

To: Robert Ringel, Dean, School of HSSE  
Leon Gottfried, Head, Department of English

Copies To: Allen Hayman and Leonora Woodman

From: Muriel Harris, Writing Lab Director

Date: June 10, 1985

Subject: 1984-85 Writing Lab Report

The 1984-85 academic year has been unusually busy in the Writing Lab, and judging from the evaluations from students and teachers, a very effective one as well. The Lab helped a total of 8753 Purdue students, most of whom were enrolled in English classes, though we were also able to offer more help with resumes and applications than in past years, at no additional cost to the English Department. In addition, we were pleased to offer the necessary computer time for students in the new English Department course on writing computer documentation and for students in other writing courses where word processing experience was important. We were also able to respond to requests from faculty in the AUS, Biology, Communications, and Political Science departments who asked for assistance in upgrading the writing skills of their students. This report discusses this wide variety of services in terms of the staffing and scheduling, specific services, evaluations, and considerations for future improvements in Lab services.

### Staffing and Scheduling

This year's Lab staff consisted of twelve graduate teaching assistants and myself, an instructional assistant at the reception desk, and two groups of undergraduate teaching assistants, one funded by the English Department to tutor English 100 students and the other funded by other sources to assist students preparing resumes and applications. Together we offered tutorials, drop-in assistance, workshops, and Traveling Teacher sessions (in composition classrooms) and made available the Lab's resources of computers, self-instruction tapes, handouts, books, and reference materials to a wide variety of Purdue students:

1. students enrolled in writing courses (English 100, 101, 102, 103, 109, 304, 420 and 421)
2. foreign students working on language skills in the English-as-a-Second-Language program (English 001, 002, 101I, and 102I)
3. graduate students taking the English Proficiency Exam in the Office of Writing Review
4. students preparing resumes and letters of application
5. students using computers for the documentation writing course and for other writing assignments
6. composition teachers who need professional journals, plus books and handouts on writing skills
7. students assigned by teachers in other departments and schools to get help with writing assignments
8. students in two sections of a practicum in tutoring course (English 502)

## 9. Other Purdue students interested in improving their writing skills

During the year the Lab was open five days a week and three weeknights, for a total of 54 hours/week. Because of the large numbers of students seeking help in the Lab, we unfortunately found ourselves having to turn students away at busier drop-in hours and to keep students waiting a week or two for tutorial appointments during mid-semester weeks. Because ESL students require extensive tutorial work, we found that they were, at times, using an unduly large proportion of our available tutorial time. However, the addition of another Lab instructor for next year, specifically assigned to ESL students, will help to alleviate this without having to ask that teachers of ESL courses eliminate some material from their curricula.

Another major problem was having students using computers share facilities with English 100 students. The overcrowding of the room and the whining noise of the computer printers seriously detracted from the effectiveness of the tutoring. We hope that the acoustical covers being purchased will reduce the noise, but we still face the problem of English 100 tutors being asked to interrupt their teaching to attend to the needs of the computer users (getting materials, answering questions, attending to computer problems, etc.). Work/study students to handle clerical and security matters and more computer consultant time would permit the tutors to return to their instructional work.

### Special Services

In addition to our regular tutorial services, the Writing Lab also offered special help this year in the following areas:

1. two practicum courses in tutoring (English 502) and practicum time in the Lab for English education majors enrolled in English 391
2. weekly training sessions for the undergraduate tutors working with the English 100 program, coordinated by Robert Child, a Writing Lab instructor
3. weekly training sessions for the undergraduate writing consultants who work on resumes and applications (funded by the Purdue Student Association and the School of Management), coordinated by Nancy Allen, a Writing Lab instructor
4. experience in individualized instruction and administration of writing lab programs by Writing Lab staff which has led to conference presentations, publications, and future employment opportunities
5. independent study courses for students who wanted to work on writing skills on their own
6. on-site visits to the Writing Lab by faculty from other institutions seeking guidance in starting their own writing labs (Purdue's Writing Lab is frequently cited as a national model for writing labs because of the visibility of its staff through publications and presentations at professional meetings, because of its wide variety of services, because of the impressively large number of students using its facilities, because of the staff's willingness to spend time with visitors and share our materials, and because so many of its previous instructors have gone on to direct their own labs.)

