

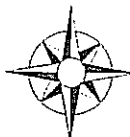
Southern Discourse

Publication of the Southeastern Writing Center Association



Summer 2001

Volume 4, Issue 3



Planning Your Trip to SWCA/ IWCA in Savannah April 11-13, 2002

By Traci Augustosky, Savannah
College of Art and Design

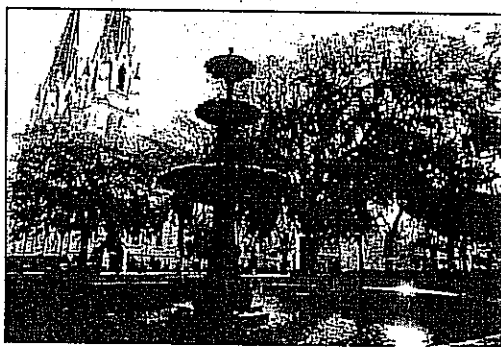
It seems that nearly every article about Savannah opens with declarations of "hostess city" or "crown jewel of the South." Just one quick visit to this coastal community and visitors begin using those very terms to describe the city. Every corner and crevice appears to cradle a piece of history, charm, or natural beauty. Whether providence, intuition, or luck, when British General James Oglethorpe landed on the Savannah bluff in 1733—founding America's thirteenth colony and creating an outpost buffer against the Spanish in Florida—he helped establish what would become one of the nation's most fascinating cities.

Although Savannah at large is more than sixty-five square miles—the city incorporates a commercial ward with two shopping malls, several movie theatres, suburban chain restaurants, a proliferation of strip malls, various family fun centers, and plenty of activities for out-of-town guests and locals of all ages—most of the travel and tourism is concentrated in its compact Historic District and portions of the surrounding Victorian District. Entering these sectors of town temporarily transports visitors to the Old South and, in the city's subdued and relaxed manner, engages all their senses.

It was in 1966 that 2.2 square miles starting at the Savannah River were officially designated as a Historic Landmark District, thus becoming one of the largest urban historic districts in the United States. But the city's most recent revival really began in 1977 when Savannah embarked on the \$7 million River Street Urban Renewal Project, transforming abandoned cotton warehouse properties into beautifully renovated space that now houses an eclectic array of more than seventy-five boutiques, galleries, artist studios, restaurants, and pubs. The river walk's cobblestone streets provide the perfect accent while the adjacent river provides cool breezes and stunning views of mammoth ships being escorted in by dwarfed tug-

boats. Passers-by are often shocked that the narrow and tranquil river can accommodate freighters of this size, but Savannah is proud of her status as the largest foreign commerce port on the South Atlantic Coast. As enchanting as it is, River Street is not the only downtown enticement. City Market, a four-block plaza, also boasts beautifully restored structures that are now home to shops, restaurants, art galleries and taverns. Live music and entertainment draw travelers into City Market's park-like open courtyard. The arts and crafts emporiums, antique and specialty shops, and distinctive clothiers all over the city present almost too many alluring options from which to choose.

Naturalists will find Savannah's splendor at every turn. The city plan designed by Oglethorpe, which features an organizing system of public-use trust lots, has been maintained. This grid-like arrangement created twenty-three esplanade parks, each surrounded by impressive churches, historic homes, and businesses. Equally breathtaking are the moss-draped live oaks, azaleas, Confederate jasmine, and other foliage and flora wrapping and



filling each square. While some squares host shaded benches and picnic-perfect grasslands, others accommodate historic monuments, memorials, and commemorations. Local vegetation is not limited to the splendid squares. Forsyth Park, a thirty-acre promenade, dispenses a fair amount of sun, shade, and floral aromas as its patrons and their pets walk the encasing sidewalk and view the cascading fountain, utilize the sports and playground areas, or convert the expansive green way into a Frisbee, soccer, or rugby field. And as

(Continued on page 9)

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A Call to History

By Christine Cozzens
Agnes Scott College

Prompted by our recent move from a classroom building to the newly renovated library, we had a tutors' reunion last April at the Agnes Scott College writing center. Seven alumnae tutors returned for discussion and dinner with the current staff and next year's new tutors. While seven may not seem like a big number, our alumnae are spread all over the country, and for various reasons our invitations had gone out later than they should have, so I was delighted that seven were able to come.

I was even more delighted that one of the first tutors I hired—Debbie Strickland, a true writing center founder—came to the event, even though she was leaving the next day for a new job in Washington DC. "I'm looking forward to begin a 'relic,'" Debbie quipped when she emailed to say she was coming. Debbie remembered the days when there were only three tutors paid for four hours a week; we did a lot of sitting around then, hoping for business. Today, even with a staff of twelve tutors working ten hours a week or more, we can hardly keep up with the demand for writing conferences.

The alumnae tutors each had stories to tell about her "era," and their memories jogged mine. As they talked, I began to look at the past thirteen years in new ways, to see accomplishments and areas for growth I hadn't identified before. Though I teach English, I've always loved and read a lot of history, and my approach to teaching literature and writing has been shaped by that passion. At the reunion, I was suddenly aware of the need for greater attention to the history of our writing center, now evolved from the Writing Workshop to the Center for Writing and Speaking. What changes had taken place in the last thirteen years? What do the former and current tutors need to know to converse about and understand each other's experience? Even the change of names is significant and should be accounted for somewhere. While each alumna, current, and prospective tutor had her take on the center experience, I was the only thread tying the whole together.

So in the coming year, I am going to put new emphasis on recording, retelling, and preserving our writing cen-

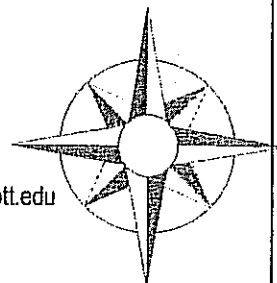
ter's history. Our home-grown handbook, *Tutoring Writing and Speaking at Agnes Scott College*, has always included a brief section on history, but the next revision will cover more than the administrative shifts and details I felt were needed in the original. I want to talk about some of the subtle changes in our outlook over the years, show how our vision has grown and matured, and tell interesting or amusing stories about our work.

One of my most ambitious tutors has already started a wonderful scrapbook project where we'll collect our photographs, publications, thank-you notes from students and visitors, and memorabilia. We make a point now of taking pictures at special events, conferences, social occasions, and even of our day-to-day work in the center. Our website is another good place for attention to history through images and text. With a database established now for all alumnae tutors, I can keep them up to date with what's going on in the writing center by sending them copies of our semiannual newsletter, *The Paper Chase*, perhaps adding a column about alumnae, most of whom have ended up in jobs connected to writing.

