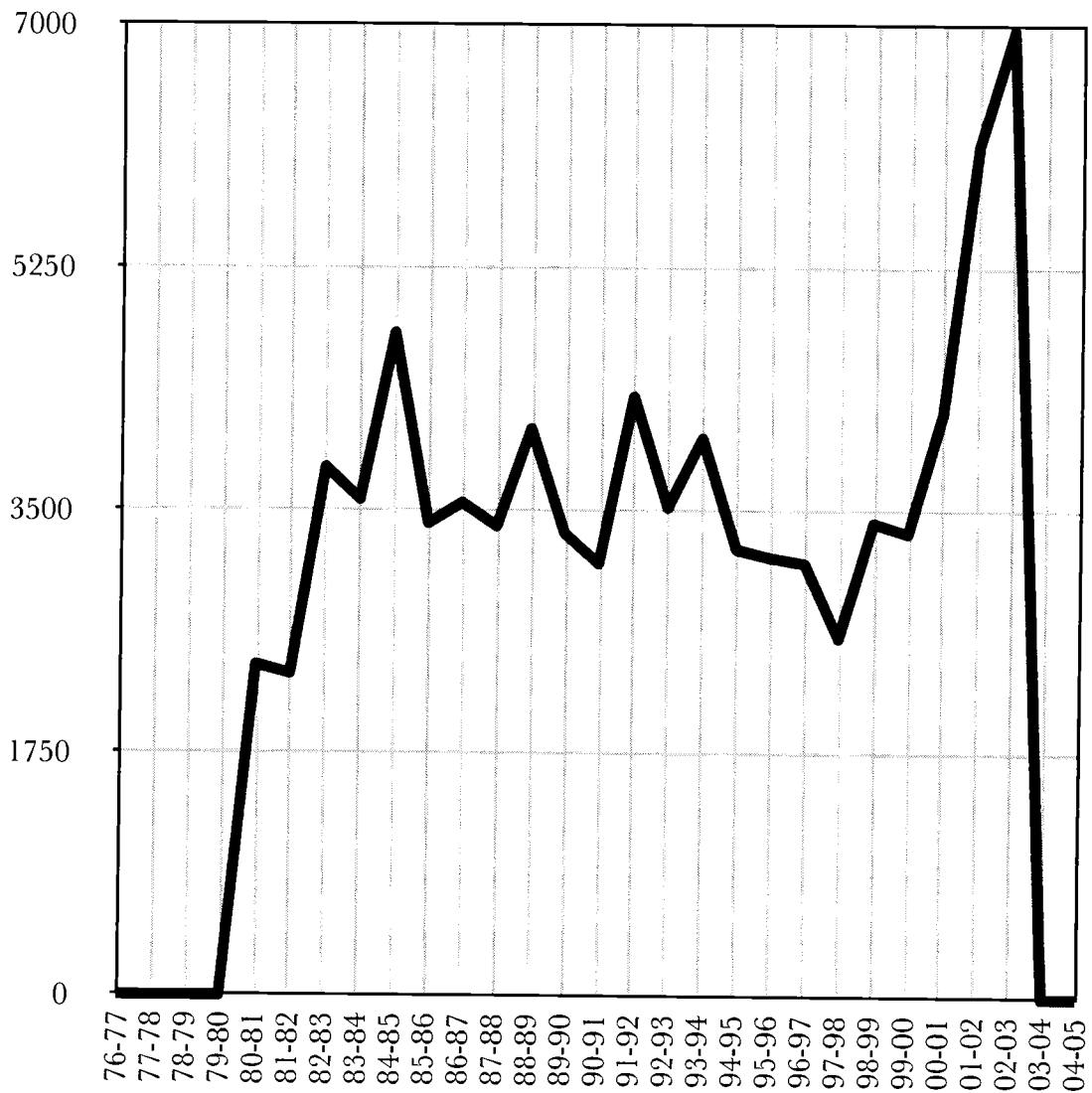


Figure 4.2: Graph of the Numbers of Overall Student Contacts 1976-2005. <sup>a,b</sup>  
 Source: Ede's Annual Reports, Pederson's *Yearly Report*.

<sup>a</sup> Each contact equals 1/2-hour appointment.

<sup>b</sup> Data was unavailable for the years that list zero student contacts

During the 1990s, the number of business student contacts decreased steadily, returning to numbers lower than in 1980. Science, agriculture, and liberal arts student contacts approximately doubled. Other schools fluctuated, reaching a high in the

mid-1990s and then decreasing. Although the WIC program began university-wide in 1990, its impact did not seem to affect the numbers of student contacts in the Writing Center, at least not in the 1990s.

In the past five years, the number of business student contacts in the Writing Center again increased, doubling its number to over 750 contacts. Health and Human Sciences Department contacts have increased dramatically (perhaps because more writing is required in the combination of the former colleges of home economics and health and human performance). Pharmacy student contacts have increased almost twofold, and oceanography had one high year in 2002-03. Liberal arts student contacts have risen fairly steadily, but engineering, after an increased the number of contacts, has been declining.

These numbers demonstrate not only the increase in student use over the years, but also the variations within different schools whose students use the Writing Center. There is also a range of use among the four (or five) undergraduate years, graduate students, and others. Table 1 in Appendix D illustrates the student usage by year during the 1980s. As can be seen, increasing numbers of students used the Writing Center, especially first-year, seniors, and graduate/post-baccalaureate students. Numbers of sophomores likely declined because, having completed a required writing class (which many students do in their first year), many had little writing to do until their junior or senior years, depending, of course, on their majors. Seniors likely came for assistance, as higher level courses often require more writing.

In the 1990s, fewer undergraduates seemed to use the Writing Center. Certainly, the number of first-year students declined; there were 759 contacts in 1990-91, 1554 in 1993-94, and only 484 in 1998-99. The number of seniors peaked mid-decade and then declined. Only graduate and post-baccalaureate students continued to increase in their use of the Writing Center.

During the current decade, numbers are again increasing. Use by first-year students has risen (although it was lower between 2003 and 2005). Interestingly, sophomore use is higher. Use by juniors has nearly tripled in five years; likely, they are using the Writing Center when taking their WIC course, which is always an upper-level course. Use by seniors has climbed as well, and use by graduate and post-baccalaureate students remains high. The numbers of faculty or staff members using the Writing Center has also increased from the 1990s, as has use by members of the local community.

In addition, many of the students who seek assistance at the Writing Center are Non-native English Speakers. During the University's focus on international students in its long-range plan starting in 1983-84, there were 1542 NNES (38%) contacts in the Writing Center. Since 1982, the percentage of NNES contacts in the Writing Center has been between thirty and forty percent of the total contacts—as many as 2267 in 2004-05. There are no statistics to indicate how many NNESs come consistently; however, reports suggest that a number of NNESs meet with writing assistants (usually the same one) weekly, and, in fact, have standing appointments. (As stated earlier, the training for writing assistants has increasingly involved working with

NNESs.) It's clear that the Writing Center both serves many students from myriad departments and that it serves students well.

### **Changes in the Writing Center**

As is the natural way of evolution, changes have occurred frequently in the Writing Center. Most, however, did not alter the fundamental nature of the services the Center provides, despite there being different coordinators, different writing assistants, increased number of writing assistants and of student contacts, and more. Some changes were more significant, in that they had a lasting impact on the actual services or the way services could be offered in the Writing Center; among these are the increasing engagement with technology, the summer session and satellite Writing Center, the elimination of the EDT, and the recent budget improvements.

### Technology

Over the years, as technology improved in the world at large, it changed in the Writing Center, as well. When the Center opened, the technology consisted of tape players and headphones (Perkins), and pens, pencils, and paper. Jon Olson, however, managed to acquire three used computers in 1991 or 1992, which he integrated into Writing Center use. By 1993 and 1994, writing assistants worked with students at the computers. Later, three Power Mac computers were added.

In 1995 and 1996, Olson created WritingQ, an e-mail “hotline” for users both on and off the OSU campus to ask short questions and receive answers to them (the responses were checked for accuracy by two hotline staff members, who may have been specially-trained writing assistants). (Ede’s recollection is that only either she or Olson answered these questions.) This service is still available, although the numbers of queries it receives is minimal.

In addition, the Writing Center developed a webpage, for which Olson received additional education in a summer workshop in the Communication Media Center’s EdWeb ‘96 series. Again, the website is still in use. The webpages have been revamped and updated over the years by Yurdana, Robertson, and Bennett. At present, it provides information about the Writing Center in general, tips on how to get the most out of an appointment and what to expect, and a links to the Portal and the OWL. The OWL began in the late 1990s and is a service in which students can e-mail a paper to the Writing Center, where a writing assistant trained in responding to essays by computer reviews it and provides feedback online within a day or two. Use of the OWL has expanded, with increasing numbers of writing assistants trained to respond effectively to the papers submitted on it (Robertson). Anyone visiting the website, which may include people not connected to OSU as well as students at the Corvallis and the Cascades campuses, faculty, and prospective students, and others, can also see some pages of the Online Portal, as well.

Other changes have also involved the use of computers. A recent innovation has been the shift of the conference evaluation form from paper to online, as discussed



briefly earlier. The new form is somewhat more extensive, allowing students to explain why they might not return, to indicate which activities they worked on (analysis will allow seeing if it matches what the writing assistant indicated), which activities they found most helpful, how they perceived the writing assistant, and whether they will keep working on the writing assignment after the completion of the session (“Writing Center Session Information”). It also allows for automatic, up-to-the-minute tracking of these statistics (freeing up time for the CWL’s Administrative Assistant), and provides more privacy for the student. The online form is accessed first by the writing assistant, who fills out the first part of the form detailing length of session, what was worked on, the type of writing assignment, and the stage of writing the student is at (“Writing Center Session Information”). The student then completes the form and submits it electronically.

Perhaps most significantly, Bennett developed the CWL Online Portal (as has been discussed earlier in this chapter). It is a website for writing assistants and staff (including Bennett, Ede, and Robertson) to discuss readings, difficult sessions, and more. Topics such as working with international students, ways of approaching certain assignments with students, and feelings and experiences with basic writers are explored. Often, topics are presented by the coordinator, who encourages the writing assistants to think and explore various aspects of the topic in preparation for that week’s meeting. Students seem to feel free to express their concerns and observations, more so, perhaps, than they might in person. Not only do the coordinators and director respond, but students “speak” to each other, providing support and

suggestions. During spring term 2006, Bennett expanded the portal's use to include a writing assistant handbook and training manual.

