

PURDUE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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

From: Muriel Harris, Director, Writing Lab

Date: June 1, 1982

Subject: Writing Lab: 1981-82 Progress Report

The following report offers an overview of the work of the Writing Lab during the 1981-1982 academic year, plus our plans for next year.

Services Provided

For students, the Writing Lab offered a variety of instructional formats in which to study writing skills: tutorial appointments with lab instructors; drop-in hours during which students could obtain immediate help; self-instruction modules (mostly with cassette tape and response booklet programs); mini-courses which offer one-hour small-group instruction on a particular topic; Traveling Teacher sessions in which lab instructors are invited into a teacher's classroom to offer their mini-courses to the whole class; handouts which review grammar, spelling, usage, and rhetorical principles; a resource library of texts and self-instruction books to check out; and use of the lab as a writing room in which to write, use reference materials, and ask questions as needed.

For composition instructors, the lab offered the following: copies of all of its handouts and exercises for classroom use; a Resource Library of journals, professional books, and resource files of materials; handouts for the Clerical Communications Development Program; and Traveling Teacher sessions in composition classes, in courses in other departments and schools, and for student groups on campus. In response to requests from faculty at other universities, we mailed out sample packets of our materials, and we provided tours of the lab's facilities for visiting faculty and administrators from other universities (e.g., Beloit College, De Pauw University, Illinois State University, Olivet Nazarene College, Valparaiso University, Vanderbilt University, and Wabash College).



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Growth and Expansion of Services

As indicated in the statistical summary, in Appendix I (pp. 8-13), the Writing Lab's services were offered to 7727 students during the year, an increase of 2678 students when compared to the 1980-1981 academic year. Since all of our record keeping is done by means of hand-counting the thousands of slips students sign as they come in each time, 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. However, despite this difficulty, we can report the areas of greatest expansion by comparing figures with those from last year's report. The major growth was in the following services.

1. Self-instruction

A 77% increase in the use of the lab's self-instruction materials is due, in part, to the additional materials purchases by the English Department last spring for the English 001 and 002 students studying English as a second language. The pronunciation tapes and conversation programs (with accompanying texts) were heavily used as part of course assignments and by students seeking self help. In addition, during the fall semester, English 100 teachers were encouraged to use one of their class days each week as a lab day for those students who needed time for self-instruction, and several Communications 114 teachers have begun to make regular use of these materials. The lab's expanded hours, to three evenings a week, also provided many more available hours for use of the materials. This was particularly useful in the fall for students discouraged by the waiting lines for the study carrels.

2. Traveling Teacher sessions

Increased requests for Traveling Teacher sessions resulted in a 62% increase in the number of students taught, and more requests by teachers in engineering, retailing, general studies, and other departments, greatly increased the number of classes visited outside of the English Department. For teachers in the Business Writing Program, the Traveling Teacher sessions proved to be a more useful format than mini-courses, and for the first time, several mini-courses were offered in the fall as large group sessions for English 101 teachers.

3. Drop-in

The 50% increase in the number of students seen during drop-in hours is due, in part, to the extended evening hours and to the much appreciated volunteer assistance provided by six composition instructors who donated several hours each week on a regular basis. In addition, lab instructors made more of their time available as drop-in time, a format that proved to be espe-

cially useful for students in the Business Writing course. There was a noticeable increase in students dropping in with Communications 114 papers, and a sharp increase in the number of undergraduates seeking drop-in help with letters of application and resumes.

4. Tutorials

The 43% increase in the number of students offered tutorial help is due mainly to the added staff member this year who was assigned to work with English 003 students. The extended evening hours and volunteer tutors also helped greatly in meeting the expanded need. In addition, more tutorial instruction was needed because of the expansion of English 003, for which the lab is the main instructional facility. Students enrolled in independent studies courses in the lab (English 589 and 590) also required more tutorial assistance.

Evaluation

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

1. From students

- * 85% of the students judged the quality of instruction to be very clear and very adequate while 13% judged it to be adequate.
- * 63% of the students reported a great deal of progress with writing skills because of their lab work while 33% reported some progress.
- * 36% of the students reported that their grades rose at least two letters because of what they learned in the lab while 36% reported that their grades rose at least one letter.
- * 84% of the students judged the lab instructors to be very helpful and very competent while 13% judged the lab instructors to be adequate.
- * 76% of the students liked using self-instruction materials while 24% did not.