We hadn't been settled too long in our new location before we realized how different things were in the library and at this location on campus. Next year will be, by necessity, a year of assessing those differences and of looking at ways to address them. As we look forward, we will also be looking backward, uncovering the dissonances and the connections that define the Center for Writing and Speaking at Agnes Scott College.

Send all submissions to *Southern Discourse* to

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Southern Discourse is published three times a year in the fall, spring, and summer.

The *Art* of Writing Centers

INTERNATIONAL WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE, 2002

Savannah Marriott Riverfront Hotel
Thursday, April 11, 2002-Saturday, April 13, 2002

This year's theme celebrates the artistry of our professional lives as we write, tutor, and direct writing centers, learning from our own experiences and the experiences of those we tutor. The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers several definitions of the word *art*, suggesting that art denotes skill that occurs from knowledge and practice, denotes scholarship, and denotes grammar, logic, and rhetoric.

We especially welcome proposals in the following strands:

- English as a Second Language
- tutor training
- Writing Across the Curriculum
- grammar
- administration
- theory
- research
- history
- technology for novices
- advanced technology use

Proposals are invited on other relevant topics as well. If focusing on one of the strands mentioned above, please name the strand on the abstract. Please consider audience as well, and indicate on the proposal if the audience should be peer tutors, faculty tutors, or directors (or any combination). Please use the online submission form (the web address will be provided in the next issue of *Southern Discourse*), or send one-page proposals for poster presentations, for twenty-minute presentations or for ninety-minute panels or workshops to the proposal chair:

Donna N. Sewell
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Valdosta State University
Valdosta, GA 31698
Phone: 229-333-5946
Fax: 229-259-5529
Email: dsewell@valdosta.edu

Online proposals and faxed proposals are due by midnight (Eastern Standard Time) on October 31, 2001. Proposals (three copies please) sent via postal mail must be postmarked by October 25, 2001. Please include complete mailing address and email address on proposals sent via postal mail.

SWCA Brings IWCA to
Historic Savannah
for "The Art of Writing Centers"
in April, 2002

By Jerry M. Mwangbe, Atlanta Metropolitan College

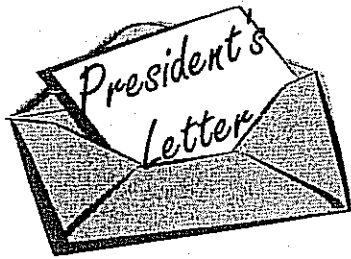
It has been confirmed that the Southeastern Writing Center Association will host the 2002 annual conference of the International Writing Center Association, IWCA. (National Writing Center Association has recently been formally changed to IWCA). The conference will take place in historic Savannah, Georgia, and will run from Thursday, April 11 to Saturday, April 13, 2002. The theme for the conference is "The Art of Writing Centers," and the host hotel is the Riverfront Marriott Hotel, which overlooks the Savannah River. The keynote speaker for the conference will be determined during the June meeting of the SWCA Board.

From the way things look so far, this conference is bound to be a success. Already an experienced, determined, and committed team of writing center professionals has begun work for the conference. SWCA president Marcy Trianosky, with the consent of members of the SWCA, has formed several committees to handle the multiple tasks necessary to prepare for the conference. Traci Augustosky has been appointed conference coordinator; she will handle all on-site arrangements in Savannah as well as the design of the conference program. Her institution, Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), will be hosting the opening reception for the conference. In addition, SWCA Board member Christina Bourgeois of Georgia Institute of Technology and coordinator of the SWCA 2000 conference in Savannah will serve as advisor to the conference coordinator. Donna Sewell of Valdosta State University will be chairing the proposal committee, which will be charged with sending out the call for proposals, evaluating the proposals that are submitted, organizing the submissions into panels, and communicating with all presenters.

Other members of the conference committee are Sonja Bagby, SWCA vice president; Marcy Trianosky, SWCA president, Karl Fomes, SWCA treasurer, Phillip Gardner, former SWCA Vice President; Jo Koster Tarvers, at-large representative for the IWCA board; Eric Hobson, IWCA board representative; Beth Bouquet, IWCA board representative; and Penny Bird, IWCA board representative. James Inman of Furman University will be in charge of the conference's web page. He will work in close coordination with Donna Sewell to allow on-line submission of proposals. Information regarding accommodations, travel and the conference program will be available on the web site. The site will be also accessible from the already established SWCA web site.

The hosting of this conference could come at no better time in the history of the SWCA. Not only will SWCA receive a tremendous amount of visibility from this conference, but it is likely that attendees from our region will dominate the conference. SWCA President Marcy Trianosky is confident that the conference will be well attended. She also hopes that individuals in our region who may not currently be members will take this opportunity to join SWCA and take part in the national conference. From a tourist standpoint, this conference will also allow SWCA to showcase the beauty of Savannah in the spring as an example of our region's geographic appeal and to share the expertise and enthusiasm of writing center professionals in our area with others from around the country and, we hope, from around the world.

So writing center professionals, mark your calendars, call your travel agent, submit your proposals, write your papers, and then pack your bags, to Savannah, Georgia we go!



By Marcy Trianosky
Hollins University

Dear Colleagues,

The end of the school year and the beginning of summer always elicit from me a conflicting mixture of emotions and thoughts. I said goodbye to four graduating tutors this year. Their departure signals new beginnings for them—the start of new jobs or perhaps graduate school. I'm excited about their many opportunities for growth, but I already miss them. Added to these mixed emotions is my anticipation at the arrival of four new tutors, and I wonder what I will do to insure the cohesiveness of the writing center with a new group of peer tutors and the inevitable change in dynamics that will result.

I also revisit in my mind the training class I conduct for new tutors—how should I revamp it, bring it up to date? What have I learned this year about training tutors and writing center theory and practice? What have others learned? How can I apply this knowledge to our writing center? Balancing these two areas—interpersonal dynamics among tutors and writing center theory and practice—is always a challenge for me. I offer here some thoughts to consider over the summer for all of you who are facing similar challenges.