#### Expansions: Summer Term and the Satellite Writing Center

Beginning in 1993, the Writing Center began staying open part-time during the summer terms. During the first year, this was possible due to funds from a WIC grant funding a pilot program for this purpose. Ede reports that the summer term writing assistants were as busy with equivalent numbers of student contacts (305) during those eight weeks as during a regular term (taking into account that there were fewer writing assistants, no support staff, and that the Center was open only twenty hours a week). The student contact makeup seemed to vary a bit during the summer, consisting of more students recently out of high school, those in the Upward Bound summer program, and more graduate students. In addition, more than half of the contacts were from weekly visits by students, many more than during the regular terms. As Ede concludes,

In even more ways than were initially anticipated, then, this pilot program demonstrated a clear need for the Writing Center to remain open during the summer session. Now that the Writing Center's ability to fulfill those needs during summer session has also been established, continued support for the Writing Center in summer sessions is highly recommended. ("Annual Report 1992-93" 5)

In addition to the increased numbers of hours offered during the summer term, the Writing Center developed a satellite Writing Center Desk in the Information

Commons at OSU's Valley Library in 1998. This took time and negotiation to develop, and Matt Yurdana worked closely with Loretta Rielly at the Valley Library to explore this possibility. The satellite desk offered evening hours several days a week, including Sundays, and it increased the number of hours offered over time. The satellite runs a bit differently than the Center itself: students sign up for their own appointments on a posted form, and there is no phone (and thus no need for phone coverage). Because it is located in an area which offers academic assistance in various subjects—now enclosed from the surrounding, busier parts of the floor—it has a different atmosphere, as well.

### The English Diagnostic Test

As has been stated previously, the EDT was a test required by five colleges for a number of years as part of the graduation requirement which was administered by the Writing Center. Although it brought in some money from these departments, the EDT did not truly fit with the philosophy of the Writing Center (Ede personal interview). Fewer schools required it in the 1990s: only 58 student contacts for the EDT were recorded in 1992-93 compared with 953 the previous year, and there is no mention of or statistics about the EDT in the 1993-94 annual report. The WIC program, which emphasizes Writing Across the Curriculum, requires all students to participate in at least one intensive writing course in their majors, thus fulfilling the need not only for basic writing skills for every student, but also for more advanced and field-specific ones.

### Budget

For most of the CWL's and the Writing Center's existences, the budget has been a source of great concern. As explained in the previous chapter, the CWL always had more money than just that \$3,768, but not enough to function without worry and attention to the budget. Indeed, the paucity of the budget was reflected in the low salary for the Writing Center coordinators; although information is not available for every year, one Coordinator left specifically because of the low salary, and the Coordinator who followed him started the job at about \$23,000 a year—in 2000. We can surmise, then, that the salary was even lower in the earlier years of the Writing Center.

In addition, there was little money to pay writing assistants, who either had to be on work-study, work at the Center for class credit (for which they paid the university), or volunteer. Further, the money budgeted was often not enough to pay for the entire school year, and Ede had to request money from alternate sources, including the Oregon Emergency (or E-) Board, at least once.

With the move back to central administration in 2001, these budget problems eased substantially. Money was earmarked for writing assistant pay, allowing the director and coordinators a broader base from which to choose writing assistants. Although ongoing concern exists about the budget (due to state budget difficulties, as explained in Chapter Three), this is a significant change and one which Ede hopes will continue. And coordinators received a substantial increase in pay, with the current coordinator earning over \$40,000 a year.

## **Conclusion**

The OSU Writing Center has been a mixture of continuity interspersed with change. The aspects that have been continuous—the training of new coordinators and of writing assistants, of Ede's close involvement with the Center, of an ongoing philosophy and pedagogy—have all contributed to the actual continuity. And the changes have only enhanced the ability to provide services effectively; they have not altered basic Writing Center theory and practice.

The Writing Center follows theories and practices similar to those mentioned in Chapter Two. The writing assistants educate students about the writing process as they assist those students in becoming stronger writers. And these writing assistants are undergraduate and graduate students, a common but not universal circumstance. Writing assistants are only distinguished by their disciplines (that is, some effort is made to match a student with a writing assistant who has experience writing in the discipline in which the student is requesting help)—and this is not always possible—and undergraduate writing assistants may work with a graduate students. The training for writing assistants is fairly extensive and done on-site; that is, writing assistants do not take a special, credit-bearing class, as is the case in some institutions. The coordinators' job is likely very similar to those of other coordinators, but at OSU, they answer to and confer with a director who is active in the Writing Center; this is likely somewhat different than the situation at many universities. The range of students who seek assistance in the Writing Center is likely quite similar to that in other schools in that it has a significant number of NNES contacts. Further, the balance of the students who

visit the Writing Center likely reflects the population of both the student body and, perhaps, the locale of the OSU.

This basic theory and practice mentioned earlier is part of the Writing Center's culture. In fact, the Center could be said to have several overlapping cultures: that of the professional staff (the coordinator and the director), the coordinator and the writing assistants, the writing assistants and the students, and the writing assistants themselves. All of these overlap and influence and affect each other. For instance, the interests of the coordinator at the time certainly affects the direction of the Writing Center's activities (such as Jon Olson's interest in technology and Matt Yurdana's development of the *Craft of Writing* series). The types of students who visit the Center, too, affect the culture, depending on, for instance, the reason they are visiting, their majors, or if English is their first language.

And external events influence the culture of the Writing Center. The budget available to pay writing assistants changed the way many writing assistants were chosen; there was more choice for the coordinator and the director and, likely, a more consistently high quality of writing assistant. So as Peter Carino suggests, discussed in Chapter One, the OSU Writing Center does not exist in a vacuum; it has its own culture unto itself, but is also part of the larger culture around it.

## Chapter Five: Revisiting the Oregon State University Writing Center in Context

*Other stories can be brought to light, stories which write the developments of the contemporary writing center in theoretically sophisticated ways, stories which consider the critical capacities of networking, of linking writing centers with WAC [Writing Across the Curriculum] programs, of placing peer tutors in classrooms. Stories which draw on the history, and the continued problematic, of the at-odds-ness inherent in the writing center in order to pry apart distinctions which have become fused in our discussions of writing center theory and practice, enabling us to tease them out in a manner consonant with our intimate relationship to the teaching of writing in our institutions. All of these stories can be written. Should be written. Are waiting to be written. Will be written.*

—Elizabeth H. Boquet, “‘Our Little Secret’: A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions” 479

Many scholars working on the history of writing centers have called for more extensive histories of individual writing centers, and Beth Boquet’s statement in the epigraph above is an example. This thesis responds to Boquet’s and others’ call, telling the story of the Oregon State University Writing Center: its development, its link with the Writing Across the Curriculum movement via its WIC program, and its “at-odds-ness” with its larger institution. It also pries apart some of the distinctions that Boquet mentions by challenging some of the myths that have become fused with the idea of writing centers. In responding to the work of writing center historians such as Boquet, Lerner, and Carino, this thesis contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation.

This thesis also responds to another, connected, call: to explore the history of writing centers in the richest and fullest context. As discussed in Chapter One, Peter

Carino has been a particularly strong advocate for this historiographic approach. This thesis responds to Carino's call by situating the OSU Writing Center in the overlapping larger cultures of the Center for Writing and Learning and OSU. It also acknowledges the multiple internal cultures at play within the Writing Center, as writing assistants, the Writing Center coordinator, and the CWL's director work together to create a community. In doing so, the various perspectives enhance readers' understanding of this Center and, to a certain extent, of other writing centers.

Despite the myriad variations among writing centers, a review of the literature suggests a number of common themes which influence many, though not all, writing centers. These themes—or some of them, for there are surely more—were presented in the first chapter of this thesis. In this conclusion, I return to these themes to determine their relevance to the OSU Writing Center.

### **Analysis of Writing Center Themes and Context in Relation to Oregon State University's Writing Center**

The themes presented in Chapter One are culled from various “conversations” about writing centers. Readers may have connected OSU's Writing Center with some of these themes while reading the previous two chapters. Nonetheless, in the following discussion I will systematically explore the relevance of these themes for OSU's Writing Center. These themes include the reputation of writing centers; remediation versus collaboration; the role of open admissions in writing center development; the vulnerability of writing centers; how the variety of students who visit writing centers



are worked with; and the question of whether writing centers do what they say they intend to do.

The first theme, that of the reputation of the OSU Writing Center, calls attention to how it is seen by the English and other departments at OSU, as discussed in Chapter Three. As is the case at many colleges and universities, the purpose of the Writing Center at OSU is understood by some but not by others. It is hard to know exactly how faculty perceive the Writing Center, but some faculty seem to believe that the Writing Center is an editing service, one which will correct students' papers, or that only struggling writers might benefit from conferences with writing assistants. In the last fifteen years, however, the implementation of the WIC program has undoubtedly improved some faculty members' understanding of the mission and philosophy of the Writing Center, as its training includes a presentation about the Writing Center. The classroom visits made by the coordinators, a service which has been offered for most if not all of the Writing Center's existence, have also disseminated accurate information about the Writing Center.

Conversely, it is probable that some faculty members believe that the Writing Center offers only remedial services instead of collaborative ones, the second theme mentioned earlier. In fact, the OSU Writing Center staff has offered both ways of working with students but has always felt that the most productive use of the Writing Center has been collaborative work. Collaboration was, perhaps, an internal purpose, whereas the remedial work, in the form of the EDT-driven support, was an external request or requirement. The phasing out of the EDT was an important

moment in the history of OSU's Writing Center because it allowed the Writing Center to perform its central, self-stated purpose without the burden of doing remedial work.

This is not to say, however, that information about basic punctuation, grammar, and syntax isn't offered. Instead of students sitting at a table or a computer doing exercises, writing assistants educate students while conferencing about students' papers. Writing assistants might also make use of a handbook at this time, modeling strategies that students can employ to find what they need to know. This is consistent with the scholarly consensus that students learn grammar and punctuation best when they are working on their own writing.

The third theme, that of open admissions, is harder to analyze, as no evidence exists about what role, if any, the national open admissions movement played in regard to the founding of OSU's Writing Center and the CSC. Still, given the attitude of the education community nationwide in the mid-1970s, when the CSC was proposed and opened, we can assume that the history of OSU's CSC supports Carino's claim that, in general, open admissions *encouraged* the development of writing centers but did not *start* them. After all, writing services had already been offered through the English Department (the OSU Writing Clinic discussed in Chapter Three), and a math assistance lab, begun by Stuart Knapp, already existed. Further, Tim Perkins mentions the 1975 *Newsweek* article "Why Johnny Can't Write," not open admissions, as a reason why OSU was receptive to the CSC proposal.

The OSU Writing Center is a strong example of the next theme—that writing centers always were, are, and will be vulnerable to a lack of support from their

institutions, evidenced most strongly by inadequate budgets and by frequent budget cuts. Like most writing centers, the OSU Writing Center depends entirely on the OSU for its funding. As discussed several times in this thesis, the Writing Center has had significant budget difficulties—and has even been threatened with closure—for most of its existence. It is only in the last few years, with the latest strategic plan, that the CWL—and thus the Writing Center—has been adequately funded in all or at least most areas. Still, although the CWL's function coincides with OSU's current strategic plan, the Writing Center's future is far from guaranteed. In addition, support for public education at all levels in Oregon has declined in recent decades, and OSU, as an institution, feels the impact of this. That impact will likely filter down through every department and program on campus. Unfortunately, money troubles seem to be the status quo for public education in Oregon.

