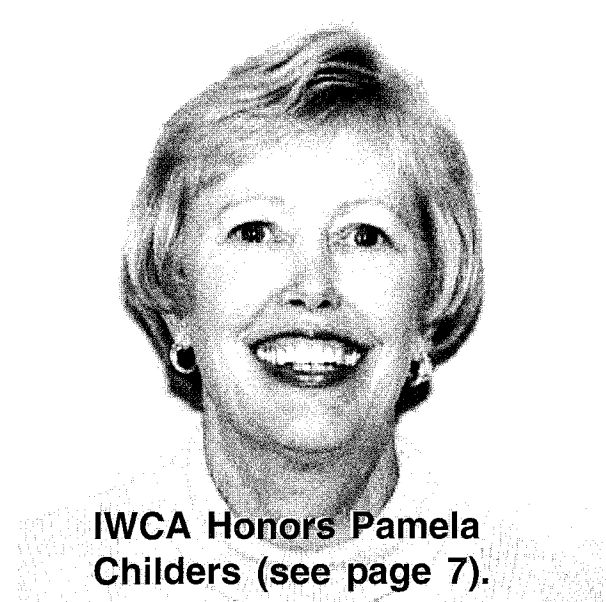


From the Editor ..... 2  
Missing Wendy Bishop ..... 3  
Editing Rage ..... 4  
Compass Points ..... 6  
IWCA Honors Pamela Childers ..... 7  
Back to the Center .....8  
What's the Point? ..... 10  
Writing Center Assessment ..... 12  
SWCA Treasurer's Report ..... 14  
President's Letter .....15



**Donna Sewell  
remembers  
Wendy Bishop  
(see page 3).**



**IWCA Honors Pamela  
Childers (see page 7).**



**Nicolette Lee gives her last words as  
managing editor (see page 4).**



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AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE  
THE WORLD FOR WOMEN

# From the Editor

By Christine S. Cozzens  
Agnes Scott College

## Wild About Writing

I'm teaching Advanced Composition this semester, a course that attracts students from all majors and all four classes. In my class of thirteen students, there are students from Pakistan, Nigeria, and Korea, and students representing several American ethnic groups. The oldest student is forty-something, the youngest is eighteen. Though each of them has come to the course for a different reason, they all have one thing in common. They know writing is important, and they want to learn to write better.

I observed this same mania for writing, though it had different characteristics, at the IWCA/NCPTW conference in Hershey, PA in October. The conference center was crammed with mostly young writing tutors, flying from session to session, presenting their own work or soaking up the wisdom of others—all having to do with writing. The energy—and it was writing energy—at that conference was so strong, even I felt young!

I'm grateful to the contributors to each *Southern Discourse* for their writing mania, and I'm thinking especially of the three women on the cover of this issue. Wendy Bishop was a generous, committed leader in the field of writing centers. Donna Sewell has eloquently captured the essence of Wendy's contribution as a person and as a writer, along with a sense of how we will miss her. Pam Childers lights up the field of writing centers, as Marcy Trianosky points out. Pam's love for writing has even got her coauthoring a regular column for SD with Sonja Bagby. And Nicolette Lee—political science major, future lawyer and social activist, graduating managing editor for *Southern Discourse*, and devotee of writing—represents the future. Nicolette and others like her will carry the good word about writing and writing centers to graduate schools and professions and organizations around the world.

Wendy, Sonja, Pam, Nicolette, Donna, and Marcy and all of you make me glad to be a writing center person. ✨

*Southern Discourse* / Spring 2004 • Volume 7, Issue 2 Page 2



Christine

# Missing Wendy Bishop—Writer, Teacher, Scholar, and Writing Center Girl

By Donna N. Sewell, Valdosta State University

Like many of you, I miss Wendy Bishop, who died 21 November 2003. I met Wendy in 1990 when I began graduate school at Florida State University, enrolling in the summer T.A. training class. Wendy observed that class in preparation for taking over T.A. training in the fall. Wendy functioned as a participant-observer, interviewed participants, and studied our developing pedagogy. She modeled the kind of teacher/researcher/writer I wanted to be, someone who cared deeply about learning, both for herself and for her students, someone who wanted writing to swirl through her life and through the lives of her students.

The research project disintegrated eventually, a “failure” that she documents in “Having Been There: The Second Ethnography and On.” I use the word “failure” ironically because this experience underscores Wendy’s academic life. She was the kind of person, to borrow from Henry James, on whom nothing was lost. She examined the project that didn’t succeed, worked to understand why, and published her thoughts. Her honesty, her willingness to look closely at herself and her writing, makes her a great writer/teacher/scholar.

I realize the awkwardness of these slashes, but Wendy eludes individual words. She reminded me to see students as writers and showed me the writing in my life long before I finished my dissertation or presented my first conference paper.

Wendy generated academically rigorous and engaging texts and conference presentations. Please don’t slide over that last sentence. Balancing interest and thoughtfulness is rare and deserves praise. She directed a writing center in Alaska, and her publications include several articles and book chapters focused on writing centers (see works cited for a partial list of writing center publications). In fact, everything I have read by Wendy interested me—both the content and the style. Her care for language and her writerly persona connect me to her topics, pulling me in and asking me to consider carefully these issues.

Missing Wendy, I googled (a word I think Wendy would like) her and found a radio interview online. I listened to the interview while drafting this article,

Wendy’s voice filling the room as she discussed with Peggy O’Neil her writing process and pedagogy. Wendy described her life as one of connections. I can’t think of a better description; she brought together composition and creative writing, literary theory and composition theory, theory and practice. Hearing her voice saddens me because I know that her spoken voice is gone. I’m sure that I will turn to her written voice again and again—as will many of you—thankful to have at least that left.

Wendy mentored her graduate students, encouraging us to propose chapters for her edited collections, putting these chapters next to those of well-known scholars. She copresented with graduate students at conferences. And at the 2002 joint conference of the Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) and the International Writing Center Association (IWCA), she urged us to help give writers time to write by turning over class time to writing. As always, when she talked or wrote, I found myself nodding in agreement, remembering how much I struggle to create writing space for myself.