2. From instructors

- * 45% of the instructors reported great improvement in those writing skills that their students studied in the lab while 48% reported some improvement.
- * 72% of the instructors reported that their students' self confidence in themselves and their abilities showed definite improvement because of the results of lab work.

- * 43% of the instructors reported that their students' motivation increased greatly while 38% of the instructors noticed that motivation increased somewhat.
- * 55% of the instructors judged that communication from lab instructors was excellent while 39% reported that it was adequate.

A small sample of individual comments by students and instructors is included in Appendix II (pp. 15-23).

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. Those professional activities related to writing labs are as follows.

Baker, Tracey and Susan Whealler, "The Comp-Lab Exercises: Use and Effectiveness with Basic Writers in the Writing Lab," 4th Annual Writing Centers Association Conference, Columbus, Ohio, May 1, 1982.

Dukes, Thomas, "Coaching the Deaf Student in the Writing Lab: Helping the Silent Voice Speak on Paper," 4th Annual Writing Centers Association Conference, Columbus, Ohio, May 1, 1982.

Ewing, David, "Going Beyond the Composition Curriculum: Writing Lab Services for Professional Preparation and On-the-Job Writing," 4th Annual Writing Centers Association Conference, Columbus, Ohio, May 1, 1982.

Harris, Muriel, Frequent Grammatical Errors, a self-instruction program developed under grants from Conoco Oil Company and the Honeywell Foundation, 1981.

_____, "A Grab-bag of Diagnostic Techniques," 4th Annual Writing Centers Association Conference, Columbus, Ohio, May 1, 1982.

_____, "Growing Pains: The Coming of Age of Writing Centers," The Writing Center Journal, 2 (Fall/Winter 1982), 1-8.

_____, "An Introduction to the Basics of Writing Labs," to be published in the Journal of Teaching Writing.

_____, "Modeling: A Process Method of Teaching," to be published in College English.

_____Report Formats, a self-instruction program developed under grants from Conoco Oil Company and the Honeywell Foundation, 1981.

_____"Supplementary Writing Instruction for Engineering Students, "to be published in Engineering Education.

_____(editor), Tutoring Writing: A Sourcebook for Writing Labs (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1982).

_____"The View from the Writing Lab: Another Way to Evaluate a Composition Program, WPA: Writing Program Administration Journal, 5 (Winter 1981), 13-19.

_____"The WHY, WHAT, and HOW of Writing Labs: An Introduction to the Basics of Writing Labs," Indiana Teachers of Writing Conference, Indianapolis, Indiana, October 3, 1981.

_____(editor), The Writing Lab Newsletter, published by The Department of English, Purdue University.

_____and Mary Sheldon, "The Writing Center Conference as a Teaching Tool," Faculty Convocation, De Pauw University, April 15, 1982.

Kilborn, Judith, Muriel Harris, and Janet Callaway, "Designing and Presenting Effective Short Courses to Supplement the Teaching of Reports," Midwest Regional American Business Association Conference, Indianapolis, Indiana, April 24, 1982.

Projects Proposed for Next Year

For the 1982-83 academic year the following projects, activities, and expanded services are planned.

- * With the addition of 224 Heavilon Hall, the Writing Lab will double its physical capacity. We plan to use the present space, 226 Heavilon Hall, for the reception area and all tutorial instruction. With the additional study carrels being provided, we plan to use Room 224 as a quiet self-study room for the English 100 program and all other students using self-instruction materials. This will not only allow the English 100 program to use the lab on a regular twice-weekly basis but will also provide greatly needed additional space for more self-study and more tutorial space. The separation of tutoring and self-study is also expected to alleviate the major complaint of students using self-instruction materials, that the noise level of tutoring sessions interferes with their concentration.