Lerner also suggests that writing centers get the dregs of other types of resources, as well, such as staff and space. Although the CWL is located on the lower floor of an older building, it has adequate space and is probably more attractive than many of the classrooms on the OSU campus. It also has satellite centers, allowing greater access by more students. Yes, it could benefit from more space and would use it well, but it is hardly crammed into a closet. Thus, though the space that the Writing Center is in doesn't match what Ede would design in an ideal situation, it seems that it is as good or better than that of many schools.

And the Writing Center is certainly not staffed with under-qualified people. As stated earlier, Lisa Ede has been the director of the CWL for twenty-six years; while

her PhD is not in rhetoric and writing, she has been a productive scholar who has become renowned in this field. In addition, although the salary for coordinators was shamefully low until a few years ago, the coordinators themselves were of high quality. All but the first one had at least a master's degree (she was working on hers while working in the Writing Lab), and some had PhDs. And as we've seen in Chapter Four, all brought various skills and interests to the Writing Center, which enhanced the Center's function. Finally, the writing assistants are also of high quality; the coordinators and director have been careful in hiring students with strong writing and communication skills. Increases in the amount of funding for student pay in recent years have only strengthened the overall quality of writing assistants, who receive substantial pre- and in-service training.

This training touches on the fifth theme, that of how writing assistants (or tutors) work with student writers. The OSU Writing Center staff is, again, similar to many other centers' staff in its approach to writing assistance. To put it simply, the philosophy followed is that of helping students to think like writers, not to just have them produce better papers. To encourage this, writing assistants generally follow a "hands-off" pedagogy, but they are strongly encouraged to be flexible, helping students differently when they feel it is necessary.

Even with extensive training and a common philosophy, it is still not possible to know that every writing assistant—and every conference—is guided by the Writing Center's collaborative philosophy. This final theme discussed in Chapter One is important, as it is easy for most people to believe that their work follows their

philosophy—particularly when they are not observed or encouraged to evaluate themselves. The staff at the Writing Center do all they can to ensure that writing assistants adhere to the Center's philosophy and pedagogy by eavesdropping (for lack of a better word) on writing assistants' conferences and by encouraging writing assistants to reflect on their beliefs and practices. However, only extensive case study and/or ethnographic research on writing assistants' actual practices could determine if this is the case.

## **Conclusion**

In researching and writing this history of OSU's Writing Center, I have learned a good deal. Most importantly, this experience has reinforced my belief that it is both difficult and vital to understand events and circumstances in the richest possible context. Such an approach required me to draw upon a range of research sources, including in-person interviews, phone interviews, e-mails, Lisa Ede's annual reports, the few remaining reports and correspondence from former CSC Director Lisa Pederson, archival material, and online and print studies. Working with such a wide range of materials was challenging. Another challenge grew out of my interviews with those connected with the Writing Center's history. After all, peoples' memories are fallible, especially when looking back over twenty-five or thirty years. In addition, what stands out is what was or is important to each individual. Thus, various perspectives on the same event emerged. These diverse perspectives emphasized the impossibility of presenting a complete and objective history of OSU's Writing Center.

There are additional reasons why I could not tell a complete or objective history of OSU's Writing Center. As mentioned in Chapter One, I brought my own experiences and biases to this project. As a result, the temptation to depict writing centers—especially OSU's Writing Center—in the most positive light was strong. While I strove to be as objective as possible, my commitment to the work of writing centers undoubtedly influenced my analysis. Thus, while I would *like* to say that all problems experienced by the writing center and its staff and writing assistants and the students who visit it rest solely on the university or on those to whom the director reports and from whom she receives her budget, that would be both untrue and unrealistic. Still, I can honestly report that the OSU Writing Center has experienced no extreme internal struggles; that is, overall, the coordinators and directors have agreed on the approaches and philosophy of the Center even while negotiating other work-related issues. As seen in this thesis, disciplinary problems have been rare, student satisfaction has been high overall, and the experience by writing assistants has been positive. To present the thirty year history as all sunshine, however, would be false. Thus, I tried to maintain a balance in this history, one which acknowledges the problems and struggles without belaboring them. (Recommendations for changes are available in Appendix E.)

In so doing, I was strongly influenced by Carino's cultural approach and by my own background in anthropology and social work, all of which strive to account for or explain the context of that which is being studied. In regard to Carino's cultural model, I encouraged readers to consider the institution in which the OSU Writing

Center exists, the way the Center is staffed and directed, its goals, philosophy, and pedagogy, and its particular struggles through the years. And though I ran up against some of the limitations of this model to which Carino alludes—that is is impossible to fully understand or convey a writing center's complete culture—this model enabled me to provide a fuller picture of the OSU Writing Center than I might otherwise have been able to do. In sum, then, I've learned how difficult it can be to negotiate the various cultures and contexts of histories, and how important it is to understand as much of these contexts as we can when presenting these histories.

I encourage other scholars to examine individual writing centers' histories in similarly contextually rich ways and to share these histories with others in the writing center community. Doing so will encourage the dissemination of facts, not myths. It will also help both scholars and practitioners to identify the tensions and themes which seem to be a part of every writing center's culture.

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## Glossary

AA: Academic Affairs.

ASC: Academic Success Center. Originally called Study Skills, it was part of the Communication Skills Center and coordinated by Michele Sakurai. Its name was changed to the Academic Success Program, and in 2004, it became an independent program administrated by Moira Dempsey.

ASOSU: Associated Students of Oregon State University.

Assessment: “demonstrat[ing] that the objectives of [a] program and [ . . . ] the performance of its students and graduates are being systematically measured and used to enhance the educational programs” (“Goals and Metrics”).

Baccalaureate core curriculum: OSU’s general education requirements.

Ballot Measure 5: A 1990 state proposal to limit property taxes.

Blue form: Used in the Writing Center for communication between writing assistants and faculty (usually when a student is referred to the Writing Center)

CAMP: College Assistant Migrant Program.

CCCC: Conference on College Composition and Communication. A professional organization which supports and encourages the study of composition and communication in colleges by hosting yearly conferences and publishing various materials.

Center for Writing and Learning Online Portal: A website designed by Dennis Bennett, the coordinator of the Writing Center, for communication among the staff and writing assistants of the Writing Center. Includes the writing assistant’s training manual, various resources, communications, and blogs.

Collaboration/collaborative learning: students and tutors working together and learning from each other.

Conference: A session in which a tutor and student work together on writing. These are usually one-on-one sessions

Conversant Program: A program in the CWL from the late 1980s in which native students met with international students to improve the latter’s command of English. The program moved to the English Language Institute in the early 2000s.

Coordinator: A person in charge of running a writing center. At OSU, the coordinator is in charge of the day-to-day aspects and reports to the director, who administrates the Writing Center as part of the Center for Writing and Learning.

CLA: College of Liberal Arts.

CSC: Communications Skills Center (1976-1990). The umbrella program which included the Writing Lab.

CWL: Center for Writing and Learning (1990-present). The umbrella program which includes the Writing Center.

Dead Week: The final week of classes of each term, in which no final, midterm, or comprehensive exams are supposed to be given.

Director: A person who administrates a writing center and/or an umbrella unit. At OSU, the director administrates the CWL, of which the Writing Center is a part.

EDT: English Diagnostic Test.

GRA: Graduate Research Assistant.

GTA: Graduate Teaching Assistant.

International Writing Centers Association (IWCA): The professional organization which grew out of the National Writing Centers Association (NCWA) in 1983 for writing center directors and staff and for others interested in writing center work. It holds bi-annual conferences. It has a governing boards and a constitution. Its website is an excellent resources for writing center materials, information about conferences, and job postings.

LBCC: Linn-Benton Community College, located in Albany, Oregon.

NNES: Non-native English Speaker. Traditionally known as ESL (English as a Second Language) or ESOL (English as a Second or Other Language).

Open admissions: A policy in which institutions of higher education (colleges and universities) relax their admissions policies, generally admitting anyone with a high school diploma or GED. This type of policy is often instituted after wars, such as WWII and Vietnam.

OSU: Oregon State University, located in Corvallis, Oregon.

OWL: Online Writing Lab. Any sort of online or internet writing assistance, from grammar and punctuation guidelines to submission of essays to a writing center to be evaluated by a tutor. The OWL at OSU provides some grammar and punctuation information, links of other websites, and a service for sending a draft of an essay and receiving feedback from a trained writing assistant.

Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association (PNWCA): A regional branch of the International Writing Centers Association, including staff and tutors from writing centers in Alaska, British Columbia, Oregon, Washington and the Yukon. It holds bi-annual conferences.

Process: See Writing Process.

Reporting lines: The person, department, or division to which a writing center administrator reports. These lines generally define the writing center's place in the institution; those in it determine the budget given to the writing center and have ultimate control over its fate.

Satellite Writing Center: A smaller writing center associated with a larger or central one in a second area (on or off the institution's main campus). At OSU, one of these is located in the library and offers evening and weekend hours when the main Writing Center is closed.

Strategic plan: A long-term plan with incremental steps to improve or change specific facets of an institution. OSU has had a number of strategic plans; the current strategic plan has areas a variety of areas of focus, including student retention, which benefits the CWL and the Writing Center.

Student: For the purposes of this thesis, a person attending OSU who visits the Writing Center for assistance with writing. Students may be from all undergraduate and graduate years, full-time and part-time, and native or non-native speakers of English.

Study Skills: A program that began as part of the OSU Counseling Center services and combined with writing and reading services in 1976 in the Communication Skills Center. The name was eventually changed to Academic Success, and it has been a free-standing program since 2004.

Supplemental Instruction Study Tables (SISTs): A program administered by the Academic Success Center, in which a number of students are paired with a student experienced and successful in a specific field. They meet at least weekly as a group for the entire term, and teaching exists both between the students and the student helper and among the students themselves. Because of the great interest in joining an SISTs in fall 2005, students who had scored the lowest on the math placement test were

allowed to join the program. The preliminary results from Math 111 showed a significant increase on scores on exams and in enthusiasm for the subject matter.

Tutor: The general term for any person who works individually with students in writing centers. In many cases, these tutors are students. Tutors at the OSU Writing Center are called writing assistants.

Upper-level course: Any course intended for juniors and seniors, with the course numbers starting with 300 and 400 (at OSU). Students of any year may take upper-level courses if they have completed the prerequisites for the course and/or have professor permission.

WCRP: Writing Centers Research Project. A program located at the University of Louisville which collects material and statistics from writing centers and does interviews with representatives of writing centers. It also supplies information about conducting interviews and gathering material for interested individuals.

WIC: Writing Intensive Curriculum. A program of Writing Across the Curriculum that began at OSU in 1990. Each student must take at least one course in his or her major that involves a lot of writing (formal and informal) and is designated as a WIC course by the WIC director.