Wendy served as the keynote speaker at my first writing center conference as well, the 1996 SWCA conference and South Carolina Writing Center conference in



Wendy Bishop (1953-2003)

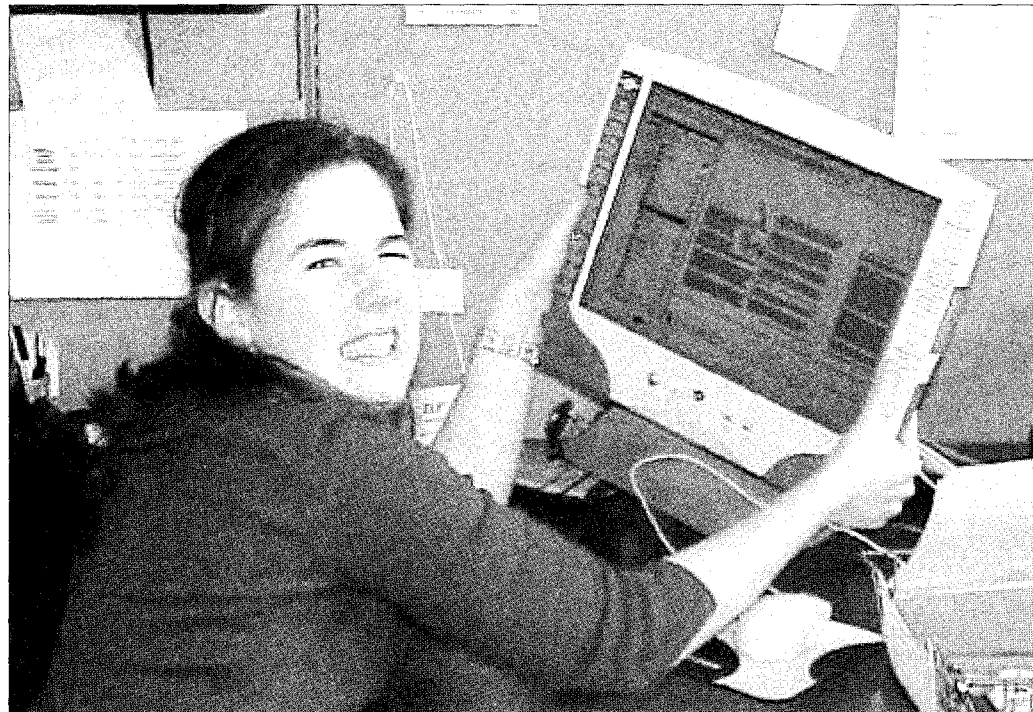
# Editing: It's All the Rage

By Nicolette Lee, Agnes Scott College

I see people screaming at the car in front of them while they are both rendered immovable by asphalt flypaper, and I just don't get it. I can accept the cathartic effect of screaming; I have taken advantage of it many times myself. But, do you really think your foul words will somehow motivate the 500 cars in front of you to scoot forward just for you? I'm sure you don't. Even screaming with your windows down seems less silly to me. At least there's the possibility of someone hearing you that way.

Okay, so I give up on understanding vehicular rage, but I am quite familiar with a much lesser known, perhaps even more insidious form of anger—editing rage. Doesn't sound too bad, does it? Well, think again. While most people needlessly chide the car in front of them in rush hour traffic, I needlessly curse an inanimate object for hours on end. And why, why do I expend so much energy? Because the computer mouse won't move correctly, or it moved too much, or the editing program isn't doing what I want it to do. You have never known true pain until the page you've been working on for three hours turns into a permanent and horribly ominous blue error screen.

Here is a typical exchange from our writing center office between me and a fellow tutor as I'm laying out an issue of *Southern Discourse*.



Nicolette Lee shakes the life out of the computer as she edits *Southern Discourse*.

"Grarrrrrhhh!!"

"Nicolette, what's wrong?"

"This stupid box won't fit around this picture right. Move, darn you, move!"

"Oh. Sorry..."

Of course, of all of the times I have cursed the computer for being finicky, it has never cursed back or even said a word. How could it? It can't speak or think at all, though sometimes I wish it could. I wish it could give me the answer, just like drivers really do wish the car in front of them would hear their cries. But, they never do.

Yet, with all of the frustrations involved, I still continue laying out the issue at hand. I never give up or quit, just like you don't get out of your car and walk the rest of the way home. Why give up the comforts of the environment you only temporarily hate?

Apart from shelter, a managing editor's comforts include developing a finished product, something tutoring writing will never get me (and rightfully so). Each issue is in some way "mine," even if dozens of other people had a hand in its making. The editing process is as collaborative as the tutoring process. Articles are submitted and edited by Dr. Cozzens, and then I get to lay them out on a precreated template. An entire team of publishing gurus goes over the finished product before it gets mailed to you.

While I didn't have the pressure of writing or editing the text, I am the one who usually decides how the reader perceives it. I'm the layout person. My job is really an introverted writing tutor's guilty pleasure. I read all of the great—and by then nearly flawless—articles and decide how they look on paper. I can draw your eye to an interesting article or a breathtaking picture, and I don't have to put my name in the upper right (or left) hand corner. If this issue looks horrendous, you probably wouldn't know whom to blame, but if it's great, I'll make sure to show everyone what a great job *I* did. See? I have it made. Sure, sometimes I want to throw the computer out the window, but I usually find a way to get it right in the end. Then, when I finally get the picture looking just the way I want it to, I save quickly and repeatedly and let a big “woo hoo” fill the space that the “grarrh” used to inhabit. The taste of victory is sweet indeed. Frankly, I love my job. Both of them: tutoring and editing. And I will miss them dearly, but I hope not for long.

You see, this article is a managing editor's last hurrah. My four years of undergraduate toil are near their end, and so, too, are my two years of laying out *Southern Discourse*. When I began, I knew very little about how to construct a sixteen-page publication, but like any overly ambitious undergrad, I thought I could figure it out...eventually.

And eventually I did, but I figured out a few other things, too. For one, cheap computer mice are indeed the devil. Secondly, if you talk to the computer, it looks like you're talking to yourself, and unless your name is Sybil, this is not normal. Thirdly, editing really is a tough job, but now it is one I can do with some confidence and good deal of enthusiasm.

Hoping to finally get it all right, I have looked forward to each issue with excitement. When I flip through each one, I can see the entire publication coming together—solidifying. It's a great feeling to be a part of that. In some little way, I'm helping a community I love communicate. What better job for a writer?

