

To: Professor Leon Gottfried, Head

Copies To: Professors Harris, Hughes, Weiser, Ohlgren, Berns, and Mark Zamierowski

From: Dr. Mark S. LeTourneau, Writing Lab Summer Co-Director

Date: September 5, 1986

Subject: Summer 1986 Writing Lab Report

The 1986 summer session was a productive one for the Lab. We set a new record in the number of times students were served, improved the efficiency of our operations, and enlarged our repertoire of instructional materials, particularly for a growing ESL clientele, in anticipation of a busy academic year.

This report documents these and other accomplishments by the Lab staff under the following headings: 1) staffing and scheduling, 2) student and staff use of the Lab, 3) evaluation of staff performance, and 4) recommendations for next summer. In what follows I have used **tutorial help** as a cover term for appointments and drop-in, reserving the latter terms for contexts in which they are differentiated from each other.

Staffing and Scheduling

This summer we again had two half-time slots, filled by Mark Zamierowski, the other co-director, and I, and one quarter-time slot, filled by Bob Child. As Bob noted in his report of last summer, distributing five slots among three tutors seems to be an optimal arrangement, allowing us to accommodate students without long waits during drop-in or long intervals between appointments, a frequent problem for ESL students last semester.

Mark and Bob worked from 9-12 in the morning, I from 1-4 in the afternoon, Monday through Thursday. Although tutorial help was not offered on Fridays, since few students have come in for it on that day in the past, self-instruction and the computers were available. My informal impression is that afternoons were busier but quite manageable nonetheless. The slower pace allowed us to conduct longer drop-in sessions; these, together with ten per week for appointments (comparable to last summer's nine and a half hours), enabled students to reap the benefits of unhurried discussion and guided revision of their writing.

Student and Staff Use of the Lab

The Lab's clientele was as usual varied, in keeping with the goal of diversifying our services to the university community. It is gratifying to see the Lab becoming, in a spontaneous if modest way, a locus for writing across the curriculum at Purdue. The following groups made use of the Lab this summer:

1. students in English 001, 002, 101, 102, 420, 421, and 589

2. students writing for courses in audiology, communications, education, health, industrial engineering, philosophy, physical education, and sociology
3. graduate students writing the Graduate Test Paper for the OWR
4. graduate students revising articles and their dissertations
5. students needing help with resumes and application letters
6. minority students in BOP (the Business Opportunity Program)
7. secretarial staff phoning in questions on our Grammar Hotline

These groups collectively took advantage of the following services. A more complete tabulation of these figures is given in Attachment A.

1. total number of students and instructors using the Lab:	355
2. appointments for tutorial sessions attended:	74
3. drop-in sessions:	210
4. sessions with self-instructional modules:	310
5. student requests for handouts:	65
6. student uses of the Lab as a writing room:	77
7. student uses of the computer:	98
8. Grammar Hotline phone-ins:	38

Total Lab use rose by 59 visits to 355, up from 296 last summer, a healthy 20% gain. This rise is particularly robust in view of the fact that the instructor for Upward Bound (from another department) did not send his students to the Lab as Harriet Crews routinely did when she taught the course. I attribute the increase in large measure to a multifaceted publicity effort initiated during the second week of the term. We filed a short notice in the "Newsbrief" section of the **Exponent**, blitzed the blackboards in Heavilon, put up posters in the Union and nearby academic buildings, set up an attractive display case in Stewart Center, conducted tours for two Upward Bound classes and one ESL class, and visited fourteen of the twenty-one writing classes. Special credit goes to Debbie Stier, our work-study student, for her diligent work in preparing the posters and display case.

Inspection of the breakdown of Lab use by course (Table 9) confirms the continuation of a trend begun last year--a marked increase in use by ESL students, the result of a program-wide requirement that students enrolled in 001 and 002 take self- and tutorial instruction. Whereas only 2 students in 001 came to the Lab in summer 1984, 002 students used the Lab 26 times in summer 1985, and 001 and 002 students together made 93 visits--almost four

times as many--this summer. ESL students likely should be credited as well with the increase in appointments from last summer (61 to 74, a 20% increase), as the more conscientious among them tend to make appointments weekly.

The 20% increase in the use of self-instructional materials from 261 two summers ago to 310 this summer (ignoring last summer's low of 64 as an aberration) was also in part due to heavy use by ESL students: of the forty-seven students who used tapes, thirty-three (70%) were in 001 and 002. That the ESL self-instructional requirement accounts for the increase is supported by the fact that the 20% gain occurred despite a 46% drop from the number of students using tapes two years ago (47 vs. 88). Apart from the self-instructional requirement, the use of these materials probably increased because more were available, thanks to new ESL acquisitions. The Grammar Mastery computer program was used regularly, and **Clear Speech**, the text (with tapes) for 001, was on reserve in the Lab, owing to Debbie's laboriously assembling the pages of a master copied from the textbook.