The most recent issue of *College English* landed in my mailbox a few days ago. I was pleased to see that it contained a review by Jeanette Harris, former president of the National Writing Center Association; the presence of her article in this prominent journal is a sign of the continued visibility of our profession. Dr. Harris reviews a number of books related to tutor training, writing across the curriculum (WAC), writing center theory, and writing center practice. In particular, her succinct and positive recommendation of *The WAC/Writing Center Partnership: Creating a Campus-wide Writing Environment*, edited by Bob Barnett and Lois Rosen, helped me identify some ideas directly applicable to the Hollins Writing Center. The recent expansion of the writing requirement at Hollins means upper division courses across the curriculum will now have a writing intensive designation, supplementing the first-year WAC courses already in place. With Barnett and Rosen's book in hand, I will be better able to plan our writing center's work in the context of the new writing requirement.

So, this summer I'll be rethinking my approach to tutor training and its connection to writing center and WAC theory. But where will I look for guidance in bringing my tutors together in the fall, in making the new writing center staff a community? Where else but to my own tutors?

This spring we did a "micro" assessment of the writing center. This was my (made-up) term for assessing the internal dynamics of the writing center, how we relate to each other individually. Over two staff meetings, the tutors met in small groups (three or four people) and discussed a variety of questions: How well do we get along with each other? How good are we at resolving conflicts? How can communication be improved within the writing center? I asked tutors to think about these questions on a tutor-to-tutor level, as well as on a supervisor-to-tutor level. While the tutors worked in small groups, I worked alone to answer the questions with regard to my relationship with the tutors. Then we all came together and discussed our answers. My idea was to develop strategies for improving our conflict resolution skills, but I initiated the process with trepidation—what kinds of problems was I going to discover and be unable to solve? The outcome far exceeded my expectations.

Although the tutors were candid about interpersonal problems that caused tension (chronic lateness or absenteeism among tutors, gossiping about other tutors within earshot of tutees, etc.), they were also candid about solutions. "We need to stop being afraid to talk to each other when something's bothering us," one tutor said. "You know, if we got more students in here to be tutored we wouldn't have time to gossip," another tutor observed. I didn't need to worry about finding solutions—collaborative problem solving proved itself worthy of the task! The tutors engaged in this exercise with enthusiasm and identified with great clarity our areas of conflict. I realized that "group encounter" sessions like these need to become a regular part of our staff meetings, perhaps as frequently as once a month.

When fall comes and we begin again with a new group of tutors, I'll be ready with ideas and practices gleaned from my colleagues and from the Hollins tutors. I hope my experiences will help you, too, to achieve a balance between theory and practice, between building people skills and honing tutoring tactics.

Have a good summer!

When They Write With Too Much Feeling

By William V. Sinski
Georgia Military College

"One time Grandpa needed a crescent wrench, and I couldn't find one. He had to come out from under the tractor to get one. As he went to pull himself out, he grabbed the shift linkage, and the tractor rolled up onto his chest. His eyes filled with water like he was crying, but he never closed them; he never made a sound. He was dead."

This quotation is from a cause-and-effect essay assignment on the subject of feeling fear for the first time. It is a true story about an experience the writer had when she was about five years old. Because of the effect it had on me, I gave it to my supervisor with the explanation that I could not concentrate on the grammar. I had to leave the room for a while.

College composition core courses present a problem when it comes to assigning a subject, topic, and title. The first semester of composition usually focuses on the writing form and grammar a student needs to develop his or her writing style. A narrative essay, based on an experience of the writer, can be corrected and rewritten until the student learns to communicate by writing a coherent story that is understood by a reader. Students have come into our writing center with narratives about domestic abuse and violence, death, guilt, and despair. When these tragic stories are true, a freshman may be trying to find a way to talk to someone about his or her problems. As a tutor, I know I am not that person. The colleges I have attended have professional therapists on call or staff to assist troubled students. The student may possess "special needs," qualifying him or her for assistance that can make the difference between dropping out or graduating. Not only am I not the therapist the student needs to be talking to, I may not be the proper person to suggest a student needs therapy.

I do not hesitate to relate my positive experiences with the college staff therapists. My introduction to them came from a concerned instructor. Because in the past I have expressed my satisfaction with the system, fellow students have sought the same assistance. Writing center directors should give clear and specific instructions on the subject of how to assist a potentially troubled student. I think therapists should assist in drafting such instructions. I realize that this article has little to do with developing the writing form and grammar skills a student needs to succeed in college. But a narrative essay written with too much feeling about personal problems suggests the writer may have special needs that will interfere with college study. These needs should be addressed while he or she is developing the written skills needed to tell us all why William Faulkner believed Miss Emily deserved a rose.

Southern Discourse Walks on the Wild Side!

Announcing SD's First-Ever
Special Creative Writing Issue,
Fall 2001

The Fall 2001 issue of *Southern Discourse* will be a special issue celebrating the creativity of those who work in or come to writing centers. For that issue,

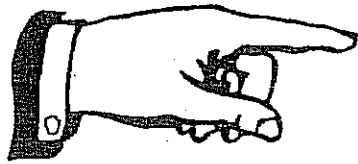


we invite you to submit creative writing connected in some way to writing centers or writing. We welcome essays, poems, short fiction, dramatic writing, and

cross-genre pieces. The connection to writing centers or writing may be explicit (a poem about a tutoring session) or implicit (a piece of creative writing for which the author received tutoring).

Writing center administrators, staff, tutors, tutees, and friends are all welcome to submit their works. **The deadline for the issue is 1 October 2001.** Submissions should be sent by email attachment in Microsoft Word to Christine Cozzens, Southern Discourse Editor, at ccozzens@agnesscott.edu.

This is your chance to show the world how the writing center has inspired you!



What's the Point?

By Peter M. Carriere, Georgia College and State University

A few years ago I ran into the office of a colleague carrying a college anthology of short stories opened to a story called "The Use of Force" by William Carlos Williams. Because the opening paragraph contained some errors in comma usage, I was licking my intellectual chops at the prospect of proving to my colleague once and for all that in the real world, comma placement was not such a big deal.

Here is the first sentence of the story: "They were new patients to me, all I had was the name, Olson."

I thrust the book under my colleague's nose: "Look at this!" I exclaimed. "There are two errors in this first sentence. Do you see them? Huh? Do you see them?"

"Well, let me look," she said taking the book.

I waited with anticipation while she looked for the errors.

"This looks like a comma splice here," she said pointing to the comma after "me."

"Yep!" I gloated. "Now where's the other one?"