I can only hope that you love reading *Southern Discourse* as much as I have loved putting it together. That's what the rage is all about, isn't it? Our desire to accomplish some task. We yell at the car in front of us because there's somewhere else we desperately want to be, and I yell at the computer because there's something I desperately want to create. Sure, the yelling didn't help, but it made the anguish a bit easier to bear. Soon, the torture is over, and we attain our respective goals. You find your way home through the traffic, and I get the finished copy fresh off the printer. I guess I'll have to make this last one count. ✨

MISSING WENDY: Continued from page 3

Myrtle Beach. At that conference Wendy talked about taking the girl out of the writing center but not taking the writing center out of the girl. Perhaps that's the best way to talk about who she was. Wendy sat down with other writers and helped them develop their ideas and their professional lives, treating them with respect. She remained—and remains in our memory and in her published texts—the epitome of writing center pedagogy, dedicated to the art and craft of writing and teaching, using research to advance both. ✨

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# Compass Points: Can Distractions from Collaboration Reap Rewards?

By Sonja Bagby, State University of West Georgia  
and Pamela Childers, The McCallie School

In our previous column, we discussed lessons we learned from collaboration. In this issue we decided to follow that column with one in which we discuss rewards of collaboration.

We have collaborated via the Internet to write this column and to work on other projects in the past, but face-to-face contact has certain advantages, especially at holiday gift-giving time (chocolate for both of us, thank you!).

To achieve our face to face time, each drove almost two hours to meet for lunch at B.J.'s in Calhoun, Georgia, on an early December Saturday. We intended to work on this article together and to celebrate the holidays a bit. B.J.'s is a family restaurant, and today it was filled with party-goers, dressed for the season. Sonja reached the restaurant early, so she watched the restaurant workers ready the buffet. The three young men and one older woman clicked along, very much in harmony: one young man removed the tray of fried chicken while his partner placed a new one into the receptacle; the older woman watched and assisted another young man to fill the coffee and tea urns. Sonja noticed the synchronization of this work: the workers were a team and humming!

When Pam arrived, we set to work to write an article about "the rewards of collaboration," but little did we know that in the middle of our discussion, a cherubic soprano standing directly behind Sonja's chair would interrupt us with "O Holy Night" and "Silent Night" (with passionate orchestral accompaniment on cassette). The group watched the singer intently, and Pam had to sit, smiling politely, as Sonja tried earnestly to make Pam laugh. After just a moment, however, we found ourselves enjoying the sweet voice of the singer, the sincerity with which she introduced each song, and the adulation of the listeners in her group.

Distracted from our initial mission, after the concert concluded, we decided the interruption was a perfect excuse to go to the buffet. The "collaboration" continued as Pam dropped her soup cup in the tureen, and Sonja fished it out—synchronicity at its Lucy and Ethel finest. Pam finally released her long-held laugh at our predicament, and our topic veered off into "How many distractions to collaboration occur every day?" and "How can we find the rewards to these distractions?"



Sonja Bagby and Pamela Childers

In the writing center, we all experience "distractions" which can harm a collaborative effort. We note just a few generally here and the rewards each may offer:

### Hierarchical differences

Who sets the collaborative tone? You, the dean, the department chairs? **Rewards:** learning the value of each person's position and learning to compromise and negotiate.

### Conflicting agendas

Why are we collaborating? To reach whose goals? **Rewards:** clear communication of what really are our agendas and putting hidden agendas on the table. Limitations of location or scheduling. Who can deny or disregard the age-old problems of budgets and staffing? How can we find common time and place to collaborate? **Rewards:** discovering new ways to collaborate and learning the hidden strengths of colleagues.

## Limitations of curriculum

Does your center serve the English department only or does it serve the entire institution? **Rewards:** learning from colleagues outside our discipline about writing, thinking and learning.

## Differences in program goals

Does the lack of a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program hinder your work with diverse departments? **Rewards:** discovering ways to have a WAC program without the name and developing new collaborations with other disciplines.

## Turf wars

Have you ever been in the position of shutting out faculty or departments in an attempt to save your program? **Rewards:** learning how important our program is to the bigger picture of the institution and that sometimes focusing on one area may cause others to value what we do.

## Compartmentalization versus departmentalization

Have attempts been made to separate your center into smaller parts or services? **Rewards:** reevaluating our own philosophy and goals before perhaps revising or defending them.

## Conflicts between teaching students and students learning

Outside the writing center, theories abound about how best to tutor students—how many do you hear each day? Do they resemble the writing pedagogies that you have learned and practiced? **Rewards:** considering how we may improve faculty development through workshops and other activities based in the writing center. Surveying students to find answers to questions that you have about this conflict.

Although these distractions may appear to defeat any possible collaboration, through patience and diligence, sometimes, unexpectedly, we can discover rich rewards. Pam and Sonja survived B.J.'s, and their experiences taught them further lessons in collaboration.

*We must confess that some of the ideas for this column actually came from Michael Lowry, Pam's team teaching partner, who suggested that we might consider describing the rich rewards of collaboration. ✨*

# IWCA Honors Pamela Childers with Muriel Harris Service Award

By Marcy Trianosky, Hollins University

When you meet Pam, she'll probably be smiling. And within a few minutes of meeting her, you'll probably both be laughing. Pam is like that—she enjoys life, and she knows how to share that enjoyment with others. It is this warmth, this genuine friendliness, that radiates from her and is her most outstanding characteristic. That's actually a surprising statement, given that her professional accomplishments are no less than stunning. Pam is the most recent recipient of the 2003 Muriel Harris Outstanding Service Award, given by the International Writing Center Association (IWCA) to recognize significant contributions to the writing center community, both professional and scholarly. The conferring of this award on Pam places her in the company of only five other notable writing center scholars who have also been its recipients.

Pam is an outstanding contributor to the professional and scholarly world of composition and writing centers. There is no doubt about that. As Caldwell Chair of Composition at the McCallie School in Chattanooga, Tennessee, since 1991, Pam directs the Caldwell Writing Center and writing across the curriculum (WAC) program, teaches poetry and peer tutoring courses, team teaches in multidisciplinary settings, and facilitates faculty workshops and in-service programs for new teachers. But this is only the professional context that has stimulated her many accomplishments. Summarizing her vita is difficult; if you want to take a look at that impressive document, check it out on the McCallie School web site ([http://www.mccallie.org/wrt\\_crt/vitablack.doc](http://www.mccallie.org/wrt_crt/vitablack.doc)).