7. a grammar "hot-line" in which students, faculty, and clerical staff on campus phoned in with questions (Because Purdue's Writing Lab is also listed in a national Grammar Hotline Guide, we also fielded calls from editors, authors, and copyreaders from around the country.)
8. workshops on word processing for students and composition instructors
9. A new collection of materials on grammatical skills for use by English 100 students (prepared by the Director of English 100, Irwin Weiser, and myself). These materials, we believe, have provided more effective and individualized help than any of the workbooks previously used.
10. Instruction for ed majors (enrolled in English 589) who needed an extra hour or two of credit in a composition course
11. a booklet written by Madelon Cheek, a Writing Lab instructor, for faculty in engineering and technical courses who have a writing component in their courses

### Summary of Lab Use

The list below summarizes details included in Attachment A, which presents tables of student use of various Writing Lab services, plus a chart summarizing all uses of the Lab by type of service and course number. As the tables and charts indicate, we were pleased to provide all of this assistance to the Department's writing courses and also to help with a wide array of other writing projects brought to the Lab.

1. Total number of students and instructors using the Writing Lab:	<u>8753</u>
2. Number of students attending tutorial appointments:	<u>1020</u>
3. Number of students attending drop-in sessions:	<u>1884</u>
4. Number of students using self-instruction modules:	<u>369</u>
5. Number of students attending workshops:	<u>62</u>
6. Number of students attending Traveling Teacher sessions:	<u>1894</u>
7. Number of students using the English 100 lab program:	<u>223</u>
8. Number of students using computers:	<u>180</u>
9. Number of students using lab resources (handouts, library, etc.):	<u>2384</u>
10. Number of instructors using lab resources (handouts, library, etc.):	<u>136</u>
11. Number of students writing in the lab and using reference materials:	<u>180</u>

These statistics reveal six significant trends in Writing Lab services.

- First, we are pleased to see that the number of tutorial appointments has greatly increased, from a total of 797 last year to 1020 this year. Since we consider scheduled half-hour tutorial appointments to be our most effective teaching format, this 25% increase is especially encouraging. In part, this is due to the addition this year of a Lab instructor trained to work with ESL students. Previously, we could only offer ESL students primarily self-instruction assistance, whereas we can now provide a combination of both self-instruction tapes and tutorials for these students, a service teachers of ESL courses have told us is essential. In addition, because of other funding which permitted the hiring of our undergraduate writing consultants, more tutorial hours were available for students writing resumes and application letters.
- Second, there is a sharp decrease in the number of students being taught in Traveling Teacher sessions, down from 2654 last year to 1894 this year. We have tried to de-emphasize this program of classroom instruction, which threatened to consume many extra hours of Lab instructors' time, because we do not see it as an appropriate major program for a lab committed to individualized instruction.
- Third, the increase in the number of students using lab resources, up from 2109 to 2384 this year, is due in large part to the growth of the resume service as large numbers of students requested samples available in our files. Given the duplicating costs this represents, we must either find additional outside funding to cover this or curtail this service.
- Fourth, the increase in the number of instructors using the Lab for resources (up from 114 last year to 136 this year) is encouraging because the lab's resources are meant for teachers of writing as well as their students. We are particularly glad to see more composition instructors checking out current professional journals and books and investigating uses of the computer to teach writing.
- Fifth, with only three computers (two of which were purchased in December) we were pleased to be able to offer computer time to so many students. For those students in the computer-documentation writing course, many hours were needed at the computer examining, using, and writing documentation. The remaining hours were filled by students in other courses where teachers are beginning to include computers as tools to teach writing.
- Sixth, we did not realize that our phone-in grammar "hot-line" service has become so popular, and we are pleased that among the many phone conversations we offered assistance to secretarial staff in the President's office, to faculty members writing grant proposals, and to people inscribing honorary degrees for graduation ceremonies, in addition to Purdue students and to editors and writers around the country seeking long-distance help.