Work-study Program: A federally-funded program in which students earn money to help pay their school fees by working in one of any number of jobs on- or off-campus for a specified number of weekly hours. More information is available at "The Student Guide: Financial Aid from the U.S. Department of Education" at [http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student\\_guide/2003\\_2004/english/types-fed-workstudy.htm](http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/2003_2004/english/types-fed-workstudy.htm).

Writing 121: English Composition. The first of the college-level writing courses, it is required of every student in the Oregon University System.

WritingQ: A hotline to answer short, writing-related questions, run by the OSU Writing Center.

Writing assistant: A person, usually an undergraduate or graduate student, who works with students who come to the OSU Writing Center for assistance. These are called tutors in some writing centers.

Writing Center: The program at OSU which offers individual, collaborative assistance to all students (and faculty, as requested) at the university. The Writing Center is staffed by student writing assistants, run by a coordinator, and administered by a director. It is located on the first floor of Waldo Hall and has a satellite Center in the Kerr Library.

When not capitalized in this thesis, writing center refers to all writing centers despite their individual names.

Writing Lab: The name of the OSU Writing Center from 1976 to 1990.

Writing process: The idea that people write in various stages and that they go back and forth between the various stages as needed. The stages include prewriting (freewriting, brainstorming, etc.), drafting, revising, and editing.

Yellow Cards: The process by which information about the students and types of sessions in the Writing Center is gathered. The form was expanded and put online in 2005, allowing for up to the moment statistics and increased privacy for students using the Writing Center. Students fill out the form each time they visit the Writing Center. Writing assistants fill out the first portion of the form giving basic information about the visit and which issues were addressed.

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Maps**

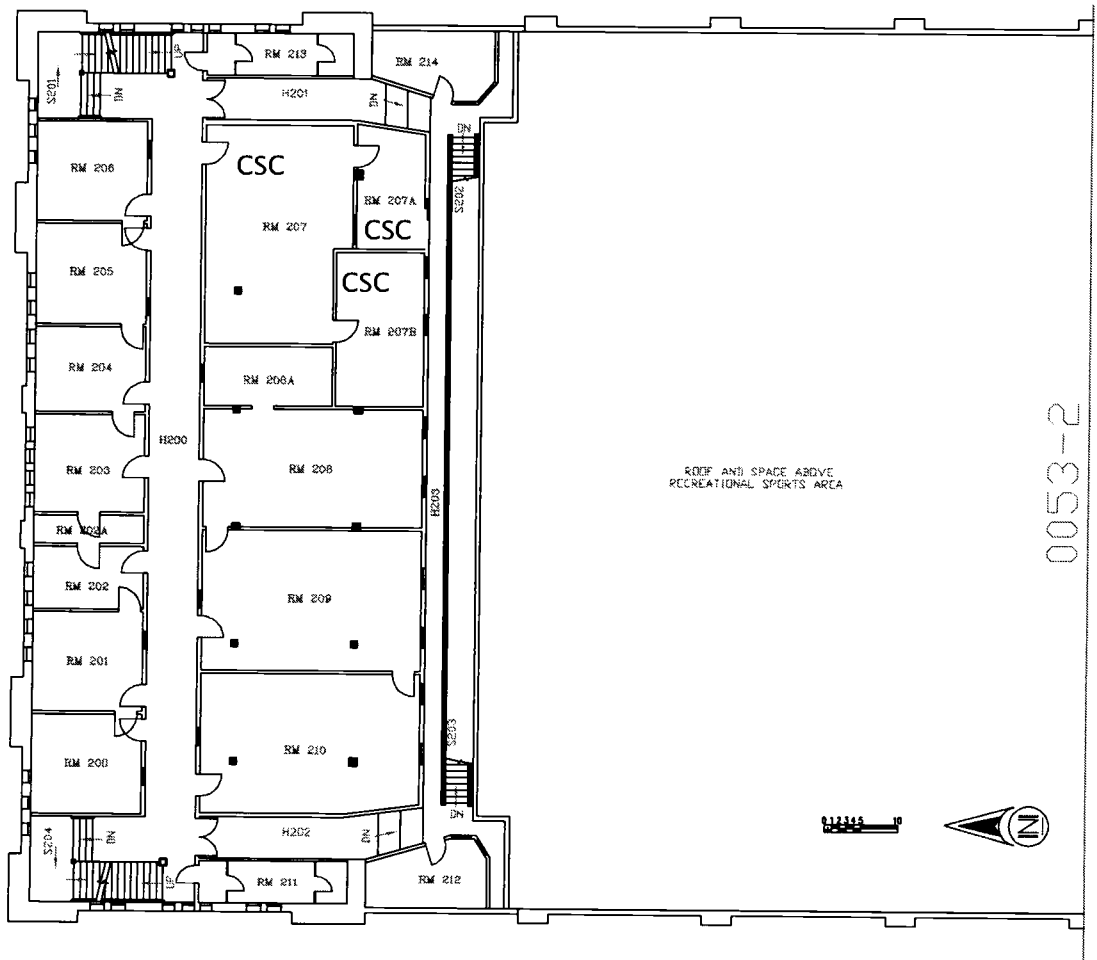


Figure A1: Map of the McAlexander Fieldhouse, 2nd Floor, Location of the Communication Skills Center 1976-79. Communication Skills Center rooms indicated. Map courtesy of OSU's Facilities Services.



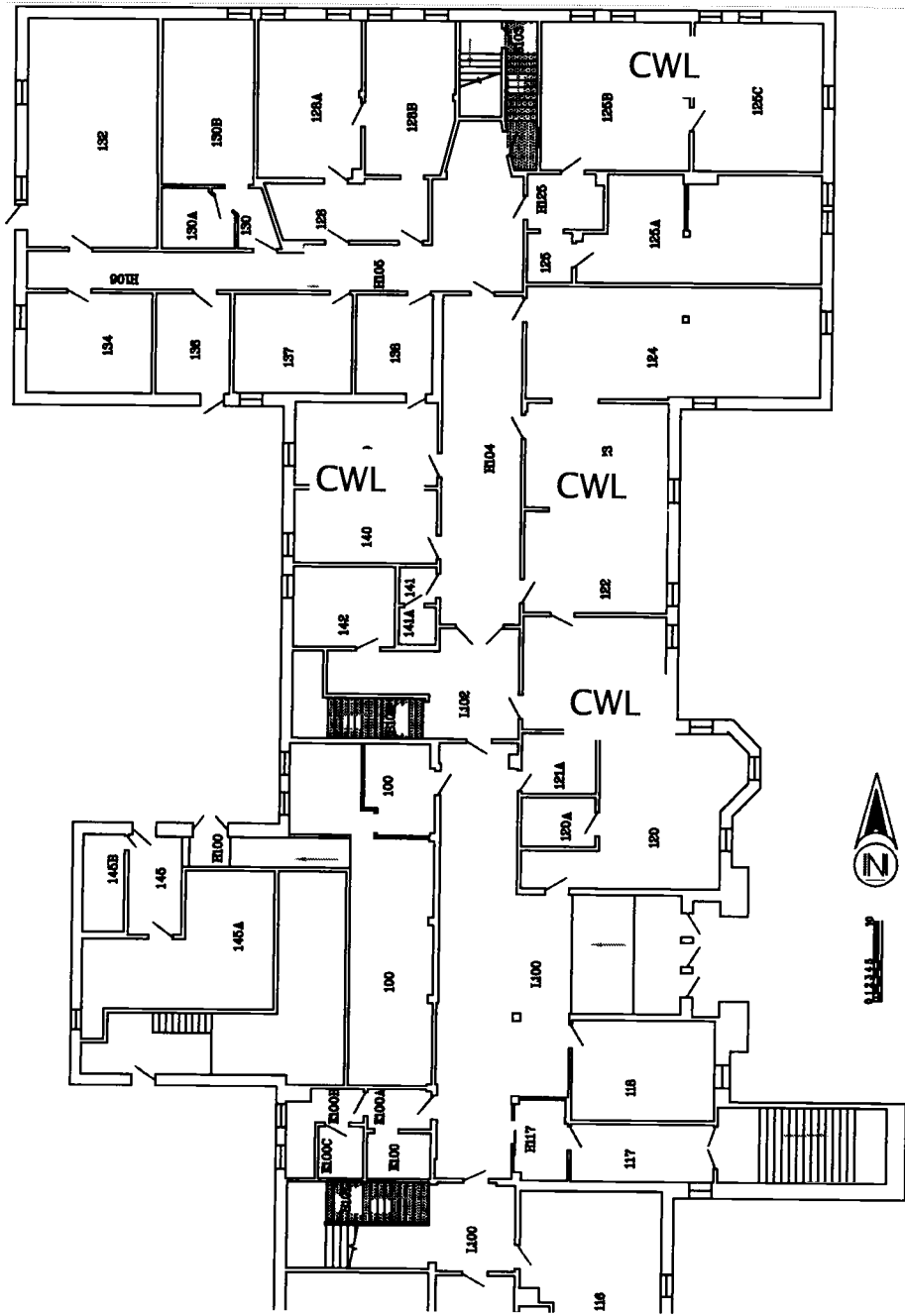


Figure A2: Map of Waldo Hall, 1st Floor, North Side, Location of the Center for Writing and Learning. Center for Writing and Learning rooms marked. Map courtesy of OSU's Facilities Services.

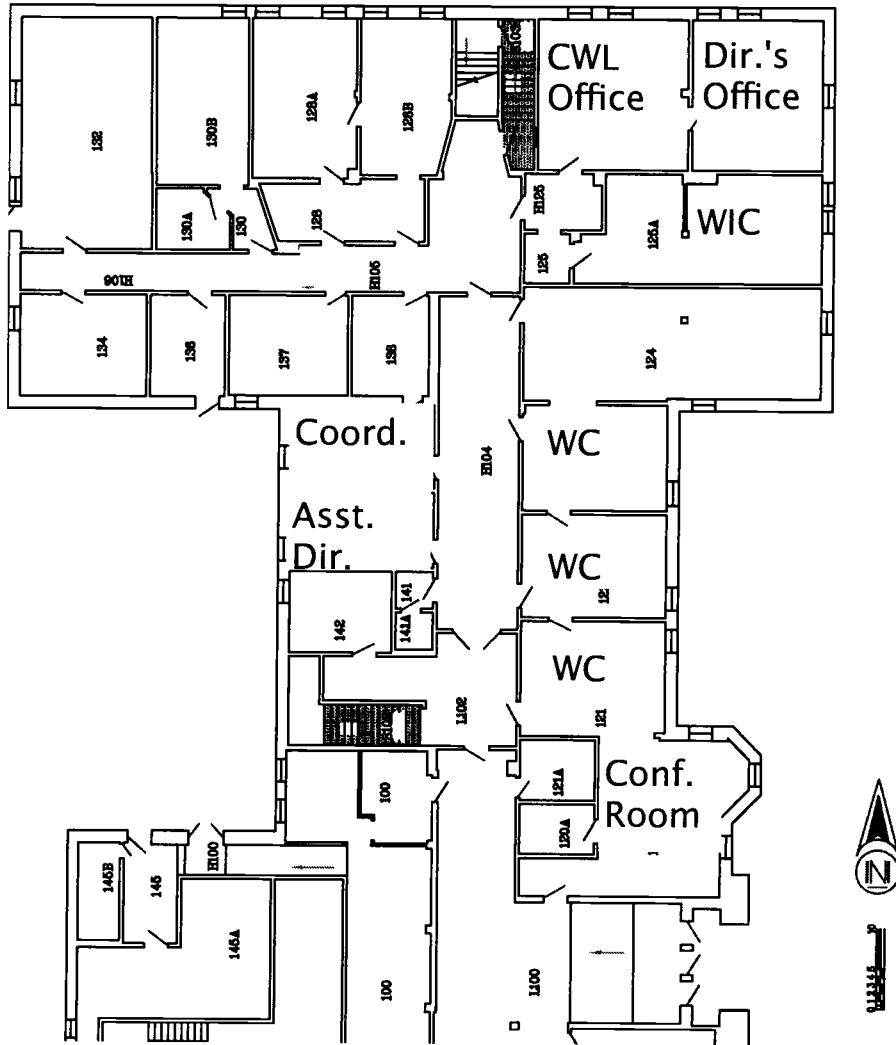


Figure A3: Map of Waldo Hall, 1st Floor, North Side, with all Center for Writing and Learning and Writing Intensive Curriculum Areas and Offices Marked. Map courtesy of OSU's Facilities Services.

