

**PURDUE  
UNIVERSITY** DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

To: Steven Beering, President  
Robert Ringel, Dean, HSSE  
Leon Gottfried, Head, English

From: Muriel Harris, Director, English Department Writing Lab

Date: May 18, 1984

Subject: Writing Lab: 1983-1984 Progress Report

The following report reviews the work of the Writing Lab during the 1983-84 academic year and includes the following sections:

1. Services provided
2. Growth and expansion
3. New services
4. Evaluation
5. Professional activities of the staff
6. Projects proposed for next year

The appendices include: 1) a statistical summary, and 2) sample comments from evaluations of the lab by students and their instructors.

1. Services Provided

For students:

The Writing Lab offered a variety of instructional formats in which to study writing skills: tutorial appointments with a staff of graduate student instructors; drop-in hours for immediate help; self-instruction modules; workshops which offer one-hour small group instruction on a particular topic; Traveling Teacher sessions in which lab instructors are invited into teachers' classrooms to offer their workshops to the whole class; handouts which review grammar, spelling, usage, and rhetorical principles; a microcomputer for word processing and computer-assisted instruction; a resource library of texts and self-instruction books to check out; undergraduate teaching assistants to assist students in the remedial writing course with workbook exercises; undergraduate writing consultants to assist with resumes and job applications, and use of the lab as a writing room in which to write, use reference materials, and ask questions as needed.



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West Lafayette, Indiana 47907

For composition instructors:

The Writing Lab offered individualized instruction in writing skills to supplement the teachers' classroom instruction; copies of its instructional handouts and exercises for classroom use; a Resource Library of journals, professional books, and resource files of materials; A-V programs for classroom use; Traveling Teacher sessions in the classroom; and a practicum in tutorial instruction in writing.

For other instructors in the university:

The Writing Lab offered one-hour workshops on writing skills in classes taught in agricultural engineering, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, mechanical engineering technology, horticulture, child development and family science, and communications. Lab instructors also offered workshops on resumes and job applications for several student groups on campus. In addition, writing consultants developed booklets and guides for resume preparation for other departments and courses, and a student working in the lab in a program of independent study wrote a guide to writing research papers for use in a sociology course. Assistance in adding writing instruction to content courses was also offered to faculty in Mechanical Engineering and Computer Technology.

For faculty elsewhere:

In response to requests from faculty at other universities, we mailed out sample packets of our materials and provided tours of the lab's facilities for visiting faculty and administrators from other universities and for high school teachers who will be adding writing labs to their programs.

In addition, the Writing Lab answered questions via a "grammar hotline" from students, staff, and other local and long distance callers.

## 2. Growth and Expansion

As indicated in the statistical summary in Appendix I, the Writing Lab's services were offered to 9051 students during the year, an increase of 761 students when compared to the 1982-83 academic year. Since all of our record-keeping is done by means of hand-counting the 14,349 slips students signed as they came in each time (in addition to separate records kept for workshops and Traveling Teacher sessions), we have not attempted to collate names from the fall semester with those in the spring semester. Thus, students who return for help in the spring are, of necessity, counted twice.

The greatest growth during the year was in the number of Traveling Teacher sessions requested by composition teachers and by teachers in other courses across the university. There was also a large increase in the number of students using lab resources such as handouts and books in our lending library. With the aid of funds from the Purdue Student Association, a staff of undergraduate writing consultants was able to offer help with resumes and job applications to an additional 340 students.

### 3. New Services

#### a. Peer tutoring for English 100

For the students in the developmental writing course, English 100, who attended the lab to complete workbook assignments in grammar and editing skills, a staff of undergraduate English and English education majors were trained to assist as peer tutors. These tutors, enrolled for a semester in a training practicum taught by the Writing Lab director, were subsequently hired in the next semester as paid undergraduate teaching assistants. The lab's ability to offer peer tutoring for English 100 students was beneficial for the students and also for the tutors who evaluated the practicum course as very helpful.