Commenting on Pam's ability to combine a tireless work ethic with significant scholarly contributions, Jon Olson, director of the Penn State Center for Writing Excellence and current president of IWCA, said recently, "even though she laughs readily and knows how to have a good time, she also works hard. Laughing while you work—it's better than whistling." Jon's statement captures something significant about Pam—how her ability to laugh makes her accessible, and allows us, her colleagues in the writing center profession, to connect with her and share her commitment to teaching and learning about writing. Jon elaborated on this idea

# A Profile of the Writing Center at Sabanci University

By Nancy Karabeyoglu, Sabanci University

Describing the Sabanci University writing center offers the challenge of simultaneously writing "small" while implying the presences of the larger, intersecting worlds of the university campus, Istanbul, and Turkey. Discussions of writing center policies naturally engage the philosophy and spirit of the university, revealing something of the dynamics of a city and country moving into an industrialized, technological age, each step mediating Eastern and Western values. The miniature hints at the larger mosaic.

**Sabanci University**  
After a less than exciting fifty kilometer drive from Istanbul's center through the city's industrial belt, where sheep and cattle routinely graze by the side of the highway, loom the white marble buildings, lake, and landscape of a modern campus. The university's goal to be a



Gulayse Kocak and Nancy Karabeyoglu share a lighter moment.

reference point for innovative education and research is being met with the creation of a international network supporting applied research, particularly in the sciences and technology.

An English medium education, civic improvement projects, and a one year preparatory English language program rank Sabanci University as selective in Turkey; an interdisciplinary curriculum, two year core education, undergraduate internships, and superior laboratory facilities make the university unique. Technology plays an important role on campus. Every entering student receives a laptop plus support; about 9000 Internet access points around campus enable twenty-four hour access. Admission is highly selective, and about half the student body is on scholarship.

## Students

The sole entrance criterion is scoring within the top 3000 of the 1.5 million candidates on Turkey's annual nationwide university exams. About half the student body is on some kind of scholarship. The average entering freshman from Turkish public high schools enters with excellent math and science preparation but less than adequate English skills for university work, few or no experiences in academic or creative writing, presentations, group work or discussion, and limited exposure to the arts and social sciences.

## Writing Center Design

In 2000, we set up shop in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences with individual staff offices, two small rooms, and one large room, which is the hub of the center.

This space is home to workshops, filming, student and guest presentations, as well as tutorials. The projector, screen, and standing computer allow collaborative laptop work at large round tables with Internet access for up to forty students. Two printers, a video camera for presentations, audio-visual materials and software for graduate school exam preparation, and last but certainly not least, a large photocopying budget keep the center running.

## By the Numbers

**Sabanci University:** nonprofit, private, interdisciplinary research university founded in Istanbul by one of the two largest industrial and financial conglomerates in Turkey, Sabanci Holding. First academic year, 1999.

**Degree programs (undergraduate and graduate) offered by three faculties:** Arts and Social Sciences; Engineering and the Natural Sciences, and Graduate School of Management.

**Writing Center Staff:** coordinator, Dr. Sibel Kamisli; administrative assistant, Canay Ture; undergraduate programs, Dilek Tokay; graduate programs, Nancy Karabeyoglu; One undergraduate peer tutor, Ferit Tuzer, and Gulayse Kocak, a Turkish novelist, have recently joined the staff.

**Student visits:** workshops, tutorials average 75 weekly for total population of 1705 undergraduates and 316 graduates



## Programs

The designs of the four overlapping programs, undergraduate, graduate, career and academic advising, and administrative English respond to student and faculty needs with workshops as the common structural denominator. Workshops serve triple duty: they raise awareness of writing as discourse and process, they offer rhetorical principles in academic situational writing, and they serve to institutionalize the center on campus. The major difference between our center and those in the States is the absence of peer tutors and the correspondingly greater weight given to workshops. No writing courses currently exist, although the center has formally requested one for thesis and dissertation preparation. Our workshops are run as a series in the fall and the spring and are well attended by prep students in the language program, freshmen, entering graduate students, and thesis writers. A required workshop series for sophomores and writing adjunct courses in the graduate programs have strengthened the center's presence on campus.

Our workshops also include creative writing in English and Turkish and guest lectures by well-known Turkish film critics and writers. Workshops for graduate study abroad cover not only personal essay and exam preparation but also scholarship opportunities and counseling for applicants. A similar series addresses corporate internships and careers. Additionally, the center, in conjunction with institutional development, invites corporate representatives for career fairs, academicians and alumni, and consulate and embassy representatives for graduate study.

Given the emphasis on teaching as opposed to the more open ended peer tutorial, our center's structure resembles centers in Europe and Britain. Bonnie Devet's "The Brits Meet the Yanks" (*Southern Discourse*, Summer 2002) portrays the "teaching vs. exploratory discourse" strategies employed by American and British writing centers, respectively (6). Our center's design, however, results more from the current student profile and the lack of graduate students as tutors than from a pedagogical stance. We log many tutorials, and as the student population has doubled within the past two years, more workshops, a larger staff, particularly graduate students from outside Turkey will be necessary. Our spring seminar "How Do We Make Writing Centers Matter to Bilingual Communities?" encourages grass-roots support for writing centers in Turkish higher education.

## Partnerships

Part of the center's identity appears to be its fluid engagement in a variety of writing-centered and "other" communicative activities with everybody on campus. We consult in the translating, writing, and editing of most university documents. Through human resources, we teach administrative English. To

encourage writing in Turkish, the center has helped in the creation and launch of the undergraduate campus magazine.

## Tutorials

All of us on staff are bilingual and conduct tutorials and workshops in both languages. Frequently client and tutor begin a sentence in one language, end in the other, code switching, inserting discipline specific terms that don't appear to translate well. These Turkish-English mixtures provide a good source of bad jokes. Students, for example, pronounce statement of purpose writing for graduate school applications as "soaps." It's not uncommon to hear "*Hocam, bu sabah soaps yaptım,*" ("I made my soaps, my teacher, this morning") at the time of application deadlines. In all tutorials, attention to language is primary; a thesis writer in the sciences will discuss not only the format and tone of his grant proposal but also the appropriateness of the word "perturbed" in an earlier conversation with a professor.



