Chicagoland Writing Tutors in Collaboration

The Center and Beyond
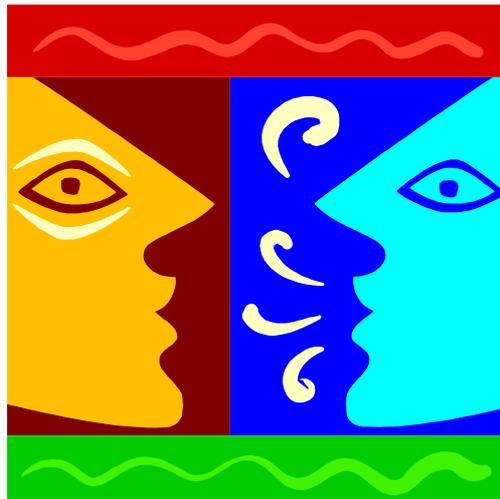
Spring Mini-conference for Writing Center Tutors

North Park University
Saturday, February 7, 2009

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Conference Schedule
All scheduled activities take place in Magnuson Campus Center, Rooms 1 & 2

Pre-Conference Breakfast   9:00 – 9:40 am

Tutor Conversation Café   9:45 – 10:55 am

All Group Workshop
11:00 – 11:50 am
Truly, Madly , Deeply: Listening to Engage
Mary Adams Trujillo, North Park University

Everyone assumes that they know how to listen. Or, that listening is the same as not talking. Listening is an essential skill for tutors. While there are several types of listening, in this session, we'll briefly look at different types of listening, but will   experientially examine an empathic listening model.   Empathic listening is a tool that will help the tutor to hear the writer's voice more clearly. Additionally, tutors will also find this model helpful for their own interpersonal use.

Lunch   12:00 – 12:40 pm

Mini-Sessions (Concurrent)   12:45 – 3:00 pm

Concurrent Sessions #1   12:45 – 1:15 pm

Concurrent Sessions #2   1:20 – 1:50 pm

Concurrent Sessions #3   1:55 – 2:25 pm

Concurrent Sessions #4   2:30 – 3:00 pm

Concurrent Sessions #1   12:45 pm – 1:15 pm

A: *Advising From the Fringe: A Strategy for Advising Hard-Pressed Writers*
 Marcus Simmons, North Park University
Writing advisors and writing tutors like to think they are capable of assisting almost any type of writer. However, many writers come into tutoring centers with papers that resemble a sinking ship. There are holes everywhere. There is no thesis. There is no conclusion, or there may be no more than one or two logical premises to work from. Water, or seemingly useless information and random streams of consciousness, pour in from everywhere. In short, if the argument were a ship on the ocean, it would be doomed. Anchor dropping is a strategy, rooted in principles of conflict transformation, useful for helping these kinds of writers command their own thinking process to develop academic discourse that is investigative, commonsensical, and articulate. Writing is much more an art form than it is a technique. Many times technique and theory of teaching may not be easily applicable, especially when dealing with fringe writers. Thus, the only thing left to do is revisit the artist or writer's intuition. This is precisely the aim of anchor dropping.

B: *Feminized Simulations: The Writing Center as Remedial Clinic and Enforcer of the Status Quo*
Paul Blom, DePaul University
I would like to present an abridged version of a paper based on primary research of internal and external documents of the DePaul University Writing Center. During my presentation, audience members will complete a handout and will be asked to participate by reading various quotations randomly assigned to them on their handout. My abstract follows: *For decades, writing center staff and theorists have struggled against the stigma of remediation and against the marginalization of their work, but many centers continue to function as remedial clinics, and those that do not are usually misperceived or misrepresented as such, a misperception that leads to the feminization of the writing center. Why, despite considerable improvements and growth, has so little changed? Because no one has addressed the root of the problem: the arbitrary distinction between "good" and "bad" writing. As long as this rigid dichotomy is maintained, all attempts toward solutions will be fruitless. It is this distinction that labels the writing center a remedial clinic and makes possible the writing center's feminization. Finally, it is this distinction that has forced the writing center to function as a simulation, what Baudrillard defines as a system with no goal other than to replicate itself.*