She put on her glasses and squinted at the story a little closer. After ten seconds I decided she was taking too long, so I decided to point it out.

"How about the one after 'name?'" I asked, confident that she would recognize the violation of the rule that says appositives do not require commas when the proper name follows the common noun, as in "name, Olson."

My colleague looked at me sternly. "I am amazed!" she said. "I am simply amazed! I can't believe they would publish something like this. I guess you just can't tell how low our standards have sunk!" She handed me the book while a look of despondency and tragic resignation stole over her face. "Why, it's a disgrace that they would publish something with errors in it!"

I took the book. It wasn't the reaction I'd hoped for. I wanted her to admit that the comma police were misguided;

instead, she was dismayed that the story had ever seen printer's ink. My bubble had burst and my enthusiasm began to wane. If I had been a dog, my tail would have wilted earthward toward China.

It was obvious that she couldn't see my point. But I saw hers: myth and emotion were more powerful than empiricism and logic.

"There's . . . there's . . . another error . . . in the second sentence," I urged.

"This," my colleague admonished, shaking a forefinger at the book, "should never have been published!"

"But," I pleaded, "he's a well-known writer, a famous poet, this story's always collected in anthol. . . ."

I was talking to the air. She had returned to her computer. I couldn't break through her intellectual chain mail. Incredulous at the way myth always dominates logic and evidence, I walked out of her office. "It's a wonder anyone ever remembered Darwin," I muttered to myself on the way back to my office.

In the Pointer's Hall of Fame, the comma after "me" would have constituted a violation of the rule that says that two complete sentences should never be joined by a comma. In American usage, that's a comma splice, one of the worst transgressions of the novice writer, guaranteed to evoke anger and a grade reduction from the Point Police.

But the other problem, the comma after "name," is not so easy. Various grammar books assert that when the appositive is closely related to the noun for which it serves as the appositive, no comma is needed. Others suggest that if the common noun is first, no comma, but if the proper noun is first, then a comma is needed:

My wife Linda. . .
but
Linda, my wife. . .

Who's right? Fortunately, grammar books, even the ones supported by the Brotherhood of Pointers, call for authorial intention in most matters. As the astute and even-handed editors of the *Chicago Manual of Style* put it, "There are a few rules governing its [the comma's] use that have

become almost obligatory. Aside from these, the use of the comma is mainly a matter of good judgment, with ease of reading as the end in view" (108). Finally! A voice of reason! I savored the line: "The use of the comma is mainly a matter of good judgment. . . ."

I thought about walking back into my colleague's office armed with even more logic, even more empirical evidence, armed with the great *Chicago Manual of Style!*

But then I hesitated. I thought about it. I considered her point of view, considered the power of myth. And then I shrugged and gave up the idea. An inescapable question played over and over again in my mind: "What's the point?"

SWCATALK

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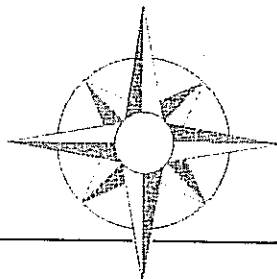
and follow the directions for subscribing.

Remember, you must be an SWCA member to subscribe!

How to Submit Articles to *Southern Discourse:*

Articles should be sent to Christine Cozzens via email, disk (MS Word), or fax. Please note the following deadlines:

Fall 2001: October 1st
Spring 2002: February 1st
Summer 2002: May 1st



Report on SWCA Board Actions

February 15, 2001
Southeastern Writing Center
Association Conference
Auburn, Alabama

By Glenda Conway, SWCA Secretary

Board Members Present: Sonja Bagby, Glenda Conway, Christine Cozzens, Karl Fornes, Bryan Moten, Jerry Mwagbe, Isabelle Thompson, Marcy Trianosky.

SWCA's officers ushered in the 2001 conference at Auburn University's Dixon Conference Center with a thoughtful and productive meeting. A number of board actions were taken.

2002 National Writing Center Association* Conference. The board endorsed preliminary investigation of the feasibility of the SWCA hosting the 2002 NWCA conference. (*Since that decision, NWCA has been renamed the IWCA, the International Writing Center Association.)

2002 Officer Elections. During the year before elections, the summer issue of *Southern Discourse* will include a call for nominations for president, vice president, secretary, and (when applicable) treasurer. Nominations will be received by the vice president through October 1. The vice president will forward names of nominees to the editor of *Southern Discourse* for publication in the fall issue. Nominations for members-at-large will be received at the conference. The final voting will be held at the conference, although members not attending may submit votes by absentee ballot.

Treasurer's Term. The term for the SWCA treasurer will be extended from two to five years.

SWCA Publications. *Southern Discourse* will be renamed the "Publication" of the Southeastern Writing Center Association. The designation "Newsletter" no longer will be used. The SWCA website will be expanded to include publication of selected SWCA conference papers; toward this goal, the board agreed that the 2002 conference call for proposals should notify prospective conferees of this plan. *Focuses*, a journal previously sponsored by the SWCA, no longer is associated with the organization.

***Southern Discourse* Editor's Term.** To ensure stability and quality, the *Southern Discourse* editor's position will be made as a five-year renewable appointment.

Funding Writing Centers: Creative Financing

By Paula Harms Payne
Georgia Military College

We all agree that persuading administrators to allocate necessary funds to create a writing center and to continue such support is difficult under the best circumstances. Even when deans and department chairs see the need, they are often reluctant to open the coffers. Jeanne Simpson stated at Four C's in 1995, "Central Administration prefers to keep writing centers powerless and marginalized" (2). Control of the money secures political power at any size institution. Many administrators know little about writing centers, so they are not eager to release dollars to maintain them (Simpson 3). As a result, many writing center directors learn quickly that they are the institution's step-child, often operating on a "wing and a prayer" from one year to the next. Through experience, successful directors recognize they must find money to sustain their existence. Much like college students who pay college tuition and living expenses through a combination of grants, loans, scholarships, student aid, and off campus work, writing centers also draw upon expected as well as the unexpected sources to pay the bills.

Peggy Jolly's "Funding a Writing Center" (1981) outlines the connection between the center's role in the university and the internal and external funding received. Writing centers benefit, according to Jolly, if they are perceived as "service-oriented, serving the needs of the total student body as well as those of the community" (64-65). More potential clients means more dollar support. Functioning as an extension of the English department often limits the budget and size (Jolly 63). Jolly suggests that the best way to fund a center is to secure budget lines from the university or department as well as "soft" monies when available (65). Soft money means *lagniappe* as the Cajuns say—the unexpected that may not be available again.