## Student and Instructor Evaluations of Lab Services

As in past evaluations, teachers and students have continued to rate the Lab's services very highly, responding that our instruction was effective and that students' grades improved because of their Lab work. In addition to the gratifyingly high ratings summarized in Attachment B, the following remarks typify the range of comments appended to evaluation sheets:

"I think all teachers should recommend students to the Writing Lab. It helps students to improve their writing skills." (ESL student)

"It helped me to better understand my problems and how to correct them. I liked the one on one help. In one tutorial I learned more than in two weeks of class." (English 102 student)

"We all have areas of "expertise" and areas of "disability." The Traveling Teacher sessions allow us to give our students the benefit of other people's special areas." (English 102 instructor)

"English 109 was not so bad. I feel that I learned more in 109 than I did in my English class. The individual help was great, and it gave me more confidence in my ability to write. I think the English Department should work more with the Writing Lab! (English 109 student)

"The Writing Lab is a strong fall-back system for students who need additional help in courses. I rely greatly on the Lab, sending students there for one-on-one instruction in all aspects of composition. I wish that the Lab can be expanded in order to accommodate the pressing need for more instructors." (English 101 teacher)

"The personal touch in help with writing is always the best. Thanks for being there." (English 103 student)

"The Lab provides a very useful service by giving the students individual attention, something a TA like myself with fifty students cannot adequately do. Working on a one-on-one basis with someone other than the teacher allows the student to express his feelings and questions. Some of my students may be diffident about approaching me with problems because they are uncertain about whether I would judge them or hold their opinions/weaknesses against them. The Lab, I think, provides a service that is almost indispensable." (English 101 teacher)

"It helped me to organize letters, my resume, and cover letters. I liked the Writing Lab. Everyone is helpful and friendly. This is an important service to students. (resume writer)

"I can listen to the tapes many times at the part I cannot understand. Also, they help me not only in writing but in listening ability." (user of self-instruction tapes)

"While I have only been here a semester, I have been impressed by the Writing Lab's efforts. You work with few staff members and accomplish more than your numbers should be able to do." (English Department faculty member)

The major criticism of the Lab had to do with overcrowding and with long waits before being able to see a tutor. Some unhappiness was expressed about the noise level in the Lab, an unavoidable side-effect of a room full of people talking to each other (with an accompaniment of a phone ringing and a secretary typing), but the complaint of long waiting time can only be alleviated by adding more staff.

The other complaint, repeated by about one-third of the computer users, was that more hours are needed each week on the computer and that the Lab staff is not trained as computer consultants and cannot offer assistance or answer questions. Although attempting to provide professional help at all hours would be prohibitively expensive, more consultant time (beyond the present two hours/day) is needed, and work/study students need to become more familiar with rudimentary aspects of computer use in order to help students sign in and begin working.

### Suggestions for Future Services

Three areas in which the Lab must provide more services are for computer users, ESL students, and students in the technical writing program:

-Computer use. As already indicated, there is a need for more computer consultant help, for more computers, and for more work/study help to handle clerical matters relating to computer use. We will also need to expand our programs of orientation to the computers both for teachers and for students as it was clear this year that merely having computers available is not sufficient. Teachers need help in becoming acquainted with the computer's potential in learning how to incorporate effective uses of the computer in their courses.

-ESL. With the addition next year of a second Lab instructor trained to work with ESL students, we will not only be able to offer more tutorial time for ESL students but will also be able to develop needed special materials.

-Technical writing. As the newly restructured technical writing program becomes operational, we will need to develop appropriate supplementary materials and services.

Although all of these needs represent potential areas for future growth, we are pleased with this year's work and offer our appreciation and thanks to Dr. Leon Gottfried for his strong support of the Writing Lab.