Sibel Kamisli is deep in thought while tutoring a student.

That English is a tool to economic betterment ironically limits the openness of the tutorial. Students are reluctant to abandon language concerns for the broader ones of process, voice, and ownership of a piece. Most see the tutor as teacher-expert who will exhaustively correct the paper from A to Z and not mince words. In Turkish education, student frustration with the assignment—or even questioning of an assignment—is regarded as an implicit criticism of the teacher and is thus not encouraged. Nor do students do much journal writing, outlines, or drafts. Yet, when students write on subjects in which they have invested their professional identities, their writing and subsequent discussions are more authentic.

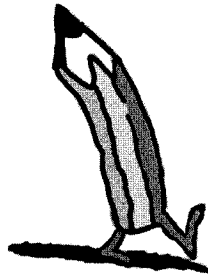
## Conclusion

The generalized truths that writing is a solitary activity and Turkey a collectivist society don't seem to mesh well, but because of the number and nature of cooperative projects within the university structure, our writing center has been able to gain acceptance and establish itself as a given on campus. In responding to a broad variety of university community needs, an eclectic but certainly democratic platform has emerged. After all, the university motto is *Creating and Developing Together!*

# What's the Point?

## Points of Reference

By Peter Carriere,  
Georgia College and State University



A few issues ago, I satirically lamented the passing of the virgule, a slash mark used a few hundred years ago to indicate a vocal pause similar to our comma or semi-colon. Of course, the virgule has made a strong recovery thanks to hypertext, as in <http://www.gcsu.edu>. But what about other points of interest? Have there been others that flourished for a while among the diligent communities of English scribes, only to perish from neglect or be relegated to insignificance and used for minor tasks?

These gems appear in a grammar booklet titled *A Clear and Practical System of Punctuation* published “for the use of schools” in 1797: the “hand,” the “dagger,” the “brace,” the “crotchet,” and the “section.” None of these has fallen into permanent linguistic disgrace or disuse, but their status in the pointing community has diminished, and few college students would find them in their first-year composition style manuals.

The hand, according to the booklet “points out a remarkable passage, or something that requires particular attention.” Unfortunately, the booklet contains no examples of the efficacious use of the hand, but the OED does. The OED definition (all the way down to number 18, B) is “a conventional figure of a hand with the forefinger extended (☞), used in writing or printing to draw attention to something.” Here’s their example from 1669: “a hand pointing at some places which are of most necessary use.” Now, I, for one, am happy not to have to teach the hand to college freshman, whose appreciation of other uses of the hand would immediately render serious discussion impossible.

☞ But the dagger, also known as the “obelisk” is a mark we can sink our teeth into, so to speak. Well, anyway the dagger, according to the 1797 booklet “refers to some marginal note; or, in dictionaries, to some obsolete or barbarous word.” Now the dagger is a mark with twenty-first-century promise. How many times have my students littered their papers with barbarous words that screamed for some mark to be leveled against them! If only I had had the dagger to wield! Oh, the blood-red ink that would have flowed!!!!

☞ Okay, so some people might recognize the brace, which, the booklet tells us, “is used in poetry, at the end of a triplet, or three lines, which have the same rhyme. . . .” Of course, I wonder why we would need the brace if the lines were placed together or

rhymed. Today we use the brace indiscriminately, in instances totally unrelated to poetry. I have used it myself. And if you haven’t guessed yet what it looks like, it’s this ☞: }.

☞ Okay. Brace yourself for the crotchet or crotchets, defined in our booklet as brackets that a “serve to enclose a word or sentence which is to be explained in a note; or the explanation itself; or a word or sentence, which is intended to supply some deficiency, or rectify some mistake.” So that’s what they are, then: ordinary brackets still used today, although the Associated Press style manual declares that since the crotchet cannot be transmitted over the news wires, journalists should just use the parentheses instead. So any time you see parentheses in a news article, you should ask yourself, “Do they really mean crotchets ([ ])?”

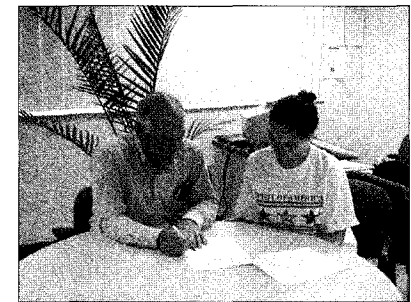
☞ And the last item mentioned by the 1797 booklet is the section, “used in some books for subdividing a chapter into smaller parts. It seems to be made of ss, and to be an abbreviation of *signum sectionis*, the sign of the section.” It seems to me that somewhere I’ve actually seen an elaborate and elongated ss used this way, but for the life of me, I can’t remember where.

☞ But the mark of marks, the mark I’ve never seen used before in English, the mark that always looked strange to me when I saw it in Spanish, was the upside down question mark ☞¿. The authors of this gold mine of pointing from 1797 insist that the ¿ would clear up ambiguities, especially those that occur too often in the Bible. Here’s only one example:

John viii. 43. ¿”Why do ye not understand my speech? ¿because ye cannot hear my word?”

They have a point here, of course. The second utterance beginning with “because” might easily be interpreted as a statement rather than a question until we get to the ending question mark. So if we begin with the upside down question mark, there’s no doubt. Both utterances are questions.

☞☞☞ Nevertheless, less is more in my book, and students already get lost in the hundred or so punctuation rules our forefathers tied to grammar during the eighteenth century. While the upside down question mark adds a bit of clarity, I think we can become so dedicated to perfection and clarity in an imperfect medium like writing that the results become ludicrous. And anyway, what’s the point? ✨



Peter Carriere and a student.

when he said about Pam “her enthusiasm, intelligence and work ethic are contagious.” It’s hard not to be enthused about writing and writing center work if you’re around Pam for any length of time.