#### b. Peer tutoring for resume and job application assistance

Other undergraduates who had successfully completed English 420 (Business Writing) were also enrolled in a practicum course taught in the lab, a course which trained them to offer tutorial assistance with resumes and job applications. Some of these writing consultants stayed on as paid tutors, funded by the Purdue Student Association. The success of this program has led to increased enrollments in the practicum course, and additional paid writing consultants will be funded next year by the Krannert School of Management.

#### c. Practicum for English 491

English 491, a course for English education majors, has added a practicum component in the Writing Lab in order to offer these students experience in a writing lab.

#### d. Computer facilities

The addition of a microcomputer in the Writing Lab has provided access to hardware and documentation needed by students enrolled in an experimental English course on computer documentation writing. The computer has also provided capabilities for word processing for students in writing courses, for computer-assisted instruction, and for resume formatting. Software to be reviewed this summer may be useful in business writing, technical writing, and computer documentation writing courses.

#### e. Writing instruction in other courses

Assistance has been offered to faculty who are interested in adding more writing instruction in ME 463 and CPT 154, and the instructor for EE 466 and 468 requested lab assistance with papers written for those courses. In addition, in order to add writing instruction in Communications courses, instructors in Communications referred 216 student to the lab for handouts and other materials.

#### f. ESL assistance

For ESL students in business writing and other writing courses, expanded ESL help was offered and instructional materials are being developed for next year.

#### 4. Evaluation

In response to evaluation questionnaires sent out to students and to their instructors, the following evaluations were received.

##### A. From students:

-82% of the students judged the quality of instruction to be very clear and very adequate while 16% judged it to be adequate.

-61% of the students reported a great deal of progress with writing skills because of their lab work while 35% reported some progress.

-21% of the students reported that their grades rose at least two letters because of what they learned in the lab while 54% reported that their grades rose at least one letter.

-89% of the students reported improvement in their writing after having used the lab's self-instruction materials.

In addition, students enrolled in the English 502 and 491 practicums rated their experience in the lab as very useful and valuable.

##### B. From instructors:

-50% of the instructors reported great improvement in those writing skills that their students studied in the lab while 39% reported some improvement.

-71% of the instructors reported that their students' grades improved one or two letters as a result of having worked in the lab.

-83% of the instructors rated the lab's services as very helpful and very useful while 16% reported it as somewhat helpful and useful.

A small sample of individual comments by students and instructors is included in Appendix II.

#### 5. Professional Activities

During the past year, members of the Writing Lab staff gave papers at conferences and published articles on their work in the lab.

Cheek, Madelon, speaker, "New Directions for Writing Labs: Computers Across the Curriculum," Indiana College English Association, Indianapolis, October 7, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_ (and Muriel Harris), "Computers Across the Curriculum," Computers and Composition 1, 2 (February 1984), 3-5.

\_\_\_\_\_, workshop leader, "Conferencing: How, Why, and When," Department of English, Illinois State University, Bloomington, Ill., April 4, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_, speaker, "The Writing Lab As a Practicum for Teachers," Writing Centers Association: East Central, Cincinnati, May 5, 1984.

Dukes, Thomas, speaker, "New Directions for Writing Labs: Business Writing," Indiana College English Association, Indianapolis, October 7, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_, speaker, "Developing a Business Writing Component in the Writing Lab," Writing Centers Association: East Central, Cincinnati, May 5, 1984.

Ewing, David, speaker, "Planning and Invention Strategies of Mid- and Upper-Level Managers," Conference on College Composition and Communication, New York, March 29, 1984.

Harris, Muriel, "Writing Labs: Why Bother?" The English Quarterly 16, 2 (Summer 1983), 6-13.

\_\_\_\_\_, speaker and chair, "New Directions for Writing Labs: Business Writing, Basic Writing, and Computers Across the Curriculum," Indiana College English Association, Indianapolis, October 7, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Computer: A Composition Teacher's Best Friend?" Purdue English Workshop III, West Lafayette, Indiana, October 28, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_, Computers in the Composition Classroom (videotape), Purdue University Center for Instructional Services, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_, (and Madelon Cheek), "Computers Across the Curriculum," Computers and Composition 1, 2 (February 1984), 3-5.