In order to gather more information about funding the writing center, I conducted an informal survey and questioned colleagues and members on the WCENTER Listserv about the financial support for their centers. I was surprised to see some of their answers. Traci Augustosky from the Savannah College of Art and Design said, "We operate under the auspices of the Liberal Arts Department, but we have our own whopping \$500 budget. The library offered us space in their facility because they wanted it to help increase traffic. We pay them no rent, and the phone is covered under their budget." Jim McDonald from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette described another scenario:

We have a line in the university budget to pay tutors. Printing and maintenance costs for the computers is paid out of the money collected from a campus-wide student technology fee, and the writing center also writes grants for new computers and upgrades that draw from that fund—a special committee of administrators, students, and faculty decides which grants to fund.

James Inman was able to draw on foundation money to establish the center at Furman:

The Center for Collaborative Learning (CCLC) is funded primarily by two sources at the present time. First, CCLC was created out of 25 percent of a million-dollar grant from the Christian A. Johnson Foundation to Furman in order to create a Center for Engaged Learning and associated programs. . . . Furman has begun to institutionalize CCLC in terms of its operating budget. This year I had \$10,000 in hard dollars, and next year, the director will have the same; additionally, by the 2002-2003 all CCLC salaries will be integrated into the operating budget, thus no longer dependent on the grant.

Peter Elbow estimated that \$100,000 would "establish a really working writing center with a director of the center and sufficient tutoring money with tutors to support it (quoted in Buchholz 2).

Writing center directors have to be flexible and clever, locating funds in diverse areas. Perhaps this skill will work against us if administrators recognize that writing centers can sustain themselves and produce successful results for the institution without dedicated budget lines for tutor payroll, equipment purchase and upkeep, supplies, and salaries for center directors. Keeping accurate records and assessing skills acquisition is the key to convincing administrators that successful learning takes place not only in the classroom, but also in the writing center.

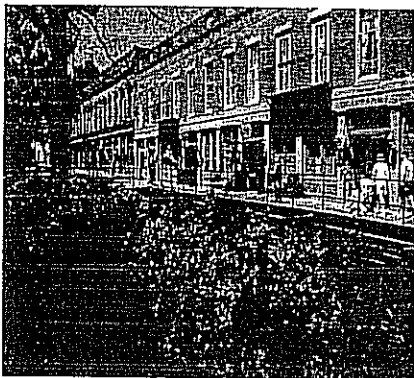
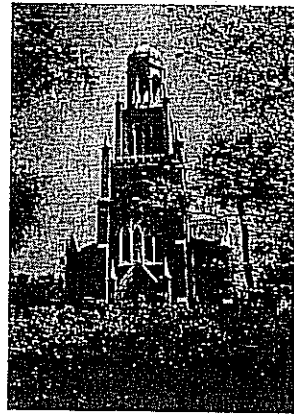
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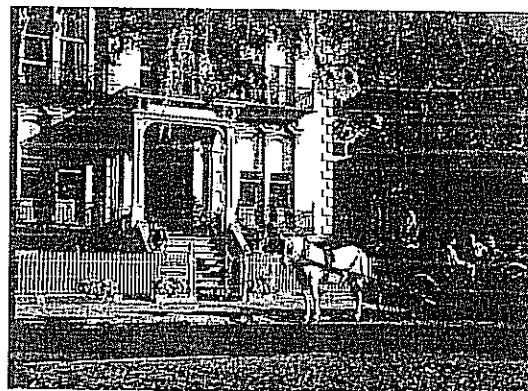
nearly everything in Savannah is connected to history, so is its pride in naturalism. Savannah constructed the first experimental garden in the New World: Trustee's Garden, a ten-acre plot which tested everything from silk producing mulberry trees to the Georgia famous peach trees and cotton. In 1963, Savannah also established the first aromatic garden for the blind in the Southeast.

And no one can mention Savannah without speaking of the city-wide historic preservation. More than 1200 magnificent eighteenth- and nineteenth-century structures have been restored in Savannah, and substantial renovation continues throughout the city. These centuries-old buildings are not only of historical and architectural significance, but they possess tremendous aesthetic value as well. Beautiful examples of Federal, Victorian, Regency and Italianate architecture are seen on every block. Greek-revival columns, intricate cast iron window and balcony railing and towering cupolas are but a few of the architectural details one encounters while strolling through the squares and streets of Savannah. The pluralistic showing of churches also provides a variety of impressive structures. Among many others, the newly restored Catholic Cathedral, the Gothic Jewish Synagogue, the Greek Orthodox Temple, and the neoclassical Baptist Church all uniquely contribute to Savannah's impressive atmosphere.



Savannah's museums and monuments also allude to the city's historical pride. The Visitor's Center and Savannah History Museum, housed in the restored 1860s Central Railroad Station, is often a newcomer's first stop. Some of the other frequently visited locales include the birthplace of Girl Scout founder Juliette Gordon Low (now the Girl Scout National Center), the Flannery O'Connor House, and the Ships of the Sea Museum (which proudly informs out-of-towners that the first steam ship to cross an ocean—in 1819—was the SS Savannah). The Telfair Museum of Art, one of the oldest public art museums in the South, showcases traveling exhibitions and a permanent collection of American and European painting and sculpture. The Olympic Cauldron sculpture, representative of the yachting events held in the Savannah area and Georgia coastal empire during the 1996 Centennial Games, and the Waving Girl statue, depicting the story of a local girl waving at all the passing ships in hopes of the return of the sailor she loved, also interest many a visitor.

Since Savannah is an ideal venue for walking, the city has made sure to provide ample eatery choices for the appetites that travelers are sure to work-up. Savannah truly is a city of restaurants. On Broughton Street alone, one of the most active commerce streets in the downtown area, sit restaurants of every ilk. Appetites are thrilled and satisfied in Casbah, an exotic restaurant designed to look like the inside of a lush Moroccan tent. Typhoon with its upscale Malaysian cuisine and bamboo laden atmosphere, Tucson Grill with its Santa Fe ethnographic decor and southwestern entrees, Sakura with its extensive sushi menu and tender teriyaki dishes, and Il Pasticcio with its ultra modern atmosphere and European gourmet selections are but a few of the possibilities. The city also offers world famous southern cooking at the historic Pink House or at the more cozy and casual establishments of Lady and Sons, Ms. Wilkes, or Nila's. Fresh seafood can be enjoyed at Huey's, The Shrimp Factory, The Oyster Bar, or Dockside, all overlooking the river, at or at the supposedly haunted Pirates House, which also offers live jazz music. The small, decorative, native cafes are numerous, offering culinary treats that are every bit as edibly delightful as the establishments are visually pleasing and interesting.