ATTACHMENT A

SUMMARY OF LAB USE

The following tables present a statistical summary of Writing Lab use during the 1984-85 academic year:

TABLE 1

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS USING THE WRITING LAB

<u>Type of Service</u>	<u>Number of Students/Instructors</u>
1. Tutorial Appointments	1020
2. Drop-In Service	1884
3. Self-Instruction Modules	369
4. Workshops	62
5. Traveling Teacher Sessions	1894
6. English 100 Lab	223
7. Computers	180
8. Lab Resources (handouts, etc.)	2384
9. Instructors using Lab Resources	136
10. Lab Reference Materials and Use of Lab for Writing	458
11. Phone-Ins	143
TOTAL:	8753

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF TUTORIAL APPOINTMENTS

<u>No. of appts. per students</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Total no. of sessions</u>
1	614	614
2	159	318
3	86	258
4	53	212
5	37	185
6	19	114
7	11	77
8	13	104

9	8	72
10	4	40
11	4	44
12	5	60
13	1	13
14	1	14
15	1	15
16	2	32
19	1	19
22	1	22

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TOTAL: 2213

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TABLE 3  
NUMBER OF DROP-IN SESSIONS

<u>No. of sessions per student</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Total no. of sessions</u>
1	1345	1345
2	292	584
3	122	366
4	39	156
5	29	145
6	23	138
7	14	98
8	4	32
9	4	36
10	6	60
12	1	12
13	2	26
15	1	15
17	2	34

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TOTAL: 3047

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TABLE 4  
NUMBER OF SELF-INSTRUCTION MODULES

<u>No. of modules</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>No. of uses of modules</u>
1	242	242
2	51	102
3	31	93
4	8	32
5	11	55
6	5	30
7	6	42
8	5	40
9	1	9
10	1	10
12	1	12
15	2	30
16	1	16
18	1	18
19	1	19
24	1	24
27	1	27
TOTAL:		801

TABLE 5  
REQUESTS FOR HANDOUTS AND OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

<u>No. of requests</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	2079	2079
2	205	410
3	54	162
4	26	104
5	5	25
6	4	24
7	3	21
8	2	16
11	1	11
14	2	28

15  
23

1  
2

15  
46

TOTAL:

2941

TABLE 6

NUMBER OF INSTRUCTOR REQUESTS  
FOR INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

<u>No. of requests</u>	<u>No. of instructors</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	71	71
2	31	62
3	9	27
4	9	36
5	5	25
7	3	21
8	3	24
9	3	27
14	1	14
29	1	29
	TOTAL:	336

TABLE 7

NUMBER OF USES OF LAB AS WRITING ROOM

<u>No. of uses</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	330	330
2	67	134
3	15	45
4	15	60
5	7	35
6	6	36
7	4	28
8	4	32
9	3	27
12	4	48

15	1	15
17	1	17
26	1	26
28	1	28
34	1	34
TOTAL:		895

TABLE 8  
NUMBER OF TRAVELING TEACHER SESSIONS

<u>No. of sessions</u>	<u>No. of students per session</u>	<u>Total no. of hours of instruction</u>
1	1798	1798
2	96	192
TOTAL:		1990

TABLE 9  
ENGLISH 100 LAB

<u>No. of sessions in the lab</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	54	54
2	34	68
3	24	72
4	24	96
5	10	50
6	17	102
7	14	98
8	15	120
9	3	27
10	9	90
11	10	110
12	3	36
15	1	15
16	3	48
20	1	20
34	1	34
TOTAL:		1040

TABLE 10  
MICRO-COMPUTERS

<u>No. of uses</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	99	99
2	26	52
3	18	54
4	7	28
5	8	40
6	6	36
7	1	7
8	2	16
10	1	10
11	3	33
12	3	36
13	2	26
24	1	24
25	1	25
32	1	32
59	1	59
	TOTAL:	577

TABLE 11  
DESCRIPTION BY COURSES AND SERVICES  
OF STUDENTS USING THE WRITING LAB

(see next two pages)