\_\_\_\_\_, keynote speaker, "The Organizational Phase of Writing Labs: The State(s) of Where We Are," Conference on College Composition and Communication, New York, March 29, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_, workshop leader, "Conferencing: How, Why, and When," Department of English, Illinois State University, Bloomington, Ill., April 4, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_, speaker, "Spelling: The Research and Development of a Teaching Strategy," Writing Centers Association: East Central, Cincinnati, May 5, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_, Practice for A Purpose (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984).

\_\_\_\_\_, (and Thomas Gaston), Making Paragraphs Work (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, forthcoming).

\_\_\_\_\_, "Diagnosing Writing Process Problems: A Pedagogical Application of Speaking Aloud Protocol Analysis," in Composing Process Problems, ed. Mike Rose (New York: Guilford Press, forthcoming).

\_\_\_\_\_, Conoco Renewal Grant, March 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_, ERIC/RCS Evaluation Committee

\_\_\_\_\_, Executive Board, National Writing Centers Association, 1983-84.

\_\_\_\_\_, Executive Board, Writing Centers Association: East Central, 1983-84.

\_\_\_\_\_, Editor, The Writing Lab Newsletter, published by the Department of English, Purdue University.

Hill, Georgina, speaker (and Katherine Rowan), "Teaching the Peer Critique: An Empirically Sound Method," Conference on College Composition and Communication, New York, March 29, 1984.

Kilborn, Judith, "Selecting and Training Peer Tutors for Business Writing," Writing Lab Newsletter 8, 4 (December 1983), 3-5.

\_\_\_\_\_, speaker, "Developing a Business Writing Component in the Writing Lab," Writing Centers Association: East Central, Cincinnati, May 5, 1984.

Rowan, Katherine, speaker, (and Georgina Hill), "Teaching the Peer Critique: An Empirically Sound Method," Conference on College Composition and Communication, New York, March 29, 1984.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake, workshop leader, "Conferencing: How, Why, and When," Department of English, Illinois State University, Bloomington, Ill., April 4, 1984.

## 6. Projects Proposed for Next Year

-For the lab component of English 100, we plan to develop packets of instructional materials which will meet the needs of these students more effectively than the workbooks which have been used during the last two years.

-For ESL students we plan to develop two types of instructional materials: brief handouts on selected topics and minicourse packets on topics which require more extensive instruction.

-For engineering faculty concerned with improved writing skills in their courses, we plan to write a booklet on adding writing instruction to an engineering course. For faculty and students using Writer's Workbench as an editing tool for technical writing, we plan to write a booklet explaining the output of Writer's Workbench and its suggestions for revision of technical writing. Additional funds are being sought to program some writing assistance on the Engineering Computer Network.

- For the program of writing consultants funded by Krannert School of Management to assist with resumes and job application letters, we plan to coordinate our tutorial and drop-in help with Krannert so that our writing consultants will be readily accessible.
- For the computer documentation course and for the Business Writing program, new computer software programs are being evaluated and field tested.
- For students in the proposed Communications Department newsroom, a coordinated program of individualized writing instruction in the Writing Lab is being planned.
- With a renewal grant from Conoco Oil Company, we will continue to develop modules on writing skills for engineering students.

**Appendix I: Statistical Summary**



## STATISTICAL SUMMARY

Table 1. Total number of students using the Writing Lab during the Fall 1983 and Spring 1984 semesters

1.	No. of students attending the lab for tutorial appointments:	797
2.	No. of students using the lab's drop-in service:	1937
3.	No. of students using self-instruction modules:	535
4.	No. of students attending workshops:	93
5.	No. of students taught by the lab's Traveling Teacher Program:	2654
6.	No. of students using the lab as part of their English 100 course:	288
7.	No. of students using the computer	18
8.	No. of students using lab resources (handouts, library, etc.):	2109
9.	No. of instructors using lab resources (handouts, library, etc.):	114
10.	No. of students writing in the lab and using reference materials:	<u>506</u>
	TOTALS	9051

Table 2. No. of appointments for regularly scheduled tutorial sessions

<u>No. of appts. per student</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Total no. of appts.</u>
1	485	485
2	137	274
3	63	189
4	30	120
5	22	110
6	20	120
7	10	70
8	11	88
9	6	54
10	5	50
11	2	22

12	2	24
14	1	14
16	1	16
19	1	19
21	1	<u>21</u>
Total		1676
no. of appts.		