There are plenty of attractions outside the city limits as well. Wormsloe Historic Site, the ruins of a 1739 fortified home and plan-

(Continued on page 11)



The OWL's Nest

Why Create and Implement an OWL?

By James A. Inman, *Furman University*,
James.Inman@furman.edu and Donna N.
Sewell, *Valdosta State University*,
dsewell@valdosta.edu

As OWL practitioners, we are often asked the question, "So why should I think about an OWL?" Our column begins answering this deceptively complex question.

Higher education has changed, especially in terms of student demographics and degree options. In *A University for the 21st Century*, James Duderstadt suggests that adult and distance learning are transforming education. Even at institutions where those students continue to make up a strong majority, education itself is changing; information technologies' support of curricula and service learning initiatives exemplify such changes. The Campus Computing Project (<http://www.campuscomputing.net/>) offers a statistical look at information technology use on campus: "Three-fifths (59.3 percent) of all college courses now utilize electronic mail. . . . Similarly, two-fifths (42.7 percent) of college courses now use Web resources as a component of the syllabus. . . . Almost a third (30.7 percent) of all college courses have a Web page."

Faced with campus climates steeped in information technology, writing center professionals must think broadly about their potential service offerings, opening up their minds to new possibilities. Writing center professionals can no longer assume that clients will be traditional, residential students. For centers currently offering only face-to-face consultations, an OWL makes sense as a possible addition if it is well-designed and carefully implemented. Likewise, for OWL-only programs, creating face-to-face options may open important new spaces for meeting clients.

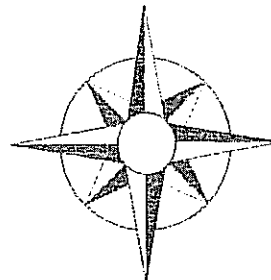
Creating an OWL allows writing centers to provide writing assistance to off-campus students, who may live in other towns. Valdosta State University, for example, offers several different types of distance learning classes utilizing

web-based, asynchronous delivery methods as well as real-time courses through interactive television. Students may live up to three hours away, making physical travel to a writing center far too inconvenient for them. An OWL moves the writing center to them. Distance education students deserve access to resources on a par with that granted to on-campus students; universities may have an obligation to provide such resources online.

In addition, an OWL provides on-campus students with increased access to writing assistance, simply by opening another venue. But OWL use may reach beyond students as well, providing public relations for the writing center and the university through allowing the community access to resources.

Writing center professionals creating new service offerings should not expect instant gratification in terms of numbers. The only number that should matter, we would argue, is the number of offerings itself. Consider Furman University's Center for Collaborative Learning and Communication (CCLC), which James directs, as a test case. Its offerings include both face-to-face and virtual consultations about any aspect of writing, communication, and technology, and the virtual options in particular include three different email consultation choices and one MOO consultation choice, or four virtual choices in sum. As of this writing, CCLC has seen only four email consultations and one MOO consultation during the 2000-2001 academic year. Does James see these numbers as a problem? No. What matters to him is that prospective clients have the fullest array of options possible.

We hope this column helps you to begin to think about whether an OWL might be appropriate for your institution after all. As always, we invite you to contact us with your responses and ideas for future columns.



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tation, is noted for its beautiful oak-lined drive. Neighboring Tybee Island has the first lighthouse on the South Atlantic Coast, Ft. Pulaski National Monument, and frequently spotted bottle-nosed dolphins at play within clear sight of the sandy beaches. The marshes and ebbing tides of Savannah's Low Country ensure scenic drives in all directions.



And although Savannah holds the honor of establishing the first golf course in America (1794) and has some impressive fairways of its own, golf aficionados can also travel to near-by Hilton Head Island and play a round on one of its nationally recognized courses. Other members of the family may also enjoy the famous outlet shops that line Hilton Head's main thoroughfare.

And as if the sights, history, and local flair aren't enough to attract visitors, travelers can always count on Savannah's hospitality. The city welcomes more than six and a half million travelers each year, an amazing feat for a city of only 150,000 (within the city limits; 250,000 within the county) permanent residents. While guests roam the city, they quickly adapt to the Savannahian relaxed pace and friendly disposition. Visitors and residents alike seem to walk slowly, breathe deeply, and smile often as they peruse the local treasures. And even though the city offers a free shuttle from downtown hotels, inns, and the Visitors Center to attractions all over the Historic District, pack your most comfortable shoes because the sites Savannah offers undoubtedly make it one of the best walking cities in the nation.

For more information, see *Guide to Savannah*. Savannah: Towery Publishing, 2000. *Savannah Official Visitor Guide*. Savannah Convention & Visitor Bureau, 2001. *Savannah Scene, Issue 2*. Savannah: Island Communications, 2001

Passenger Airlines Servicing Savannah

Continental Express
United Express
USAir
Airtran
Delta
Comair

The 2002 Southeastern Writing Center Association Achievement Award

The Southeastern Writing Center Association Achievement Award is presented annually on a competitive basis to a member of the association in honor of his or her outstanding contribution to the writing center community.

Eligibility

Any member of the SWCA is eligible to receive the award.

Process

- To nominate an eligible candidate, send a short letter of nomination to the address below. The nominator is also responsible for informing the candidate that he or she has been nominated.
- The candidate should submit supporting documents, which may include letters of support from students, tutors, faculty, administrators, or colleagues from other institutions; syllabi; publications; local writing center materials, etc. to the address below by **December 1st**.
- Nominations and supporting material should be sent to

Karl Fornes, SWCA Treasurer
The Writing Room
University of South Carolina Aiken
471 University Parkway
Aiken, SC
karlf@aiken.sc.edu

A committee of SWCA members will review the nominations.

Deadline for Nominations: December 1, 2001

The winner will be announced and presented with the award (a nifty plaque and a check for \$250) during the 2002 SWCA Conference.

Award Committee

If you are interested in serving on the committee that reviews the nominations, please contact Karl Fornes at the above address.