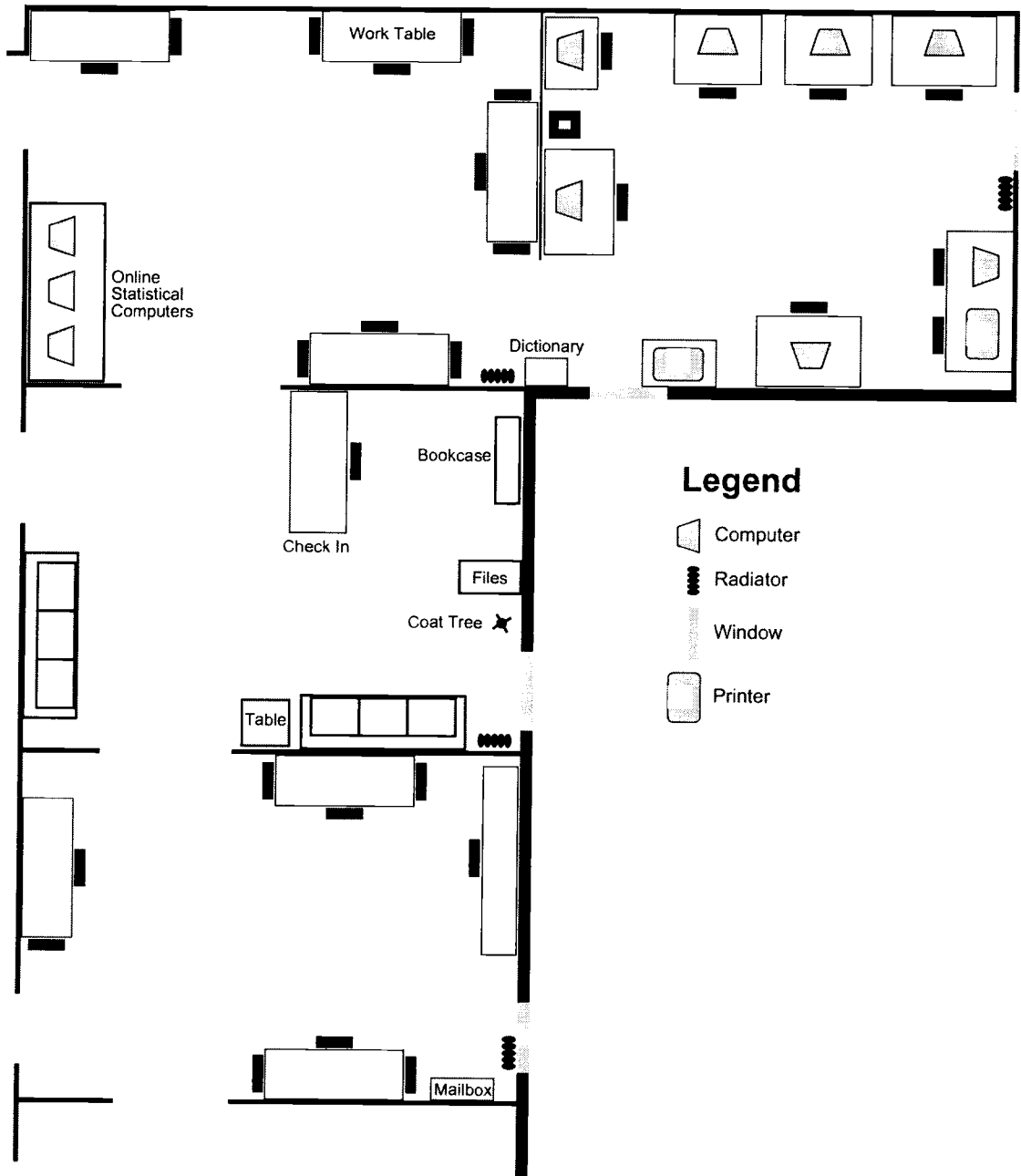



Figure A4: Map of the Writing Center, Furniture and Equipment Marked. Map courtesy of OSU's Facilities Services; details courtesy of John Ginn.

## Appendix B: Advertisements and Logos

### Advertisements

All copies are from *the Daily Barometer* and elsewhere and were obtained from Ede's Annual Reports.




Would you like to impress your friends and professors?  
Would you like to improve your grades and reading comprehension?

**HOW?**  
by taking

**Vocabulary Building**


an economical way to increase your vocabulary.

Wed., April 14-May 26 3:30-5 p.m. 

**ONLY \$20**


Communication Skills Center 754-2930

Figure B1: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Vocabulary Class, 1982-83.



**WORRIED?  
NEED  
MORE  
TIME**

**Take a rapid  
reading course**

**ONLY \$39**    Thursdays, Oct. 6, 13, 20  
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.  
Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16  
7:00 - 9:00 p.m. 

Sign up at Waldo 122, 754-2930  
Communication Skills Center


Figure B2: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Rapid Reading Class, 1982-83.

**Are you ready for finals?**  
Time is running out!!!

Enroll in:  
**STUDY SKILLS: TESTING**

- Preparing for exams
- Avoiding Test Anxiety
- Avoiding Procrastination
- Taking Exams
- Post-test Tactics

Tues., May 25  
7:00-9:00 p.m.  
\$10

Waldo 122 



  
Communication Skills Center

Figure B3: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Study Skills Class, 1982-83.

**DO YOU SINK AT  
THE SIGHT OF  
YOUR TEXTBOOKS**



★ ★ ★ **WE CAN HELP!** ★ ★ ★

**The Communication Skills Center's  
READING FOR RESULTS  
can change that cringe to confidence**

- ★ Increase your comprehension
- ★ Improve your study methods
- ★ Learn to skim and scan
- ★ Individualized instruction
- ★ 2 hours per week for 4 weeks
- ★ Just \$35

Tu & Th, Oct. 4 - Oct. 17  
3:30 to 4:30  
OR  
M & W, Oct. 10 - Nov. 2  
12:30 to 1:30


 **Waldo 122 x2930**

Figure B4: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Reading Class, 1983-84.

**S**

**GET ON  
TOP OF  
THINGS  
NOW!**

Time  
Management

Rapid Reading

Reading for  
Results

Sign up for classes:  
**Communication  
Skills  
Center**  
Waldo 122

Figure B5: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Communication Skills Center, 1983-84.

**BE AN  
EFFICIENT  
NOTETAKER...**


Take **TESTING** at the Communication Skills  
Center, Wednesday, April 11, 7-9 p.m., Waldo  
124, \$15. Sign up in Waldo 122, x2930.

Figure B6: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Notetaking Class, 1983-84.

**WHY PAY MORE?**  
LEARN TO READ BETTER & FASTER.  
TAKE **RAPID READING**  
ONLY **\$39**  
WEDNESDAY COMMUNICATION  
APRIL 18, 25, MAY 2 SKILLS CENTER  
7:00-9:00 P.M. WALDO 122 - 754-2930

Figure B7: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Rapid Reading Class, 1983-84.

**DO YOU HAVE  
FINAL PHOBIA?**



Take the  
Communication  
Skills Center  
**TESTING  
CLASS**  
Wednesday  
November 30  
7-9 p.m. - \$15

Sign up at the  
Communications Skills Center  
Waldo 122 · 754-2930

Figure B8: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Final Exam Class, 1983-84.

**THE COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS CENTER**  
Offers three ways to . . .

**INCREASE YOUR COMPREHENSION**  
READING FOR RESULTS  
Monday & Wednesday, April 2 - 25  
3:30-4:30 p.m. — Waldo 121  
ONLY \$35

**GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO ENJOY THE SUN**  
RAPID READING  
Thursday, April 12, 19  
7-9 p.m. — Waldo 124  
ONLY \$39


**IMPROVE GRADES & IMPRESS FRIENDS**  
VOCABULARY BUILDING  
Wednesday, April 4 - May 23  
3:30-5:00 p.m. — Waldo 118  
ONLY \$30

The center is located in Waldo 122  
Any questions call 754-2930

Figure B9: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Reading and Vocabulary Classes, 1983-84.

**IS SPELLING CAUSING  
YOUR GRADES TO SINK?**

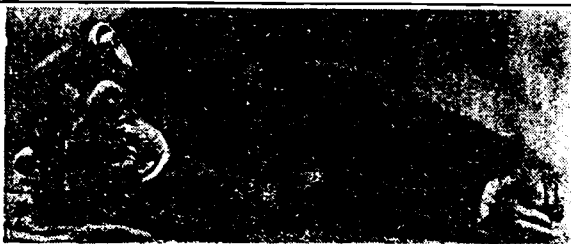
Take **SPELLING WORKSHOP**  
Tues., April 24, 7-10 p.m., \$20



Waldo 121  
Sign up at the  
Communication  
Skills Center  
Waldo 122, 2930

Figure B10: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Spelling Workshop, 1983-84.





**DO YOU CALL THIS  
TIME MANAGEMENT?**

Let the Communications Skills Center  
**WAKE YOU UP!** Take  
TIME MANAGEMENT  
\$20

Thursday, Nov. 10, 12:00-1:00 p.m.  
plus 2 individual conferences

Sign up the the CSC  
Waldo 122 754-2930




Figure B11: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Time Management Class, 1983-84

## **LEARN TO SKIM AND SCAN!!**

The Communication Skills  
Center is offering...

### **READING FOR RESULTTS**

Tues., Thurs., April 10-May 3  
12-1 pm, Waldo 121, \$35  
C.S.C. Located Waldo 122, x2930

Figure B12: *Daily Barometer* Advertisement, Reading Class, 1983-84.