COURSE NO.	tutorials	drop-in	workshops	traveling teachers	self-instruction	handouts	instructor's resource	writing room resource	English 100	computer	phone-ins	TOTALS
4. COMPOSITION COURSES												
001	26	29			25	23	1	29				133
002	26	30		50	28	13	2	21				170
100	34	76		60	6	29	5	22	223	1		456
101	195	404		569	90	629	44	133		11		2073
101 I	15	16			8	23	1	13		2		78
101 M	3	8			3	5				1		20
102	47	103	1	260	51	163	29	37		28		719
102 I	14	15			6	9		12		1		57
102 M	3	7				7	1	6				24
103	12	20				10	4	4				50
109	94	96	38		86	72	4	15				450
304	13	8		23		27	1	2		5		79
420	127	283		338		97	15	34		53		947
421	49	64			6	52	5	6		2		184

	tutorials	drop-in	workshops	traveling teachers	self-instruction	handouts	instructor's resource	writing room resource	English 100	computer	phone-ins	TOTALS
<b>B. OTHERS</b>												
<b>1. undergrads</b>												
a. self help	26	23	18		16	67	16	35		21		222
b. for other	113	159		204	40	696	8	71		34		1325
c. resumes, letters of application	203	510		392		437		11		7		1560
<b>2. grad students</b>												
a. self help	2	8	5		2	1				9		27
b. English proficiency exam	15	19			2	22		4		2		64
staff	3	6				2		3		3		17
<b>TOTALS</b>	1020	1884	62	1894	369	2384	136	458	223	180	143	8753

1984-85 STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS OF WRITING LAB SERVICES

ATTACHMENT B

TABLE 1  
INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS OF TUTORIAL/DROP-IN HELP

EVALUATION OF STUDENT IMPROVEMENT	
1. Writing Improvement: Having worked in the lab on the writing skills listed above, this student now shows	1 (6) 2 (10) 3 (65) 4 (53)
no improve-ment	some improve-ment
great improve-ment	
5 (38)	
2. Grade Improvement: During the semester, this student's grades	
dropped or	rose one
didn't change	letter grade
1 (11) 2 (36)	rose at least
3 (67) 4 (37)	two letter grades
5 (15)	
EVALUATION OF THE WRITING LAB	
1. Student Attitude: This student expressed the following attitude toward the lab	1 (1) 2 (7) 3 (56) 4 (75)
resentment	no feeling expressed
great deal of appreciation	
5 (34)	
2. Feedback: While this student was using the lab, communication from the lab instructor was	
non-existent	adequate
1 (1) 2 (2)	3 (32) 4 (48)
5 (91)	
3. Writing Lab Services: In general, do you rate the lab's services as	
not helpful	somewhat help-ful or useful
very helpful or useful	
1 (1) 2 (2)	3 (23) 4 (47)
5 (102)	

6. As a result of using the tapes, my writing showed

no improvement	1	2	3	4	5
poor, not effective	1	2	3	4	5
adequate	1	2	3	4	5
very clear and useful	1	2	3	4	5

5. The quality of instruction was

poor, not effective	1	2	3	4	5
adequate	1	2	3	4	5
very clear and useful	1	2	3	4	5

4. The tapes covered material that

was already familiar	1	2	3	4	5
I needed some help with	1	2	3	4	5
I needed a great deal of help with	1	2	3	4	5

STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF SELF-INSTRUCTION TAPES

TABLE 3

4. GRADE IMPROVEMENT: Do you feel that what you learned in the Writing Lab enabled you to write better papers and receive better grades?

grades dropped or didn't change	1	2	3	4	5
rose one letter grade	1	2	3	4	5
rose at least two letter grades	1	2	3	4	5

3. WRITING PROGRESS: Do you feel that you made genuine progress with your writing skills as a result of your lab work?

no progress	1	2	3	4	5
some progress	1	2	3	4	5
great deal of progress	1	2	3	4	5

2. QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION: Were the materials and instruction appropriate, clear, not clear or helpful?

not clear or helpful	1	2	3	4	5
adequate	1	2	3	4	5
very clear and very helpful	1	2	3	4	5

STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF THE WRITING LAB

TABLE 2