Student Reflections on the Role of the Tutor

By Elizabeth Prevatt,
James Madison University

Conducting research as a peer writing tutor at James Madison University, I have yet to come across one piece of writing that incorporates the opinion of the student writer concerning which methods of tutoring are most effective. After all, is that not the goal of a tutoring session, to help a student learn as much as possible without overstepping the bounds of tutoring into collusion and plagiarism? Most of the material I have uncovered explains what is important to do in a tutoring session and why but rarely shows tangible proof of the claims. Through experience as a peer tutor, I found that sticking strictly to one tenet of tutoring provides a one-sided review of the paper. Even though I feel that a mix and match from various theories works best to create good writers, I assumed that students would only want to invest the least amount of time and energy in correcting their papers. I conducted a survey at the peer writing center at James Madison University to reveal what students want—what works for them and what does not—in a session. My results point to a tutoring method that helps cultivate a better writer in the process.

The sheer multitude of possible approaches to and purposes for the writing center is still daunting to say the least. Should we run a grammar fix-it shop that just deals with surface errors? Should we put down our red pens and focus on a questioning process that leads students to uncover what they want to truly say in their papers, or is that also a "leading" process tainted by what we as tutors may feel is important to draw out? According to Toby Fulwiler "teaching writing is teaching re-writing," an argument which directly speaks to the tutors' role as guider as opposed to fixer (71). At James Madison University, the tutor's main goal is to produce a better writer overall, an approach in keeping with Stephen North's assertion that "the development of general patterns of thinking and writing" is of the utmost importance in a writing center (24). The main question then becomes how best to help students in this quest.

The role of the best-intentioned tutor can be full of contradictions and problems before a session even begins. There are a multitude of factors that affect any session, both for the tutor and student. The ability of a tutor to correctly assess student needs, make customers feel

welcome, insure that an equal relationship between the tutor and student exists, and the student's intentions, attitudes, and willingness to interact with the tutor are just a few variables. Each student reacts differently to tutor comments, suggestions, and conversation. The tutor has the added pressure of "reading" the student, so to speak, and trying to sense underlying difficulties and concerns. The plus in this situation, as Kenneth Bruffee notes, is that "peer tutoring works because it changed the social context of learning yet 'did not seem to change what people learned'" (Grimm 528). Thus, generalizations drawn from student responses can provide useful insights. Where better for a tutor to turn for guidance than the people who are being tutored?

To test my hypothesis, I compiled an anonymous questionnaire and distributed it to each exiting visitor over a week-long interval at the JMU center. The questionnaire was intended to uncover the frequency of visitors to the writing center, to ask open-ended questions that would facilitate student response, and to explore theoretical concepts. By establishing the ratio of repeat customers, a center can measure somewhat accurately if it is doing a good job and maintaining return customers. Open-ended questions let students voice their opinions on how the tutorial sessions could be improved. Multiple choice questions, representing the different tutoring theories, were proposed in scenario form to uncover what the student values most in a session. What students want (someone to correct the paper) and what the tutor wants (to help shape a better writer) do not coincide. However, I was surprised with the results, which definitely reaffirmed the necessity of a writing center.

Seventeen surveys were distributed and tallied as data; eleven visitors had been to the writing center an average of 3.5 times over the course of the year. All participants rated the tutor an average of 8.3 on a scale of 1-10 in terms of effectiveness in addressing concerns, answering questions and articulating comments. These are the basic premises from which to interpret the rest of the data.

In answer to the questions why the tutor was given the grade that he or she received and what would have made the session run more smoothly, the responses were all positive:

The tutor thoroughly explained how I could improve my paper and gave suggestions to strengthen my points.

She was very positive, looked for [the] good, emphasized that and then told me where I could use a little work.

They asked what I needed them to specifically look at, then addressed them in the paper. Very good suggestions.

I really had no clue where to begin with my essay

and she helped me gather my thoughts together and see where a good place to begin would be.

The need for positive and critically constructed feedback is apparent. A student coming in for help obviously believes that there is something that can be improved in his or her paper. Students need to hear as many good things about their work as things that need improvement so they do not get discouraged or embarrassed. If a tutor is unsure of how to approach a text, simply asking students before the session begins what their main questions and concerns are can help the session be more successful. The tutor will know specifically what to look out for in the text and the student will feel that time spent at the center has been worthwhile.

In addressing theoretical constructs, the majority of students preferred a tutoring session that (A) picked out several mistakes and discussed the reasons they occur and strategies with which to fix them if they recur over (B) a tutoring session that only corrected grammar and surface errors. As one student wrote, "You would benefit more from because (A) it will make your paper as a whole better and help you on your next paper." For the students who did mark (B) and explained their choice, grammar was the primary concern only because the teacher emphasized it in grading. The student might have had more global writing concerns, but grammar was more important to the teacher grading the paper. What message is this approach to teaching writing sending the student writers? Do we really want to have a generation of writers concerned more with surface errors than content?

When asked what is the most helpful thing that a tutor could do in a session, the results were again divided evenly between the choices: (A) exclusively focusing on the text/grammar, isolating errors and weaknesses over the development of writing skills; (B) using a process of question and answer to lead the student to come to their own perceptions of your paper; and (C) using a collaborative process that gives suggestions for improving things in your paper that many not necessarily be "wrong" but that the reader feels "sounds better this way." No answer clearly dominated. Unless students ask for a certain type of tutoring, a mix of methods should be used to provide the best help. This mix of methods also prevents tutors from getting so immersed in a student text from one perspective that they forget their initial goal.

The importance of drawing on multiple theories was reinforced in other ways by this study. For example, when students were asked if they felt addressed as equals and allowed to keep their own voice (stressing collaboration over collusion) in the tutorial, all respondents answered that they were not pressured to change wording, content or structure; moreover, students seemed to value discussing major issues with the tutor, using the tutor as a sounding board, and then taking key ideas and reworking their own papers. Jeff Brooks, in his essay "Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work," states "When you 'improve' a student's paper, you haven't been a tutor at all; you've been an editor" (83). Thus, "the student, not the tutor, should 'own' the paper and take full responsibility for it" (83-84). Additionally, several student valued the fact that parts of their paper were not marked in red but read aloud to them so that they could discover their own grammatical or content mistakes. In this way, tutors can avoid the pitfalls of the Socratic method because, although they are pinpointing something that is unclear, they are not "leading" the student in any other way than apprising them of a potential problem.