- * The English 100 program will include two self-study days each week in the lab for students to work with Comp Lab exercises.
- * The Writing Lab has been given a computer terminal connected to the Engineering Computer Network (ECN) in order to explore ways to help engineering students who are writing lab reports on terminals elsewhere on campus.
- * The Writing Lab staff has voluntarily increased its lab hours to seven per week in order to provide continuous drop-in service during the hours between 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., every day. We plan to talk with all students in order to assist them in setting up appointments, and we hope to use these initial meetings as diagnostic sessions.
- * Because of the diversity in the types of work undertaken by lab instructors, the current Assistant to the Director has compiled a new job description as a guide for future lab staff members. See Appendix III, p. 25.
- * Several graduate students have enrolled in independent studies courses (English 589) to study the workings of a writing lab or to concentrate on improving their own writing skills.
- * On May 6, 1983, the English Department and the Writing Lab will host the 5th Annual Writing Centers Association Conference.
- * For the 1983 College Composition and Communication Conference, a proposal is being submitted by three former Writing Lab instructors who now direct their own writing labs at other colleges and universities.

APPENDIX I

STATISTICAL SUMMARY

Table 1. Total number of students using the Writing Lab during the Fall 1981 and Spring 1982 semesters

1. No. of students attending the lab for tutorial appointments:	935
2. No. of students using the lab's drop-in service:	1383
3. No. of students using self-instruction modules:	1432
4. No. of students attending mini-courses:	665
5. No. of students taught by the lab's Traveling Teacher Program:	1650
6. No. of students using lab resources (handouts, library, etc.):	936
7. No. of instructors using lab resources (handouts, library, etc.):	97
8. No. of students writing in the lab and using reference materials:	629
TOTALS	7727

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	603	603
2	164	328
3	71	213
4	34	136
5	26	130
6	10	60
7	9	63
8	4	32
9	4	36
10	6	60
11	1	11

12	2	24
13	1	13
Total No. of appts.		1709

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	991	991
2	227	454
3	85	255
4	30	120
5	20	100
6	10	60
7	7	49
8	2	16
9	6	54
10	1	10
11	2	22
13	2	26
Total no. of sessions		2157

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	853	853
2	259	518
3	129	387
4	70	280
5	33	165
6	24	144
7	11	77
8	7	56
9	9	81
10	5	50
11	4	44
12	2	24
13	2	26
14	3	42
15	3	45
16	3	48
17	2	34

18	3	54
19	2	38
20	1	20
21	1	21
22	1	22
24	1	24
25	1	25
28	1	28
31	1	31
33	1	33
Total no. of uses of modules		3170

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	774	774
2	132	264
3	17	51
4	3	12
5	3	15
6	4	24
7	2	14
9	1	9
Total no. of requests		1163

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	58	58
2	19	38
3	6	18
4	5	20
5	3	15
6	1	6
7	4	28
9	1	9
Total no. of requests		192

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	463	463
2	78	156
3	28	84
4	17	68
5	18	90
6	7	42
7	5	35
8	2	16
9	3	27
10	2	20
11	2	22
12	1	12
13	1	13
15	1	15
23	1	23
Total no. of uses		<u>1086</u>

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

COURSE NO.	tutorials	drop-in	mini-courses	traveling teachers	self- instruction	handouts	instructor's resource	writing room resource	TOTALS
A. Composition Courses									
001	7				44	1		1	53
002	6	1		44	47	9	2	18	127
003	121	74		107	22	19		4	347
100	59	31		173	344	111	10	60	788
100 a	6	2		8	47	5	1	2	71
100 x	6	3		19	19	34	1	23	105
101	238	295	571	317	303	171	25	91	2011
101 I	7	10			53	6	4	9	89
101 M	32	36		42	74	16	3	16	219
102	133	153		304	130	109	38	137	1004
102 I	4	2			42	4	1	12	65
102 M	8	18		38	88	11	2	6	171

COURSE NO.	tutorials	drop-in	mini-courses	traveling teachers	self-instruction	handouts	instructor's resource	writing room resource	TOTALS
103	13	13			5	6			37
304	2	3							5
420	111	286	49	316	45	110	6	48	971
421	28	31			6	39	1		105
B. OTHERS									
<u>1. undergrads</u>									
a. self help	33	82			82	111		70	378
b. for other courses	56	94		288	25	55	2	53	573
c. LSAT prep.	1	2	42			5			50
d. GMAT prep.		1				2			3
e. resumes, letters of application	43	203			2	78		40	366
<u>2. grad students</u>									
a. self help	15	4			29	16		25	89
b. English proficiency exam	6	39	3		8	18		14	88
<u>3. staff</u>					17				17
TOTALS	935	1383	665	1650	1432	936	97	629	7727

APPENDIX II

Comments from Instructors

I simply want to emphasize that your lab has been quite helpful over the last 3 years. You treat students in a humane and thorough way — thanks.