Pam’s willingness to share her knowledge about writing centers has made her a significant source of support for secondary school writing center directors, a group that is often overlooked even by writing center directors themselves. Jeanette Jordan, director of the writing center at Glenbrook North High School in Northbrook, Illinois, and a long-time friend and colleague of Pam’s, describes the impact Pam has had on secondary school writing centers: “If it weren’t for Pam, secondary writing centers would be voiceless and unorganized instead of professional and organized. . . . She has mentored countless new [secondary school] directors and helped shepherd their centers from vague ideas to successful realities.” Pam is unflinching in her efforts to support her secondary school colleagues. Most recently, she began SSWC-L (Secondary School Writing Center List-Serve), a list-serve for K-12 writing center directors. Jeannette points out the significance of this accomplishment: “This much-needed forum provides elementary and secondary teachers, notorious for their isolation, with a place to exchange ideas and ask questions particular to the dynamics of K-12 schools.” In her usual take-charge manner, Pam recognized the need for connecting this group of unrecognized scholars to each other and made that connection happen.

Pam’s mentoring extends beyond her secondary school colleagues to all of us who are interested in teaching, writing and writing centers. Many of us who have attended writing and teaching conferences have been fortunate to talk with Pam and benefit from her wisdom and good-natured advice. As Michael Pemberton, director of the writing center at Georgia Southern and former president of IWCA, says, “She exhibits all the best qualities of a mentor: she listens with interest, she evaluates with insight, she critiques with sensitivity, and she encourages with praise.” For Pam, helping others is a necessity. As Michael goes on to say about Pam, “She writes, she teaches, she serves—not because she feels obliged to, but because she loves to, because she can’t see living her life any other way.” Pam’s dedication to her students and to her colleagues is an inspiration.

With characteristic humility, Pam describes her motivation for her intense involvement with writing center work: “to learn from other writing center directors, to reflect upon what has and has not worked, to question what I do and how I do it, to keep the professional juices flowing, and to keep in contact with

the best group of people I know.” Like most people who make significant contributions, Pam is too busy to be impressed by her own work. But those of who are fortunate enough to know her and work with her are aware of the enormity of her contributions. We are lucky to have Pam Childers in our region, and to have her serving on the executive board of the Southeastern Writing Center Association. When you see Pam, don’t forget to thank her. We are indebted to her for all she has done for writing and writing centers. ✨

### A Sampling of Pam Childers’s Accomplishments

#### Service to the IWCA:

- National Writing Center Association. (NWCA, now IWCA) president from 1990-91
- On NWCA/IWCA board almost continuously since 1986
- Instrumental in creating the first official directory of writing centers, published in 1992
- One of the leaders of the first IWCA Summer Institute for new writing center directors in 2003

#### Scholarly work:

- Editorial board of IWCA Press since 1995
- Editorial board of *Writing Center Journal* since 1987
- Other editorial boards, current or former: *WAC Clearing House*, *Academic Writing*, *Computers and Composition*
- Boards of professional organizations:  
Alliance for Computers and Writing since 1986  
WAC Board of Consultants since 1995

#### Secondary school contributions:

- Authored landmark book, *The High School Writing Center: Establishing and Maintaining One*, 1989
- Recently began SSWC-L (Secondary School Writing Center List-Serve), a list-serve for K-12 writing center directors

# The Delicious Crunch of Numbers: Writing Center Assessment

by Sylvia Whitman, Rollins College

Assessment is in the air as our small liberal arts college prepares for its “reaffirmation of accreditation” by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Inspired by campuswide assessment pep talks, our writing center has been evaluating our quantitative and qualitative data. What do we track? Why? Accustomed to focusing on process and programming (what we offer), we are learning to look more closely at what we want to happen (what folks get) and how we can measure our effectiveness in “realizing those outcomes.” The exercise has been character building—really. We’ve discovered that a change as small as one question on an existing evaluation can yield gratifying results.

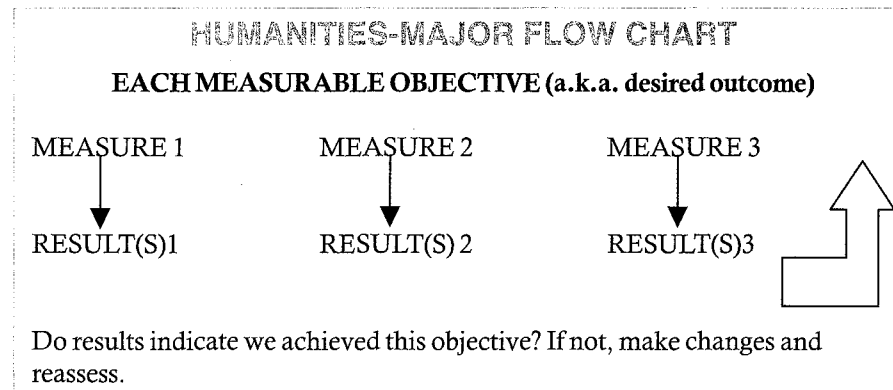
Every “unit” at Rollins College, including the Thomas P. Johnson Student Resource Center (TJ’s), which encompasses our writing center, must complete and then update an “assessment matrix.” How eagerly my colleagues and I approached that assignment—not! Fortunately, Rollins enlisted clear-spoken Dr. Joseph Hoey, an assessment guru from Georgia Tech, to frame our task.

First the bad news: by defining assessment as the “systematic collection, review, and use of information... undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development,” Hoey warned that we could not get away with a one-shot survey. Assessment is an ongoing, never-ending activity. After hewing several “measurable objectives” (a.k.a. “outcomes”), our department would then determine if we met those goals by looking at several different “measures”—everything from web-page hits to focus groups. Picture a three-legged stool: any conclusion about outcomes likely needs at least three pieces of evidence for it to stand. Most important, as we amassed data about our successes and shortcomings, we would be asking the quintessential writing center question: so what? According to Hoey, we shouldn’t waste our time collecting information if we didn’t then use it to improve our program.

I pictured the assessment cycle this way (a humanities-major flow chart below).