**Logos designed by Matt Yurdana**

All logos obtained from Ede's Annual Report, 1997-98.

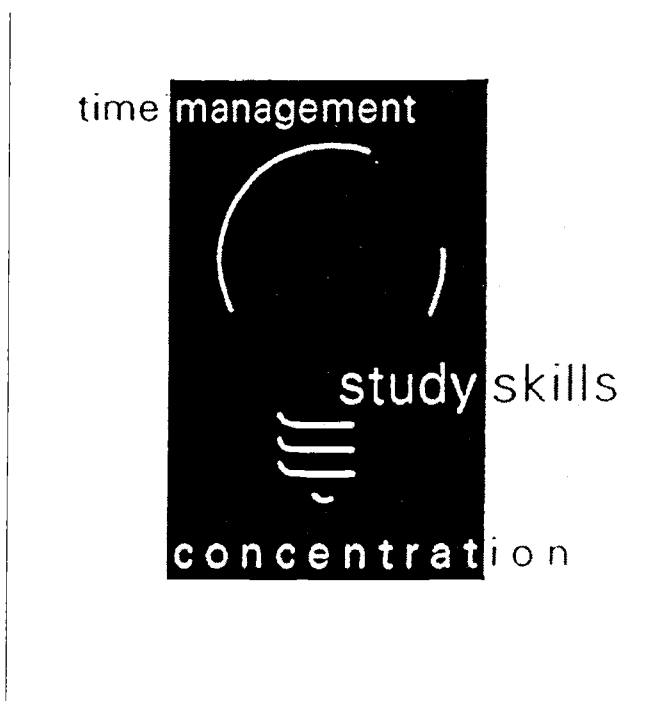


Figure B13: The Center for Writing and Learning Study Skills Logo, 1997-98

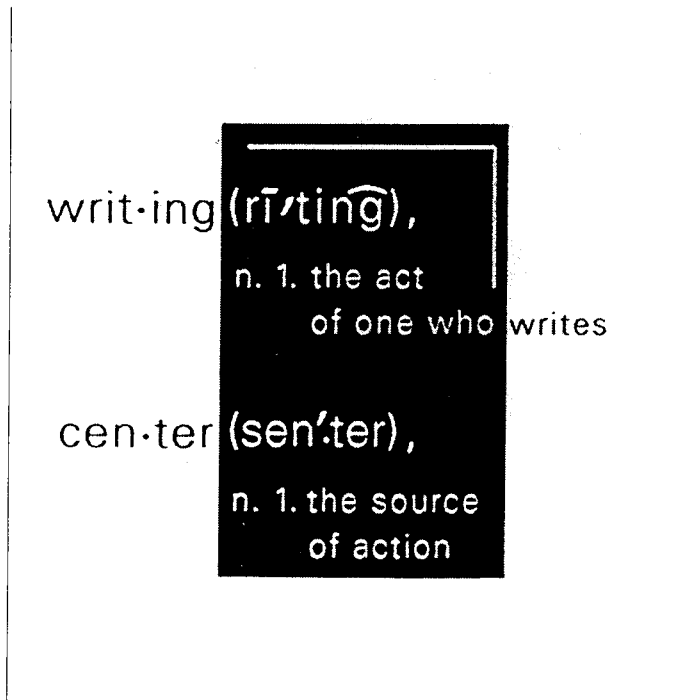


Figure B14: The Oregon State University Writing Center Logo, 1997-98.

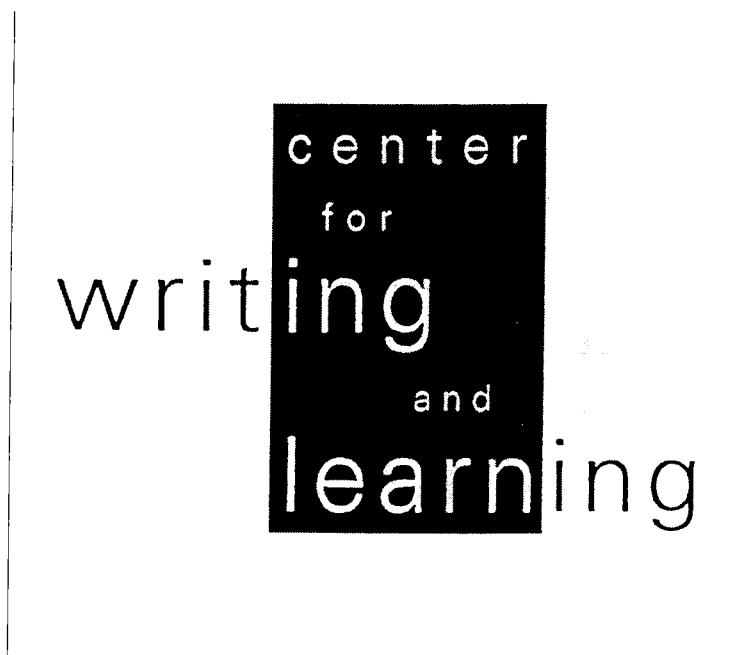


Figure B15: The Center for Writing and Learning Logo, 1997-98.

**Appendix C: Number of Student Contacts in the Oregon State University  
Writing Center by Major, per Decade**

All academic year (AY) data was compiled from the yearly Annual Reports. Each contact is a half-hour visit. An asterisk (\*) indicates that information for that year is missing, and "n/a" indicates the information was no longer tracked or that was no applicable due to changes in the University.

Table C1: Number of Student Contacts per Major, AYs 1980-90

	80-81	81-82	82-83	83-84	84-85	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90
Agriculture	330	455	580	434	637	568	504	312	276	311
Business	454	626	1142	1361	2220	1546	2084	1194	1595	2091
Education	146	130	357	366	355	313	386	180	124	150
Engineering	245	163	429	731	800	716	717	338	801	578
Forestry	128	52	33	39	106	42	63	32	106	86
H & HP	109	111	164	74	63	132	93	75	85	154
Home Ec.	395	324	287	379	506	303	457	293	363	374
Liberal Arts/CLA	189	162	273	329	315	296	523	390	752	861
Ocean/At. Science	2	0	11	4	18	8	12	2	3	27
Pharmacy	4	7	49	44	88	79	65	61	140	143
Science	248	201	327	528	655	452	458	287	431	517
UESP	98	31	80	89	127	102	100	92	208	111
Vet. Med.	1	1	2	10	10	17	9	3	22	8
Other	*	*	92	127	96	111	110	75	356	249
Special	40	65	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Unrecorded	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	58	n/a	n/a

Table C2: Number of Student Contacts per Major, AYs 1990-2000

	90-91	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
Agriculture	59	105	107	146	109	151	128	181	153	123
Business	1061	1230	1036	724	506	560	452	290	338	320
Education	173	157	77	61	52	161	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Engineering	379	511	492	739	607	524	440	389	470	456
Forestry	40	44	31	95	81	149	63	68	95	81
H & HP	66	133	165	194	181	168	178	180	185	156
Home Ec.	187	405	421	251	246	180	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Home Ec. & Education	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	254	326	429	423
Liberal Arts	491	635	536	763	716	624	617	497	756	734
Ocean/At. Science	4	10	0	6	4	2	33	7	23	1
Pharmacy	74	66	74	124	100	59	97	71	86	109
Science	282	397	330	550	396	324	398	219	515	481
UESP	71	73	18	128	65	51	20	48	36	59
Vet. Med.	3	14	5	9	7	4	0	11	7	3
Other	230	431	171	115	112	59	67	115	87	167

Table C3: Number of Student Contacts per Major, AYs 2000-05

	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05
Agriculture	198	*	231	198	343
Business	391	*	646	759	766
Education	n/a	*	101	48	136
Engineering	543	*	938	862	547
Forestry	220	*	59	71	60
H & HP	227	*	889	787	914
Home Ec. & Education	478	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Liberal Arts	868	*	1231	753	1068
Ocean/At. Science	0	*	108	7	0
Pharmacy	106	*	261	266	208
Science	603	*	794	964	*
Vet. Med.	0	*	18	3	22
UESP	63	*	85	144	58
Other	121	*	101	53	565

**Appendix D: Number of Student Contacts in the Writing Center  
by Class Year, per Decade**

All academic year (AY) data was compiled from the yearly Annual Reports. Each contact is a half-hour visit. An asterisk (\*) indicates that information for that year is missing, and "n/a" indicates the information was no longer tracked or that was no applicable due to changes in the University.

Table D1: Number of Student Contacts per Class Year, AYs 1980-90

	80-81	81-82	82-83	83-84	84-85	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90
Freshman	973	569	724	657	752	1007	1098	885	1751	1565
Sophomore	298	185	514	426	454	624	551	413	697	798
Junior	354	707	856	733	837	620	733	508	741	692
Senior	646	719	1454	1420	2288	1638	1323	984	1192	859
Graduate/Post-Bac.	52	84	176	267	403	582	724	377	617	626
Faculty/Staff	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	93	*	*
Special/Other	66	64	72	80	53	150	89	62	300	306
Un-recorded	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	80	*	*





Table D3: Number of Students Contact per Class Year, AYs 2000-05

	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05
Freshman	1043	*	1669	1460	1299
Sophomore	381	*	666	579	708
Junior	348	*	650	660	839
Senior	759	*	1110	953	1295
Graduate/Post- Bac.	1088	*	1343	1166	1281
Faculty/Staff	19	*	57	35	63
Community	135	*	68	99	29
Special/Other	40	*	*	*	*
Unrecorded	*	*	*	*	*

## Appendix E: Recommendations

*For all the information it [this book] provides and for all the questions it explores, it will invariably invite new questions and exploration on the reader's part.*

—Christina Murphy, *Forward*, xiv

The examination of the OSU Writing Center shows that it is efficiently-run and effective, serving its purpose to assist students with their writing. Improvement can nearly always be made, and this appendix examines several suggestions for improving different facets of the Center. None of these suggestions is meant to replace any portion of the existing program; instead, they are merely deeper investigations into various ideas and/or recommendations and the possibilities and drawback of those ideas. For all or nearly all the suggestions, a major drawback is resources, either financial and/or personnel.

Although it is tempting to make suggestions about how to manage the probable future budget difficulties, both the budget and the ways in which cuts are made are too complicated to address here. Instead, the following issues are addressed loosely in order of how much they would change the existing Writing Center, with the least invasive first; each issue is only related to the others superficially, if at all. It is possible, even likely, that some of these ideas (or forms of them) have been discussed among the CWL staff; perhaps, though, the following ideas may offer slightly different, more workable, options.

The following concerns are addressed: attracting students to the Writing Center, publicizing the Writing Center, the overworking of the coordinators and the director, developing training and credit courses for writing assistants, adapting the Brown University Writing and Rhetoric Fellows Program, and utilizing the space of the Writing Center most effectively.