George Fleming

On the whole I'm very happy to have the resource of the Writing Lab. All of the staff seems eager to help. At least 4 or 5 students in each of my 101 sections need regular tutorial or extra self-help sessions, and I rely on the Lab for this extra instruction.

I was grateful that the Lab was available for scheduled student appointments, its most useful service to me.

Mr. Henry

More money for more room!

I have received nothing but positive feedback from the students who have gone to the Writing Lab for help.

All who have sought help have received not only the specific assistance on mechanical and/or rhetorical problems but have also come away with a better self concept in their ability to write!

Many Thanks!

J. Ashman

Mary,

Mark is a dramatic example of a motivated student taking advantage of a valuable learning tool and improving rapidly. Mark improved greatly in all areas. Although he is not writing papers quite yet, he has the know how to do it. All he needs is more practice. Thanks for your help. He seems to really understand some of the subtleties of composition.

What a wonderful service the Lab performs for the English Dept. The prospect of having to teach composition without the writing Lab's support is dismal indeed!

Yours the greatest!

Keep up your good work! Your services are excellent. I've used over 30 of your handouts and find them ~~to be~~ very helpful.

Judy, ~~this~~ Amy's command of Grammar & the 'basics' of Business Writing improved 100%. Thanks a lot —

His papers went from incomprehensible to satisfactory; while his writing is far from excellent, witty, entertaining etc, at least now he can state a thesis, organize his materials & structure a paragraph. In other words, you did wonders. Thank you.

This is a needed service. Keep up the good work.

DMK

The Lab has become a very important resource for both me and my students, and obviously for many other people as well. Consequently, my students feel that the lab is over crowded. I realize the constraints of space and budget, but is there any possibility of expanding services during regular hours. Appointments seem difficult to get.

Also, my students had more difficulty than usual in making connections with the mini-courses. I think that this is probably as much their fault as yours, but there were at least two instances where a scheduled mini-course was apparently cancelled without notice.

Overall, your work is excellent, and I intend to continue using your resources, and developing new methods of getting my students into your capable hands.

(from Virginia Laddner) -

No complaints!

The Writing Lab has been an asset to students from my 101 classes who have had the opportunity for such closely ^{guided} work on their papers; it's been an asset to this teacher who has seen students move from fruitless struggle in a large class to fruitful development in the supportive environment the Writing Lab personnel create. I've never had an opportunity

to work ^{into} on a writing lab before so my attitude was 19
optimistic but not based on direct experience. After
this semester I am convinced that students can make
more progress faster when they have the kind of
concentrated attention they get only in the writing
lab. They develop a confidence that helps them
grow because they've talked about their writing
from a perspective that is totally new to them.

The Writing Lab is a bonus for our students and
it's a valuable resource center - in terms of people
and materials - as well. I am grateful for all
the help that the students from my classes have
received.

Most of the questions (1-3) are not particularly
applicable to my class and my needs. The traveling
teacher program was a wonderful help to me, and
all my students using the drop-in or tutorial services
found them most helpful -- staffed by
very cooperative personnel!

By my count, 27 students made use
of either drop-in or tutorial appointments.

~~As~~ In terms of resume writing, the
students' resumes were better organized,
more grammatically correct and better
formatted than most I've seen from such
groups at Purdue. I do have a few disagreements
with some technical points suggested by the
writing lab staff. I would be happy to meet
with those involved to discuss them!

Thank You for your HELP! /

The Writing Lab has helped
this student tremendously.
Congrats on a job well
done!!!

iv. Tom shows genuine concern and care
about helping students - I hope
he doesn't feel inundated by the
number of send him

Tom helped Jane tremendously; her problems were
many and varied.

Additional service suggested: Expand your
ESL resources to help the foreign
students at Purdue.