## O Bliss, O Joy, O Yet Another Staff Meeting

At least I wasn’t alone in this. Coordinating the writing center, which employs twenty to thirty peer consultants per semester, I work alongside a peer tutor coordinator, three academic advisers, two administrative assistants, and our director, who also oversees campus LD services. Four of us, including the boss, have worked at TJ’s since its creation in 1997, and we participated in the drafting of our mission statement, a process that took a whole day and much Chinese food: “The Thomas P. Johnson Student Resource Center challenges students to take responsibility for their own learning and provides tools and feedback to help them develop learning strategies to achieve academic success.” We had also drawn up a list of goals. As we brainstormed to fill the dreaded assessment matrix, we could tap each other and parse our past opus.



First we tackled measurable objectives, those desired outcomes. They needed to be short but broad enough to cover our various functions. Three sounded reasonable (three stooges, three little pigs, three body paragraphs in a high-school essay).

The tutor coordinator and I usually described our centers by our doings:

- Consultants and tutors offer one on one and group sessions.
- We stress the process of writing/

learning (all those Ken Bruffee-esque “conversations of mankind”).

- We solicit hiring recommendations, beg for faculty feedback, and send out copies of session “notes.”
- No one could argue with us, but that was the problem assessmentwise: we couldn’t argue with any pride that we were succeeding as educators. A measurable objective should resemble a thesis, not a statement of fact; someone should be able to take issue with it, and as an accomplishment, it should require more sophisticated support than a mere counting of hours and people. All of us at TJ’s had to change our thinking—and move from areas of confidence (what we can guarantee does happen) into the less controllable world of outcomes (what we want to happen).

Over several staff meetings, we generated three objectives:

- Students will use new and familiar learning strategies effectively.

- Students will make timely and/or informed academic decisions.
- Faculty will increase their participation in TJ's programs and services.

### Effective Use of Learning Strategies—Says Who?

Next we turned to assessment measures. As we developed our objectives, we'd been considering how we might appraise them—or better yet, how we'd already been appraising them. With the first goal, we were talking about two groups of students using learning strategies effectively: our clients and our peer consultants and tutors. The two intertwine. The better our student staffers practice the communication and consulting strategies we teach in TJ's training courses, the better their clients will write and study in theory, right?

We already had several paper trails in place—a half-sheet client evaluation and a full-page form (in triplicate) that consultants and tutors fill out for every session. Early in TJ's evolution, formal and informal feedback suggested that both faculty and students felt that the quality of writing consulting was generally high but also disturbingly variable. To improve consistency, we made ongoing training—a one-credit course that doubles as staff meeting—a requirement for all consultants and tutors every semester that they work here. We also honed our one-credit crash training. Without knowing it, we had been following the Hoey method: assessing, weighing the results, and basing changes in programming on data.

### Evolution of an Evaluation

Our client evaluation is still evolving. The writing center first instituted on-the-spot evaluations in the TJ's era, and to encourage consultants to press them upon clients, we cooked up a monthly raffle, one entry per form.

We soon learned that most students pick consultants based on the schedule, so in the next version we dropped that question. Consultants also complained that the *yes/no/somewhat* answer checklist didn't tell them much. We debated about how to elicit more specific feedback and finally decided on a mix of open-ended prompts and words to circle for those in a hurry.

The data improved. Here's a sample, in their words, of what clients liked most:

- “tutor's attentiveness”
- “It got me thinking a lot more on my topic and ideas.”
- “brainstorming w/a new person”
- “The fact that It worked and I can fix the problems.”
- “Reading the paper aloud, also encouraging attitude”

Consultants purred with this specific stroking. We also heard some kvetching—not much, but enough to remind us that writers often have thin skins and sky-high expectations.

Here's a sample [sic] of what clients liked least:

- “not getting as much finished as I had hoped”
- “short time slot”
- “it's hard to sit and watch your paper being critique”
- “how bad my paper was . . . haha”

These assessment results reassured us that the client evaluation was an important leg in two different stools. The positive comments show clients using “new and familiar learning strategies,” and the negatives shed light on our second objective, encouraging students to “make timely and/or informed academic decisions.” In the writing center, repeat clients should realize the benefits of meeting with a consultant earlier in the semester and earlier in the development of a specific paper.

But Hoey had revved our engines: could we employ this tool more effectively? We wanted to keep evaluations voluntary, but we sweetened our monthly raffle to a \$10 gift certificate and added a log-out question on our computerized data and scheduling program (TutorTrac): “gave client an evaluation form?” The purple sheets returned in droves.

Once each semester we put evaluations under a microscope. From November 5-18, 2003, for instance, 144 forms discussed the work of twenty-six different consultants. The rest of the time, I skim the half sheets and sometimes add an observation via sticky note before passing them back to consultants.

We also added one more open-ended prompt shaped by our objectives: “What you LEARNED (or refreshed) during today's session. . .”

Administrators aren't supposed to get weepy, but the results have been heartwarming. Here's a sample:

- “An idea dawned on me with her sparking it”
- “To relate my ideas back to my thesis and be very clear on my ideas”
- “I have focus issues in my writing”
- “She helped us stick to our idea and show the other point of view without advocating it”
- “When and when not to use quotations”
- “I need to use more sentence variety”
- “Different techniques in checking grammatical errors”
- “Edit, edit, edit, proof, proof, proof”

# SWCA Treasurer's Report

By Karl Fornes, University of South Carolina, Aiken

The SWCA Treasury account grew by about \$4,300 during 2002-2003. We had a delay in depositing all of the income from the 2002 combined SWCA/IWCA conference in Savannah. That deposit, though, made up almost 95% of our total credits for 2002-2003. Membership dues accounted for the remaining portion of our total income. SWCA debits for 2002-2003 include summer board meeting expenses, the peer tutor and achievement awards, *Southern Discourse* publication and the 2003 SWCA conference. ✨

Opening Balance (July 1, 2002)	\$10,237.20
Total Credits	\$13,158.37
Total Debits	\$8,857.92
Closing Balance (June 30, 2003)	\$14,537.65
Difference	+\$4,300.45

## SWCA Membership Application 2004-2005

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Center or Department: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Institution: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address for copies of Southern Discourse: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Writing Center Web URL: \_\_\_\_\_

2003-2004 Membership  
 Student \$10     Faculty \$25     Institutional \$40

The membership period extends from **1 July 2004** to **30 June 2005**

Mail application with check to:  
 Christina Bourgeois, SWCA Secretary, Georgia Institute of Technology, School of  
 Electrical & Computer Engr., 777 Atlantic Drive, Van Leer Building, Atlanta, GA 30332-0250

THE DELICIOUS CRUNCH: Continued from page 13

Over time, we'll identify patterns in our data and adjust our consulting accordingly. Are consultants falling into the editing trap instead of focusing on "global before local" issues? It appears not, but we'll see.