### **Publicity and Attracting Students**

Despite the increasing numbers of student contacts over the years, for many students, a reluctance to use the Writing Center remains. Indeed, even most of the writing assistants had not gone to the Writing Center for assistance, and some admitted to feeling uncomfortable about doing so. This is ironic but not entirely surprising. One of the most effective countermeasures to the remedial connotations may be having those writing assistants who haven't used the Center as a student do so. Sometimes Lisa Ede recommends that writing assistants participate in at least one session as a student. Combining this with word of mouth—that “good” students get help, too—may reduce some students' reluctance to visit.

A related concern is that of attracting students. As stated in Chapter Three, word of mouth appears to be the best way of informing students about the Writing Center. Although representation at student orientation and other events is useful, students are likely overwhelmed with information, both at the start of the term (and perhaps the start of their college career) and on the day of student orientation. The handouts they collect at each table likely end up in a pile buried on their desks.

Thus, the classroom visits are a vital element in reinforcing awareness of the Writing Center's existence, both for students and for professors. Expanding these visits by having various writing assistants visit classes—with or without the coordinator—would both broaden the number of classes that could be reached and put a student face (as opposed to a staff one) on the Writing Center. Some classes that superficially may not seem to require writing may, in fact, have elements of it; for instance, even the yoga and ballroom dancing classes require short papers which figure into students' final grades.

Elements that may work against sending writing assistant to classes include training them, feeling assured that they represent the Writing Center accurately, and scheduling the visits in a fair and convenient manner. While it is possible that a peer representing the Writing Center will appeal to some students in these classes, it could repel others; they may see the Writing Center as less professional, perhaps. In addition, the time that writing assistants spend visiting classes would need to be counted in the writing assistants' hours for that day or week, making them less available in the Writing Center itself. However, if the class visits occur more at the beginning of each term, this will have less of an impact, as those who work in the Writing Center tends to be less busy at the start of the term (unlike at the end of the term!).

Encouraging faculty to let students know about the Writing Center has been useful and could possibly be more so. Faculty are busy at the start of the term, of course, so making arrangements for these visits should be as easy as possible. Offering the opportunity for a writing assistant to visit a class could, potentially, be made

smoother, perhaps by sending out an email to all faculty with an easy reply form (perhaps checking off days of the week and times when their classes meet).

In addition, while some professors, especially those in the English Department or those teaching WIC classes, put information about the Writing Center in their syllabi, all faculty could be encouraged to make Writing Center information standard in their syllabi. The Writing Center coordinator could, for instance, send all professors a short, pre-written description of the Writing Center and its services by e-mail for inclusion in their syllabi (and perhaps on individual writing assignments, as well). This would ensure that the correct information (or understanding of the Writing Center) is disseminated and save professors from that extra piece of work. When students are paging through their syllabi or assignments (with frustration!), they may be reminded of where they can get assistance. In addition to this, the coordinator could also send an attractive flier by e-mail and encourage faculty to post it in classrooms and on their office doors. While waiting for a professor, students might see the flier and be reminded of this additional source of help. While this would place the onus for printing and posting the flier on the faculty members and the cost on their departments, the time and money involved is minute. Most of these suggestions have been used at LBCC with very good results.

A further option to attract students more specifically—or perhaps more specific students—is to explore Dennis Bennett’s suggestion of increased collaboration with the English Department. He suggests a for-credit course for those Writing 121 students who are having difficulty with the class. The students would, of course, need to

complete the class with the same skills as those in other Writing 121 classes, but the approach could address the types of difficulties these students are experiencing (after some assessment) and combine the course with weekly appointments in the Writing Center. This course, instead of being taught by a first year GTA, could be taught by at least an experienced GTA, if not a regular instructor or professor—or perhaps co-taught with the Writing Center coordinator. This program could cost the school (or the department) more money, at least initially. In addition, coordinating the curriculum and the schedules, not to mention compensating the Writing Center staff for their time, could be complicated. As greater retention is in line with the current OSU strategic plan, Academic Affairs may be willing to assist in developing this because providing these students with success in writing may lead to increased retention (in the university and perhaps within the department, itself) and in greater success for these students in other classes, especially those which require writing.

Additional options to attract positive attention are to make use of the the campus media, such as the newspaper and the TV and radio stations, in different ways. Although placing ads in *the Daily Barometer* is expensive and its effectiveness questionable, the advertising staff at the newspaper may welcome the opportunity to fill the gaps at the bottom of the classified columns with a brief “Visit the Writing Center!” This would not cost the CWL any money, since it does not require purchasing actual newspaper space, and it would be a reminder to students of the Writing Center’s existence. To ensure that all student support services benefit from this,

the *Barometer* could alternate between the various support services (the Writing Center, the Academic Success Center, the Math Center, etc.) (Ginn).

Less traditional use of the media is also a possibility. The staff and students at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington have used a number of unusual and fun options to attract people to their writing center. One way Evergreen attracted students was by enacting several sessions of the game "Password" and televising it on the school's station. The apparent enjoyment that the players were having attracted students, who came to see the place that produced it.

At a presentation entitled "The Sleeping Dog: Awakening Publicity Potential" at the April, 2006 PNWCA conference, Evergreen State College students Noah Dassel and Shaun Johnson suggested various ways of publicizing writing centers. Johnson discussed a "Publicity Web," in which the various forms of getting the information out (media such as print, radio, digital, and video) and the different audiences to reach and events to participate in are brainstormed by all people who work in a writing center. Because each tutor has various interests, the link to heretofore undiscovered audiences is made. The OSU Writing Center could take the brainstorming a step further by asking students who visit the Writing Center to participate, adding additional potential audiences and events. (The web could be posted on one of the walls, and the students waiting for an appointment or finishing one could be encouraged to look it over and add to it.) The various interests of the tutors at the Evergreen State College are also used to publicize the center. Johnson, a graphics arts student, made eye-catching and sophisticated posters for events, and Dassel, a videographer, made a short of film about

the Writing Center. Both were interesting and different, and both attracted attention and provided information.

The OSU Writing Center could easily implement a publicity web, culling any and all ideas from the writing assistants and the staff. And because the writing assistants come from nearly all the departments at OSU, they would have a sense of how best to convey the Writing Center's message to peers in their major. For instance, Theater Arts majors might develop a skit that could be performed for their peers—and in other classes and settings—drawing on their skills as actors and directors. A further enticement would be to offer credit for these contributions; that is, because all writing assistants working for credit must do a project in addition to their hours each term, the project chosen could align with their external interests and benefit the Center.

There are several drawbacks to this type of publicity, however. As Lisa Ede points out, any type of media, be it a skit, a poster, or a film, would need to be checked closely before it was shown or presented to the university at large (E-mail). This monitoring would be necessary to ensure that the Writing Center was appropriately and correctly represented and that nothing could be seen as offensive. (It is likely, though, that only some students would do a project of this sort; the rest might choose with traditional projects which require little extra attention.) An additional drawback is that it's often difficult to get writing assistants to turn in their projects (Ede E-mail). However, because this type of project would align with writing assistants' other interests (and perhaps other classes and majors), they might be more inclined to do them, in particular if versions of it could address projects for Writing Center credits



and for another class, as well. In sum, although media and other projects that reach outside the Writing Center would require more ongoing evaluation by the staff, the benefits of encouraging writing assistants to share their other skills and of attracting more students may be worth it.

### **The Tendency to Overwork: Job Commitment**

The staff's commitment to the Writing Center is remarkable. Both Ede and the coordinators work many hours; it has never been a nine-to-five/forty-hour-per-week job. This commitment has had costs for coordinators and for Ede as individuals, such as the loss of time at home, engaging in activities outside of the Writing Center. The "real, human cost" that Ede describes is also paid by other staff. Robertson currently works at least fifty hours a week. And while he enjoys his work immensely and is excited about the response to his film, he alludes to postponing activities in his personal life, such as children, until later.

Why do these jobs take so many hours a week (more than forty), and why are they so draining? Is that true other places? Is it worth it? What could help?

It is likely that the situation is not specific to OSU; in fact, Ede says that it seems to be inherent in academic work (E-mail), both in teaching and in support services. Finding remedies for this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this thesis; still, there are several possible solutions for relieving some of the stress on the coordinator.

One possibility for reducing the strain on the coordinator is to hire a student assistant for him, either a graduate student (graduate research assistant[GRA\*]) or an undergraduate (a student worker). (This has been done in the Academic Success Program when it was part of the CWL, with positive benefits.) This student could perform activities (chores) that are presently done by coordinators (and directors) but which *could* be done by someone else, freeing up the coordinator's time. For instance, if the parameters of the schedule are in place, a student worker could create each term's schedule. In addition, a student worker could take over some of the classroom visits (those explaining what the Writing Center is)—and/or the scheduling and training of other writing assistants for the visits—and clarify any questions the students and professors ask. If the student worker was also an experienced writing assistant, he or she could fill in with advising students when the coordinator is not around.

This experience would be extremely beneficial for a student, giving him or her not only writing center experience, but also administrative experience. However, training this student assistant would require a fair amount of the coordinator's time which he might otherwise spend on other job commitments. In addition, turnover occurs because of students' schedules, other commitments, and graduation. A possible solution to both issues is to ask that assistant to make a commitment to work for at least two or three terms, if not more. This is not a new idea; several of Ede's annual reports have mentioned the need for student assistance for the coordinator. She reports that arrangements for this have been unsuccessful (E-mail), perhaps because it is probably

fairly complicated in regard to payment and/or credits. It is, nonetheless, worth further study.

### **The Writing Assistants' Training**

Like many other writing centers, the OSU Writing Center uses students—in this case, both undergraduate and graduate students—as writing assistants. While some schools offer a term- or semester-long class to train tutors, OSU focuses more on pre- and in-service training. One of these training techniques was mentioned earlier in this chapter: to have writing assistants who have not already been to the Writing Center as students conference with one of the writing assistants. The experience of being on the other side of the table will, in many cases, make them more sensitive to the myriad feelings of the students with whom they work and probably make them more effective writing assistants.

Training or education concurrent with experience is often very beneficial and is used in various areas (education and social work, for example). Information that writing assistants read in assigned articles is often demonstrated in the Writing Center while it's still fresh in their memories, and this contributes to remembering the reading and to more fully understanding it.

But there is no way of knowing whether writing assistants are actually doing the reading or whether they are understanding it. They aren't tested on the reading, so there's no proof that they've done it except what they may write in journals, type on the portal, or mention in meetings. Ideally, they ask questions if they don't understand

or if they disagree with a reading, but they may not (due to lack of time, embarrassment, or feeling that discussing it isn't important). The recent implementation of the writing assistant training being online and of the writing assistants turning in each entry of their journal (or blog) as they write it may increase the ability of the coordinator to assess if all students are keeping up with, understanding, and using the reading. (Additionally, the benefits and compromises of the online training is an opportunity for further study.)

Many schools offer a class to train writing assistants, perhaps concurrent with working in a writing center. Purdue University, for example, offers English 390, a Practicum in Tutoring Writing. It is a semester-long weekly lecture (fifty minutes) and a weekly experiential class (one hundred minutes) usually offered both semesters (though it's unclear whether it has been offered every year) ("Course Information"). Students must meet certain requirements to be accepted into the class, and the amount of classwork required depends on the number of credits they wish to receive. The focus is either on English composition or on professional writing, each with its own section ("What is English 390?"). The experiential time consists of working on projects and observing in the Writing Lab, and students who successfully complete the course can then apply to work in the Writing Lab the following term ("What is English 390?").