Further addressing the value of mixing theories, Stephen North asserts that "The kind of writing does not substantially change the approach. We always want the writer to tell us about rhetorical context...[and] other constraints" (33). His assessment of the tutoring process supports the use of multiple approaches:

...the variations of kinds of talk are endless [in ways to approach a tutoring session]. We can question, praise, cajole, criticize, acknowledge...read: silently, aloud, together...play with options.... We can both write and compare strategies (North 33).

In retrospect, any combination of approaches that in some way serves the writer without compromising the goals of the writing center, including blending techniques and pedagogies, is most likely an efficient way.

In his essay "The liberatory composition teacher's obligation to writing centers at two-year colleges," Paul Tassoni argues,

Writing instruction that focuses exclusively and uncritically on such elements (grammar, stylistics, or other conventions students need to know to succeed in school and work) limits the perspectives and rhetorical approaches writers might take to particular issues (37).

In short, "Writing centers that focus exclusively on grammar and other conventions can reinforce the obsession with surface-level detail and uncritical submission to authority. . ." (35).

(Continued on page 14)

Writing Tutor Evaluations—A Questionnaire

By Elizabeth Prevatt,
James Madison University

- 1) Have you ever visited the Writing Center before? If so, how many times?
- 2) On a scale of 1 (worst) – 10 (best), how effective was your tutor in addressing your concerns, answering your questions and articulating their comments on your paper? Why?
- 3) What would have been more helpful in making the session run more smoothly, on your part or on the part of the tutor?
- 4) Which would you value more and why? A) A tutoring session that only corrected grammar and surface errors or B) A tutoring session that picked out several mistakes you made and discussed reasons they occurred and strategies with which to fix them if they occur again in the paper.
- 5) Do you view the Writing Center mostly as a place to (circle one):
 - A) Correct surface errors in grammar, structure, transition, and content.
 - B) Discuss specific questions and concerns to help you in actively revising your paper.
 - C) Go to because my teacher told me to visit.
 - D) Go because I need another Peer Review
- 6) When you leave the Writing Center, do you feel that you've come out of your session as a better writer, with a better text, both, or neither? Why/why not? Which do you care more about?
- 7) Do you feel that basic "FYI" worksheets, explaining common mistakes such as the difference between there/they're/their and when to use commas, would help in terms of allowing the tutoring session to focus more on your development of writing skills?
- 8) Do you feel that the tutor addressed you as an equal and allowed you to keep your own voice in your paper (stressing collaboration to help you with ideas instead of giving them to you), or do you feel like the thoughts, perceptions and views of the tutor were pushed on you?
- 9) What would be the most helpful thing that a tutor should do in a session (circle one)?
 - A) Exclusively focus on text/grammar, isolate errors and weaknesses, and focus on the text/corrections more than the development of future writing skills
 - B) Use a process of question and answer to lead you to come to your own perceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of your paper and then discuss with the tutor potential strategies for revision.
 - C) Use a collaborative process (similar to Peer Groups) that gives suggestions for improving things in your paper that may not necessarily be "wrong" but that the reader feels "sounds better this way."

(Continued from page 13)

In light of these findings and in concurrence with current scholarship, I believe that a mix of different approaches to teaching writing is the best way to create a better writer. As the students who completed this survey suggested, an upbeat, friendly environment that stresses positive feedback over negative, collaboration over collusion, and questioning students as a peers versus telling them what to do all contribute to a successful tutoring session. Tutors should practice different ways of conveying their messages through questioning and answering, focusing equally on global and local concerns, and truly caring about how the student handles and feels about their work. Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood express this approach the best when they say

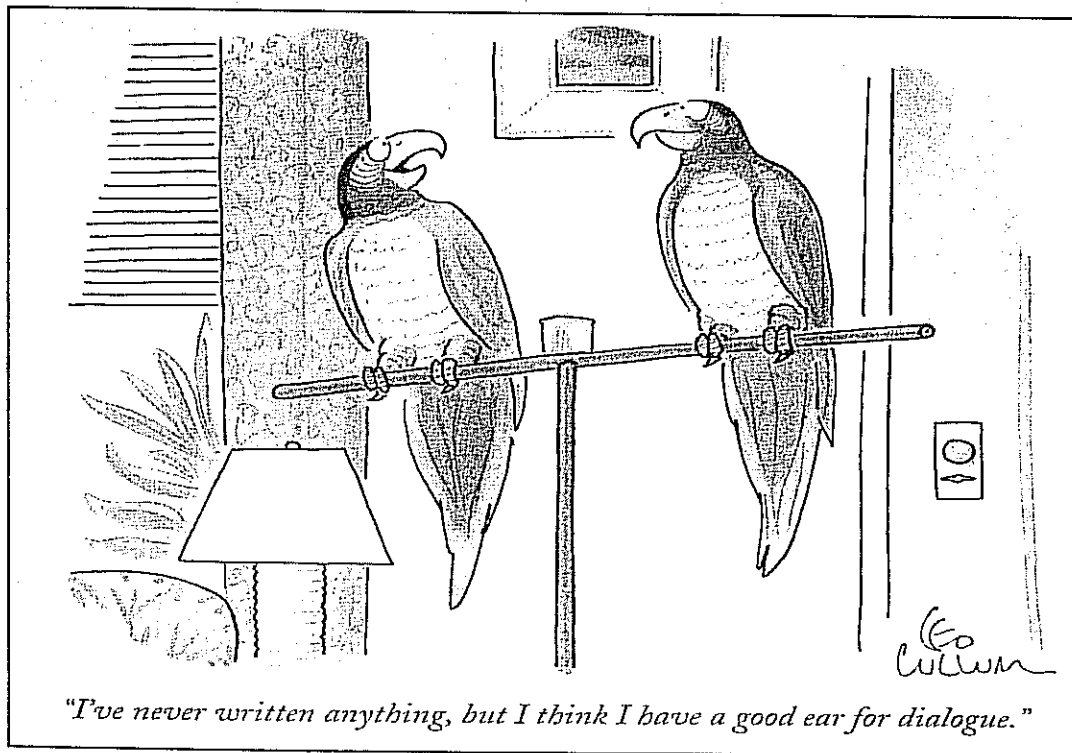
We believe that assisting others is best achieved in an informed practice that blends experience, theory and reflection... [in order to develop] a philosophy and style of your own and, ultimately, in achieving your full potential as a tutor (16).

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Southern Discourse

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AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE
THE WORLD FOR WOMEN

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