It would be great if there would be
more tutorial assistance available
for foreign students

The resources seemed to be very
helpful to the students. Those students who
visited the lab on a regular basis improved
their work a great deal.

Any help for quick questions is very helpful.

Harriet has been a fantastic help!
The Writing Lab has really helped me :D

Without Jay's help I could never have shaped that
résumé correctly.

I think it's great that there is a writing lab to help students.
It really helped me understand my writing better. They say
you have it set up works really well.

The writing lab is an excellent
program.

The résumé preparation/cover letter instruction
helped greatly. Ms. Kilbourne was very helpful
and I'm glad she took the time to go over
it thoroughly with me.

The Writing lab has helped me a
great deal - I probably wouldn't of made
it through the semester otherwise -
m. Cheek is very helpful and explains things clearly.

My marks increased and I feel most of the
help came from the writing lab instructor. This
lab is one of the most useful things on campus.

to work with. Mrs. Cheek was a terrific
 to understand more fully the different types
 of composition papers which lead to a better
 grade for me. Whenever I had any sort
 of problem in English she was always able
 to help me.

I've always had excellent cooperation
 and help from the Writing Lab - Thanks!

I think any students
 that are having trouble writing should
 go and get help at the writing lab.
 The lab help me raise a D to a C.

The Writing Lab is a great place to go,
 very helpful.

The demand for writing lab instructors is so
 great that you should really consider expanding the staff.

It is hard to get appointments

Wait during drop-in is usually long
 more tutors would be nice for
 those times.

I went for assistance with my
 commas and punctuations and in that area
 I have improved. However, I would like to
 be able to go more often, but it is always
 too crowded!

I had some of my friends drop in the writing lab and they felt that they had learned from the material. I will probably be visiting next semester too!

I think that working with a lab instructor was the best help I received for my writing.

I was impressed with the writing lab. Everyone was friendly and helpful! This lab helped make writing easier and more enjoyable.

Mr. Patten helped me tremendously. He was so kind in answer any question I had and helping me over any tough spot in my essay. I would highly recommend the writing lab.

Even though I am not taking an English course now, I have found the lab to very helpful with business letters and reports I am now writing.

I feel the writing lab was very instrumental in improving my use of the English language. Once I realized a certain fault, all I had to do was listen to a module, which cleared up any confusion I had. Writing Lab Tutorial instructors are very helpful in improving grades by correcting my mistakes before the paper is graded. Everyone at the writing lab is very pleasant and eager to help any student, which makes asking for help much easier.

APPENDIX III

Writing Lab Job Description

Writing Lab instructors spend seven hours per week in the Writing Lab. These hours are distributed in the following ways:

1. Drop-In: 3 1/2 hours
 - a. Be present in the lab at all times during scheduled drop-in time.
 - b. Assist students with quick questions and requests for handouts.
 - c. Offer more extended instruction as time permits.
 - d. When students come to the lab for the first time seeking appointments,
 - 1) Diagnose extent of student's need for instruction and types of problems;
 - 2) Based on this assessment, schedule appointments (or offer quick drop-in help if that is all that is needed);
 - 3) Establish file for student.
 - e. Assist classroom teachers who come in for handouts, materials in the Resource Library, suggestions for classroom pedagogy or grading, etc.
2. Tutorials: 2 1/2 hours
 - a. Tutor students at regularly scheduled 30-minute tutorial sessions.
 - b. Provide back-up assistance for drop-in.
3. Other Writing Lab Responsibilities: 1 hour
 - a. Revise handouts and update files.
 - b. Provide Mini-course and Traveling Teacher Sessions (for approximately four or more topics).
 - c. Confer with classroom instructors regarding content of tutorial sessions with their students, students' progress, materials, etc.
 - d. Monitor self instruction, if needed, in the self-study room.
 - e. Develop new materials for lab use, in various formats (e.g., handouts, videotapes, new mini-courses, etc.).
 - f. Keep records (student folder, notices to teachers).
 - g. Publicize the lab by giving tours, visiting classrooms, etc.

In addition, lab instructors attend regularly scheduled staff meetings approximately two hours a month. These meetings vary from bi-weekly to monthly. New lab instructors attend weekly meetings for the first six weeks.