Would the OSU Writing Center benefit from a similar course? Certainly, it would ensure that writing assistants are committed to the Writing Center, as well as that they are familiar both with the theory and pedagogy and with the actual workings

of the Center itself. These students could even take over manning the desk, thus freeing up another trained writing assistant.

Although it is a drawback to ask students to pay for the class, the class could cover a number of different skills, which could benefit them in other classes or in work. There would be a fair amount of reading and journal-keeping required; students could respond to the readings and how students see them being used in the Writing Center and in their other experiences (peer-reviews in classes, for instance). Students could also explore what makes them uncomfortable, ask questions, and agree or disagree (or both) with the readings. In-class practice simulations of various situations that could arise in writing center sessions would also be beneficial. In addition, there could be a project or a paper (something that is required at Purdue to earn three credits instead of two). Possibly, the course could be integrated with the Teaching of Writing course. Although it might be beneficial to have the students merely observing and becoming familiar with the Writing Center while taking the course, this is an unlikely luxury; thus, the course would need to be combined with the first term of work in the Writing Center.

However, a separate course would present problems. First, who would offer it? If it were offered by the English Department, for instance, it might not be “found” by interested students in other fields (who may not look at the courses offered in English). If it were integrated into the Teaching of Writing Course, this could create some other problems: because the Teaching of Writing is an upper-level and a graduate course, it would exclude first and second year students. In addition, this course, because it is

required for some majors and for the masters in English, is sometimes too large to include additional students. Additional difficulties with requiring a specific training class are that the CWL does not offer credit-bearing courses, and this course should be credit-bearing. It's possible that a collaboration between English and the CWL would be necessary. But the cost, both to students and of faculty resources, may not be cost-effective. Further, it delays new writing assistants from actually working in the Writing Center. In a university like OSU, in which terms are only ten weeks and students graduate every term, there is more turnover than there may be at some other schools. Still, this is another area in which further research could be done to truly assess the pros and cons to a separate training course for writing assistants.

### **Adaptation of the Brown University Writing and Rhetoric Fellows Program and/or of Supplemental Instructional Study Tables**

The Brown University Writing and Rhetoric Fellows Program is an option that Ede has mentioned trying in conjunction with the OSU Writing Center and/or CWL. The program is quite involved, both in regard to selecting and training fellows and in matching fellows with classes, and would, of course, need to be adapted for OSU. Indeed, various schools, both large and small, public and private, have adapted Brown's program ("About the Program").

As stated above, the program is quite involved and a full description is beyond the scope of this paper. Basically, the fellows, who are good undergraduate writers interested in helping other students, vie with other applicants for a space. Each chosen

fellow is attached to a class, which they attend regularly. They read and comment on drafts of twenty students' papers two weeks before students turn them in to the professor ("About the Program"); thus, the assistance is focused in that it matches what is expected in that class by that professor. More information is available at the program's website ([http://www.brown.edu/Student\\_Services/Writing\\_Fellows/](http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Writing_Fellows/)).

Instituting a similar program at OSU would have many benefits. Because the fellows would sit in on the classes, they would know, again, what was expected by the professors. The focused attention and involvement in the class by the fellows could enhance the feedback about students' writing.

Naturally, the program would need to be adapted for OSU, and studying how various other schools have adapted it would be useful. One adaptation would be adjusting it to a term program instead of a semester program. And, as it is associated with Writing Across the Curriculum programs, it might be a joint effort with the WIC Program, providing the program with access to more resources.

In fact, the Brown program shares some similarities with the Supplemental Instruction Study Tables (SISTs) used for Math 111 (college algebra) in the Academic Success Center. With the SISTs, experienced students (facilitators) who have taken a specific class meet with a small group of students weekly to facilitate a learning and discussion group. The SISTs emphasize dialogue between all of the students in the group, not just between the facilitator and each student. Wayne Robertson says many more Math 111 students expressed interest in participating in the Tables than could be

accommodated. Those chosen to participate scored lower on the placement test, and they significantly improved their grades and their confidence.

Both the Brown program and the SISTs could benefit students immensely. However, either would take a great deal of study to implement. Parameters for the Fellows would need to be established, and publicity about the program (to find applicants) would be necessary. Furthermore, faculty would need to be trained and to feel comfortable with what could be perceived as an intrusion. And each faculty member involved and his or her Fellow(s) would need to spend time coordinating various facets of the course, including the professor's expectations for the essays. Also, just scheduling an upper-level student as a Fellow in the appropriate class and section could be difficult.

In comparison, the SISTs would be an easier choice. First, because they were designed at and for OSU and their success with Math 111 could reassure and encourage both faculty and students who are ambivalent about participating. In addition, because the ASC has already arranged the Math 111 SISTs at OSU, they could proceed with less initial study, looking back to the arrangements for the Math 111 SISTs for what to do and what not to do. Further, these types of SISTs could, potentially, be adapted for many different classes (introductory or advanced) in most if not all departments. This, of course, would require considerably more time for personnel to choose, train, and monitor the SIST facilitators. Just having SISTs for Writing 121 would require a significant amount of resources (personnel, money, and, likely, physical space). Because all or most first-year students take Writing 121 during



their first of college and there are numerous sections with approximately thirty students each, numerous SISTs of six or even eight—each with a facilitator—would be necessary. While a SIST for Writing 121 could be offered to students on a volunteer basis, it's possible that many students would opt for it (which is what happened with Math 111); in that case, some sort of prioritization (based on SAT scores, placement tests, or timeliness in responding) would need to be instituted. Despite the potential difficulties with both the Brown and the SIST programs, possibilities for adaptation and implementation could be studied.

### **The Physical Space**

Similar to many writing centers, the Writing Center space is not ideal, although the best efforts have been made to make it user-friendly and efficient (and it is larger than some other writing centers, according to the WCRP). Like many centers, it's on the lower level of a multi-use building, and natural light is sometimes blocked. (As this is Oregon, though, the natural light is often fairly dim anyway!) In addition, the walls are painted institutional off-white in all the rooms, and, though there are pictures (and photos of the writing assistants), the atmosphere isn't cozy or homey. Also, there is no established private area for writing assistants to talk out of the hearing of students (or to stash their belongings, for that matter). Though Beth Boquet celebrates writing center noise in her book *Noise From the Writing Center*, that noise can be distracting for some students and writing assistants.

Ede has mentioned the possibility of a new building being built for student support services at OSU. Presumably, she would have input in regard to the design of the CWL. Apart from addressing natural lighting and room colors, the noise that arises in the Center could be addressed. A number of small rooms (soundproofed) with windows in the doors for individual meetings could be included. A drawback to these rooms is that would make it harder for the coordinator to surreptitiously observe the writing assistants working, which is necessary. And that this observation is unobtrusive makes the sessions more comfortable and natural for both writing assistants and students and allows the coordinator to make a more accurate assessment. Although it seems not to be discussed much (Ede E-mail), some writing assistants and likely some students get distracted by the ambient noise and can't do their best work. Another advantage of private rooms is that sometimes the content of students' papers is quite personal; reading aloud or even asking clarifying questions can be very uncomfortable for both students and writing assistants in these instances. A less expensive and more flexible alternative would be to create small offices by using dividers to create cubicles; these would dampen noise and increase privacy to a certain extent yet still allow the coordinator to "eavesdrop." This choice, both for writing assistants and for students, would be a beneficial option.

In addition, if Ede were able to design a writing center, a space for the writing assistants to gather away from students would also be beneficial. Often, backpacks and other belongings are strewn on the floor and couches of the central room of the Writing Center while writing assistants who aren't with students sit on the couches and

chat. This not only looks unprofessional, it can be uncomfortable for students entering the Writing Center; some seem loathe to interrupt the conversation and perhaps feel uncomfortable moving someone's belongings in order to sit down. Further, while writing assistants would not hide in this room, they could use it to consult privately about a certain student or situation.

Because a new building is unlikely, at least in the near future, the current physical space could be evaluated to see if it is being used as efficiently as possible. In some cases, writing center rhetoricians have designed ideal writing centers—on paper. But what is more important, point out Kim Sharp, Michael McConnaha, Amanda Barth, and Erik Echols from the University of Washington, Bothell, in their presentation “Examining the Space of the Center,” is how each tutor uses the space. After showing how they made the best use of minimal and far from ideal space (which included having a computer available in every tutoring space/with each desk), they shared their observation that their students tended to gravitate towards certain tutors because of the tutors' use of the space—that it is the way of using the space more, really, than the style of tutoring, that students find comfortable. (Granted, there is a certain amount of overlap in this.)

Sharp et. al.'s talk also suggests that good work can be accomplished in less-than-ideal space. The walls in that writing center are made of concrete, the private study rooms are very small, and the center is so small that no more than four tutors can work at one time. Yet students come and they come back. Similarly, work is done at OSU's Writing Center despite the unimaginative wall color and fluorescent

overhead lighting. Perhaps it would be nice to have pastel colored walls or one brightly painted wall in each room or a mural on a wall, and maybe floor cushions or easy chairs would welcome students, or a desktop fountain could sooth occupants with its gentle flow of water. But none of these are necessary for the dialogues between writing assistants and students. In fact, writing assistants and students appear to get so involved in their work together that their surroundings seem to fade.

Along this line, Writing Center staff must examine what they wish to accomplish when deciding how to arrange their centers and where to allocate resources. If a move toward increasing students writing while conferencing is important, then perhaps having computers at each tutoring station is a good idea; if the Writing Center staff want to allow students to keep working even after their appointments, then computers away from the actual tutoring area works better. (Of course, both of these options could be implemented, with fewer computers available at both the conferencing tables and the computer area.) If the staff encourages students to always be prepared, then it is less necessary to provide pens and pencils for them to use; if writing down *any* thoughts, ideas, corrections, etc. is more important, then a supply to pens and pencils at hand will encourage this. And if insulation from what is happening around the duo of writing assistant and student is important, then a nurturing stance is needed only from the writing assistant; if, instead, the writing center wants a warm, nurturing *atmosphere*, then table and/or floor lamps could soften the harsh overhead lights.

This collection of suggestions run from the very feasible (using writing assistants' skills for publicity) to the unlikely (getting a new building and how to design the space). And it is not meant to suggest that the OSU Writing Center is especially lacking or inefficient in any of these areas. I have only shared my ideas—and, in one or two cases, concerns—about how the Writing Center could improve. Paramount in all these suggestions is the evaluation of each; the more extreme the change, the more necessary the examination of pros and cons. In some cases, too, the decision would rest not solely on those involved with the CWL, but with OSU at large, too. Feasibility studies which involve specific data (for example, resources such as money and personnel) are recommended before deciding for or against any of these recommendations.