Three other figures call for brief comment. Surprisingly, the number of appointments and drop-ins by 420 students plummeted from 26 last summer to only 4 this summer. While last summer's figure is comparable to the previous summer's total of 23, the latter is itself a sharp drop from 50 during summer 1983. Whether these declines have any systematic significance is hard to say. Our record low may mean only that this summer's 420 instructors do not customarily send many of their students to the Lab. In any event, the decrease was partly offset by a new record in the number of students writing the Graduate Test Paper (GTP) who came for tutorial help: 30 in all, up from 19 in 1983, 9 in 1984, and 16 in 1985. The increase points to the growth in close cooperation between the Lab and the OWR, especially since some staff have begun working in both offices. It is probably not an accident that Mark and Bob, both of whom work in the OWR, agreed that some of our most successful tutoring occurred with GTP writers. The final point to note is that the number of requests for handouts fell by nearly a third, from 96 last summer to 65 this summer. We are continuing to succeed in the effort to conserve our supply of handouts and thereby hold down one of our major costs.

In order to meaningfully assess this year's performance with respect to that of previous years, it is probably most useful to compare totals for our two core services--tutorial help and self-instruction. Doing so has the advantages of ignoring possibly nonsignificant variations in the figures for drop-in and self-instruction and of adjusting for the inflation of the 1983 and 1984 totals caused by heavy distribution of handouts. The number of students availing themselves of tutorial and self-instruction (A-C, Table 9), the number of uses of those services ((2)-(4) above), and the ratio of student uses to students for the summers of 1983-86 are as follows:

	STUDENTS	USES	RATIO OF USES/STUDENTS
1983	203	578	2.86
1984	240	543	2.26
1985	161	301	1.86
1986	216	594	2.75

Setting aside the 1985 figures, the rest vary within fairly narrow limits: the differences are less than or equal to 15% for the number of students served, less than or equal to 8% for the number of times they were served, and less than or equal to 20% for the ratio of uses to students. 1983 set a record for highest use/student ratio; 1984 set a record for the number of different students helped; 1986 set a record for the number of times students were helped. It is not obvious which of these figures gives the most accurate measure for evaluating Lab use. It is reasonably clear that none of them reveals the quality of instruction that can occur in a tutorial, the proper pedagogical rationale--and, in my view, a wholly sufficient one--for such labor-intensive instruction.

In summary, then, this summer witnessed a small decrease in the number of students helped, offset by a slightly larger increase in the number of times they were helped; that increase resulted from the extensive use ESL students now make of the Lab, a trend that seems likely to continue.

Evaluation of Staff Performance

Since no teacher or student evaluations were sent out this summer, and since I worked alone during the afternoons and did not observe Mark and Bob tutoring, I feel obliged to limit my assessment of the summer's tutorial instruction as a whole to quite general (and admittedly subjective) impressions.

Overall, the quality of the tutoring was high, due to a happy combination of experience, training, and personal style. Bob, Mark, and I have acquired a varied fund of classroom and tutorial experience which instills an adaptivity to the continually fluctuating demands that individualized instruction makes on the tutor. All of us can quickly and accurately pinpoint rhetorical deficiencies and patterns of grammatical error, thanks to varying combinations of tutoring, work in the OWR, and coursework in linguistics and rhetoric. From his notes to teachers I observe that Mark does not simply list error types but articulates causal relations between them. I too found error analysis repeatedly helpful in my work with ESL and GTP students.

Because the adaptivity required in a tutorial involves a student as well as a text, we continue learning how to set students at ease while prodding them into setting their own agenda for a session. Bob is especially skillful at establishing warm rapport with tutees and in leading them in a nonthreatening way to take responsibility for their writing. I am generally more directive, as the situation merits it, and I think Mark is as well. Both styles seem effective, although perhaps with different types of students.