Table 3. No. of drop-in sessions attended by students

<u>No. of sessions per student</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Total no. of sessions</u>
1	1367	<u>1367</u>
2	308	616
3	121	363
4	69	276
5	31	155
6	11	66
7	10	70
8	6	48
9	6	54
10	5	50
12	1	12
15	2	<u>30</u>
Total no. of sessions		3107

Table 4. No. of self-instruction modules used

<u>No. of modules</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>No. of uses of modules</u>
1	276	276
2	104	208
3	48	144
4	28	112
5	14	70
6	15	90
7	8	56
8	10	80
9	2	18
10	2	20
11	7	77
12	5	60
13	6	78
14	2	28
15	1	15
19	1	19
20	1	20

21	1	21
23	1	23
28	1	28
55	1	55
67	1	<u>67</u>
Total No. of uses of modules		1565

Table 5. No. of requests by students for handouts and other instructional materials

<u>No. of requests</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	1857	1857
2	193	386
3	35	105
4	13	52
5	6	30
6	2	12
8	2	16
11	1	<u>11</u>
Total no. of requests		2469

Table 6. No. of requests by composition teachers for instructional materials

<u>No. of requests</u>	<u>No. of instructors</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	71	71
2	19	38
3	14	42
4	5	20
5	3	15
6	1	6
9	1	<u>9</u>
Total no. of requests		201

Table 7. No. of students using the lab as a writing room

<u>No. of uses</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	371	371
2	64	128
3	15	45
4	13	52
5	9	45
6	7	42
7	7	49
8	2	16
9	3	27
10	3	30
11	1	11
12	2	24
13	3	39
15	1	15
16	1	16
18	1	18
22	1	22
43	1	43
57	1	57
		<hr/>
	Total no. of uses	1050

Table 8. No. of students using the lab as part of English 100

<u>No. of visits to the lab</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	21	21
2	11	22
3	6	18
4	6	24
5	6	30
6	6	36
7	10	70
8	8	64
9	6	54
10	6	60
11	14	154
12	15	180
13	13	169
14	12	168
15	11	165
16	15	240

17	19	323
18	10	180
19	13	247
20	16	320
21	8	168
22	4	88
23	10	230
24	9	216
25	10	250
26	4	104
27	6	162
28	1	28
29	3	87
30	2	60
31	1	31
32	1	32
34	2	68
36	1	36
37	1	37
51	1	51
Total no. of uses of the lab		4193

Table 9. No. of students using the microcomputer

<u>No. of visits</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Total No. of hours of use</u>
1	7	7
2	3	6
4	1	4
6	2	12
8	1	8
10	1	10
11	1	11
15	2	30
Total no. of uses of the computer		88

Table 8. Description by courses and services of students using the Writing Lab

COURSE NO.	tutorials	drop-in	workshops	traveling teachers	self-instruction	handouts	instructor's resource	use computer	writing room resource	English 100	TOTALS
A. Composition Courses											
001		2		16	14	1	2		4		39
002	7	8		100	73	38	3		17		246
100	18	15		15	67	37	5		10	288	455
100aa	7	6			17	14	1		3		48
100x											
101	181	423	16	852	109	450	43	4	227		2305
101 I	8	18		40	20	5	2		8		101
101 M	9	14	1			15	2		3		44
102	59	160	1	327	33	181	28	4	28		821
102 I	2	9				2			5		18
102 M	8	4				11		1	10		34
103	7	34			2	36			6		85
109	116	66	66		101	67			16		432
304	8	13			1	7			1		30
420	103	372		517	3	227	7	1	40		1270
421	24	45			10	11	2	1	5		98