<div align="center">Concurrent Sessions #2   1:20 pm – 1:50 pm</div>

A: *Improving Writing While Maintaining Voice: Standing Appointments with Urban Students*
Emily Capettini & Danielle Clark, Lake Forest College
Working with a student on a weekly basis is in itself a challenge—a tutor must make certain the client's voice is maintained while guiding him/her to improve. When these students hail from urban areas, however, more difficulties may be faced. We will address how teaching the terminology and tools necessary for writing in a college-level environment can make the writing process less daunting for these students. Similarly, working with the client to identify, return to, and eventually accomplish goals can ensure the student notices his/her progress without feeling a loss of ownership over his/her work.

B: *Translocation, Transaction, Transformation: Implications for Writing Center Consultation*
Jeffry C. Davis & Julia R. Stanton, Wheaton College
In reality, what has defined the writing center at Wheaton College has not been an area or region understood largely in spatial terms—*a center*. What best characterizes our writing center is not a *place*—though place certainly has some significance—but *praxis*. Praxis, simply put, is theory put into practice. And the theory that approximates the practice that consultants engage in is travel, best represented by the prefix "trans": so as to change though X. This presentation will consider ways in which change (travel) occurs through location, action, and formation, affirming the important work that writing center consultants provide their peers across the disciplines. The two presenters will offer a dialogic interchange of theory and narrative to portray the dynamics at play in the confines of a space, often transitional in nature, curiously called the writing center. As Robert Louis Stevenson writes in "El Dorado," "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labor." A discussion will follow.

<div align="center">Concurrent Sessions #3   1:55 pm – 2:25 pm</div>

A: *Collaboration, Cogitation, and Community: The Three C's of Tutor Training*
Andrew Roback, Alexis Maloof, Rickie-Ann Legleitner, & Laura Friddle—DePaul University
We are proposing a 15-20 minute presentation which will give an overview of the tutor training techniques employed at the University Center for Writing-based Learning at DePaul University that promote collaboration, cogitation and community. Creating community is important for Writing Center work; a sense of community provides a space for open and honest dialogue between tutors and promotes a shared investment in tutoring. We believe that having a sense of community in the Writing Center leads to open

source tutoring, where tutors freely discuss, share, and collaborate on tutoring strategies, experiences, and ideas. We will briefly discuss our training system which emphasizes development in a one-on-one setting, in small groups, and as an entire staff. Collaboration between tutors is integral to the structure of our formal and informal network of training activities which promote and advance a knowledge base. Cogitation is also structured into our training activities through continual journaling and dialogue. We will reserve 5-10 minutes following the presentation for a Q & A session and discussion.

B: *Conferencing with Language Barriers*
Bethany Peterson & Jill Barker, North Park University

Many times ESL students come to the Writing Center hoping for services that we are not there to perform, such as correcting grammar mistakes and proofreading for syntax errors. Understanding which students we are allowed to help and to what extent we are to assist these ESL students is an area that may take more care and communication between departments. Serving students with significantly varying lingual and cultural backgrounds is a realm that appears to be coming onto the WA radar at an increasing rate and requires closer consideration on what our stance and action therein ought to be.

Concurrent Sessions #4   2:30 – 3:00 pm

A: *Beyond a virtual center: Infusing collaboration in a silo institution*
Laura Burt & Carol Martin, North Park University
Like many writing centers, North Park's began with little space and few resources . . . and our institution, like many, has a long history of "silo" structures to overcome. From the start, our center has infused collaborative learning theory into institutional applications. This session will mention briefly a few strategies we've followed in expanding into various streams of campus and neighborhood life. The most detailed example will be a joint project between the library and writing center to teach research writing for a core general education class and the impact that collaboration seems to be having on each of us and on the wider institution.

B: *Beyond the Line: When Too Much Help is…Too Much*
Sue McCammon, College of Lake County
How do you know when you've crossed the line? Join us for a guided discussion as we explore what it means to "help too much" during a tutoring session. What is it? How do we recognize it? What do we do when it happens? We will generate and share our varied definitions, and ways of recognizing why, when, and how we have gone beyond our duties as a writing tutor.