The staff's other accomplishments were all directed toward preparing for the coming school year. I redistributed some of the Lab's books into more suitable subject categories to make them easier for tutors and classroom teachers to find. Mark sorted seldom-used handouts on the basis of whether they should be retained and, if so, what kind of revision they needed. He also prepared a fine handout for the benefit of Lab tutors enumerating and explaining some of the commoner syntactic errors committed by OWR writers. But it was Peggy Jessie who deserves most of the credit for readying the Lab for the fall. In addition to her regular duties as Instructional Assistant, Peggy did the following:

1. revamped the sign-in procedures to save time and improve the traffic flow at the front desk
2. upgraded security by having locks installed on the cabinets for students' software and our video camera and moving materials
3. put materials on reserve for Professor Gaston's 421 class after the library declined to do so
4. moved students' computer disks up to the filing cabinet behind the front desk for easier access
5. purchased and copied on our new machine tapes for four new ESL texts (**Clear Speech, Advanced Listening Comprehension, Listening and Learning Lectures, and Even If you Can't Carry A Tune**) to make them available to more students
6. provided me with a breakdown of Lab use by classes outside the department in addition to the regular statistics

These measures will help the Lab operate more efficiently as we seek to serve a larger and increasingly diversified clientele in the coming year.

Recommendations for Next Summer

Based on the observations set forth in this report, I offer the following recommendations:

1. If summer ESL enrollments remain at present levels or increase, and if Professor Berns retains the Lab requirement, consideration should be given to reserving one of the quarter-time slots for an ESL tutor.
2. The present number and distribution of teaching slots (two 1/2 time, one 1/4 time) should be retained.
3. Hour coverage from 9-12 and 1-4 should also be retained. However, tutors should feel free to be flexible about fixing the number of drop-in and appointment hours, since the distinction between them blurs somewhat because of the more relaxed schedule.
4. The director(s) should start publicizing the Lab earlier, contacting summer teachers at the end of the previous semester, arranging for posters before the beginning of the summer session, and having the **Exponent** write an article for its first summer issue.

To close, I would like to thank you on behalf of the Lab staff for your generous support for the Lab's work and to add a note of personal appreciation for the opportunity to gain a modicum of administrative experience this summer.

ATTACHMENT A

SUMMARY OF LAB USE

The following tables present a statistical summary of Writing Lab use during the summer 1986 semester:

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	33
2. Drop-In Service	136
3. Self-Instructional Modules	47
4. Lab Resources (handouts, etc.)	59
5. Lab Reference Materials and Use of Lab for Writing	49
6. Use of Lab Computer	28
7. Instructors Use	3
<hr/>	
TOTAL:	355

Table 2. Number of tutorial appointments

<u>No. of appts. per students</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Total no. of appts.</u>
1	16	16
2	8	16
3	4	12
4	1	4
5	2	10
7	1	7
9	1	9
<hr/>		
TOTAL:	74	

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	97	97
2	26	52
3	5	15
4	4	16
5	1	5
7	1	7
8	1	8
10	1	10
TOTAL:		210

Table 4. Number of self-instruction modules used

<u>No. of modules</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>No. of uses of modules</u>
1	16	16
2	8	16
3	2	6
4	2	8
5	3	15
6	2	12
8	1	8
9	2	18
13	1	13
15	1	15
16	1	16
17	2	34
19	1	19
21	1	21
22	3	66
27	1	27
TOTAL:		310

Table 5. Number of student requests for handouts and other instructional materials

<u>No. of requests</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	54	54
2	4	8
3	1	3
TOTAL:		65

Table 6. Number of composition teacher requests for instructional materials

<u>No. of requests</u>	<u>No. of instructors</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	3	3
TOTAL:		3

Table 7. Number of students using the lab as a writing room

<u>No. of uses</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	39	39
2	7	14
3	1	3
4	1	4
17	1	17
TOTAL:		77

Table 8. Number of student uses of computer

<u>No. of uses of computer</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	15	15
2	2	4
3	3	9
5	2	10
7	2	14
9	1	9
11	2	22
15	1	15
	TOTAL:	98

TABLE 9
DESCRIPTION BY COURSES AND SERVICES OF STUDENTS USING THE WRITING LAB

COURSE NO.	A*	B*	C*	D*	E*	F*	G*	TOTALS
A. COMPOSITION COURSES								
001	5	2	15	2	6	5		35
A*--Tutorials	10	13	18	3	10	4		58
B*--Drop-ins	1	24	1	6	1	3	1	37
C*--Self-Instr.	1	3	1	4	1	2		12
D*--Handouts/ Students	1	12		2	1	3	2	21
421		7		5		7	3	22
E*--Handouts/ Instructors	1	1						2
F*--Writing/ Studying Upward Bound								
G*--Computer Use								
B. OTHERS								
1. <u>undergrads</u>								
a. self-help	3	17	10	3	7	2		42
b. for other courses		15		14	3	3		35
c. resumes, letters of application	2	21		13	3	1		40
2. <u>grad students</u>								
a. self-help						2		2
b. English proficiency exam	9	21	2	5	5	1		43
3. staff				2		4		6
TOTALS	33	136	47	59	3	49	28	355