COURSE NO.	tutorials	drop-in	workshops	traveling teachers	self-instruction	handouts	instructor's resource	use computer	writing room resource	English 100	TOTALS
B. OTHERS											
1. undergrads											
a. self help	37	80	2		58	108		2	69		356
b. for other courses	84	217		531	23	650	17	4	36		1562
c. resumes, letters of application	87	411	6	256		236			13		1009
2. grad students											
a. self help	8	11	1		2		1	1	2		26
b. English proficiency exam	24	29			2	13	1		3		72
staff											
TOTALS	797	1937	93	2654	535	2109	114	18	506	288	9051

**Appendix II: Sampling of Comments on the Writing Lab by Students  
and Instructors**



A. Comments from Students

Ms. Cheek has helped me tremendously. She displays warmth, patience, and a great deal of knowledge in her field. Without her help, my papers would have been reduced to rambling, unorganized, "collections" of my thoughts.

I FELT THAT THIS LAB WAS VERY HELPFUL FOR IMPROVING MY WRITING FORMAT ON MY RESUME + COVER LETTERS. THE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION WAS VERY HIGH, INSTRUCTORS WANTED TO HELP, AND WERE USUALLY AVAILABLE TO DO SO ON A ~~ONE-ON-ONE~~ BASIS. THE WRITING LAB IS AN EXCELLENT STUDENT SERVICE. I HAVE RECOMMENDED IT TO OTHERS, AND THANK YOU FOR MAKING THIS SERVICE AVAILABLE.

The tutors really explain things and clarify problems and how to go about solving those problems when writing future papers.

Most of the time I received tremendous help and advice. Through individual attention I was able to see my mistakes and use this advice for later papers.

Very helpful for 420 students.

It should definitely remain open & helping especially during long report & the preparation process.

I liked the handouts - they were easy to refer to for future reference

Comments from Students

The lab helped me a great deal for my rewrites. It is a very, very good service.

I think the lab is so wonderful I wish that there were more people available to help students in drop-in.

The lab helped me revise a couple of important assignments that I failed. I was able to improve the failing assignments to "A" - "B" grades.

The lab was very helpful to me in revising my papers. The handouts also proved to be a helpful guide during my paper writing.

The drop-ins and handouts were very helpful. The tutors were especially helpful and showed a lot of interest in giving help.

The only comment is that you ~~are~~ need more people to work in the lab. I would be used it a lot more if they had people available or the wait was shorter. Many times I would go to the lab & have an hour + half ~~wait~~ wait which is ridiculous.

B. Comments from Instructors

As an instructor, I truly appreciate the work the lab does. With 3 sections, I can not provide students the attention they may need & deserve. I really wish more students would take advantage of your services.

The writing lab offers a terrific service.

- Thanks so much for your help. I've always found that the lab has helped my students improve in <sup>their</sup> problem areas. Thanks again,  
Marlana Pugh

As with most of the students I sent to the lab - Hug was able to apply the advice you gave him to substantially improve his work.

In general, students (none of these (Sharon Beelig, for example)), expressed very positive attitude toward the lab. Not only were students helped with mechanical problems, but they found support from the tutors, a lot of it, which motivated them. My students have obviously tried hard, and the WL helped their attitudes greatly.

Comments from Instructors

Jessica has done a marvelous job with Jim. I simply cannot say enough good things about her - she's caring, sympathetic, conscientious and communicative. Jim has made enormous progress in his sessions with Jessica, and she is the major cause of my sending Jim to IOA rather than compelling him to repeat the course (as I originally thought would be the case). The woman is a paragon of patience and an example of the very best the Writing Lab and the tutorial process have to offer students.

Very useful!

Edwin's work has improved greatly because of his sessions at the Lab. He is making far fewer tense + plural errors and his Causal Analysis paper was up nearly a full grade from those previous & his next one was a bit higher. I think the Lab is a great help.

Susan's work has risen from D level to A or B level because of the work she has done with you. Credit goes to your helpful advice and a lot of hard work by Susan.

This is a vast improvement. It is clear you have helped her enormously. If she continues she can come close to getting this problem under control. R. Kotler

Please, either get longer hours or, better yet, more instructors available.