The teachable moments go on and on. Our forms, er... assessment measures, edify as well as collect data, spurring clients and consultants to reflect on their collaborative experience. Involving consultants in revising them during staff meetings has sparked discussions about our practices and philosophy.

Like writing, assessment is only due, never done. But thanks to the SACS kick in the butt, we are doing more of it and finding it, if not sweet, at least not the bitter pill we so dreaded. ✨

The Writing Center at TJ's  
 Quickie Evaluation Form

**Clients, please fill this out--  
 help a consultant win our monthly raffle!**

Consultant name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Your name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Is this a REQUIRED visit? Y N

1. What you LEARNED (or refreshed) during today's session \_\_\_\_\_
2. What you liked MOST about today's visit \_\_\_\_\_
3. What you liked LEAST about today's visit \_\_\_\_\_
4. Circle any words that apply to your CONSULTANT OR CONSULTATION:  
 critical (+)    critical (-)    productive    waste of time  
 too much info    respectful    impatient  
*good questions*    *knowledgeable*    *challenging*    *unfocused on time*  
 other: \_\_\_\_\_
5. I LEFT my consultation feeling (circle any words that apply):  
 encouraged    confused    satisfied    disappointed    inspired  
 judged    bossed around  
*engaged*    *irritated*    *informed*    *blah*    *grateful*    other: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Any comments? What could we do better? (Use back of sheet if necessary.)

# The President's Letter

By James Inman, University of South Florida

Dear SWCA Members,

It's with a degree of sadness that I write this last President's Letter, as I've greatly enjoyed serving the organization in this capacity the past two years. At the same time, however, I write with a great deal of pride because we've accomplished a great deal together. In this column, I'd like to outline some of our most important accomplishments.

Any accomplishment owes to the hard work of everyone together: the other SWCA officers and executive board members and regular SWCA members alike. More than anything else, I'm proud that we've been able to work together in much greater numbers than has, to my knowledge, been accomplished before. I thank all of you for your willingness to get involved and your dedication to doing great work.

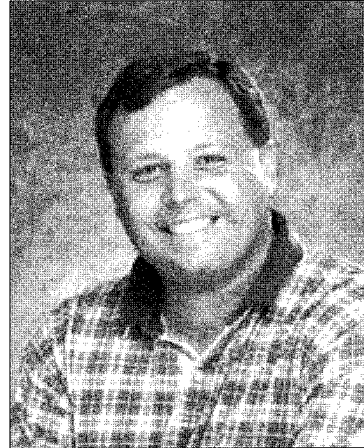
At the heart of what we've done have been our five initiative teams, and while I can't cite everything they've accomplished, I would like to share some highlights:

## Awards Program Expansion

Led by Jennifer Liethen Kunka, this team created policies and procedures for new tutors' awards and managed the work-intensive awards nomination and selection process both years.

## Evaluation

Mary Alm led this team, which conducted an extensive evaluation of the Charlotte SWCA conference and provided an exceptionally detailed and



informative report that will no doubt lead to continued great conference experiences for us.

## Membership Expansion

Led by Jennifer Ahern Dodson, this team developed new ideas for reaching current and future writing center practitioners throughout our region, including compiling lists of schools, colleges, and universities in various states.

## Online Presence Expansion

With leadership from Jane Love, this initiative team authored and published an impressive new Web site for our organization at [www.swca.us](http://www.swca.us) and developed ideas for administration of the site, as well as possible other electronic initiatives.

## Organizational Issues

Christine Cozzens led this team as it developed a new and important comprehensive mission statement and reviewed existing policy and governance documents.

All told, more than thirty-five of you were involved on the various initiative teams, and I can't begin to express what a terrific number that is. When our IWCA executive board representative, Sonja Bagby, shared updates about SWCA with that larger organization, we definitely impressed everyone with our collective energy and commitment.

As I look to the future of SWCA, I hope that we can continue to work together and stay excited and involved with the organization. I urge you to continue your great work and to get colleagues and friends in the profession involved with us. Please consider running for an office yourself, hosting the annual conference, writing for *Southern Discourse*—the options are indeed almost endless.

Thank you again for your energy, dedication, and excellence.

See you in Atlanta!

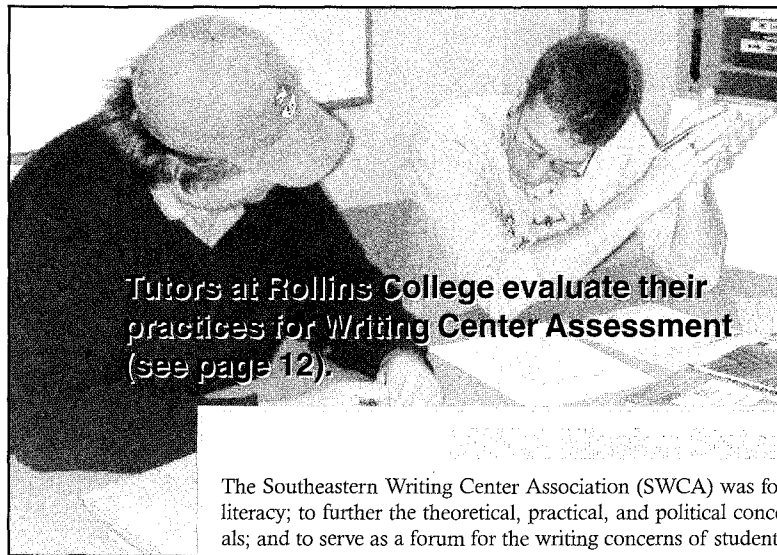
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James".

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**Tutors at Hollins College evaluate their practices for Writing Center Assessment (see page 12).**

The Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) was founded in 1981 to advance literacy; to further the theoretical, practical, and political concerns of writing center professionals; and to serve as a forum for the writing concerns of students, faculty, staff, and writing professionals from both academic and nonacademic communities in the Southeastern region of the United States. A member of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), an NCTE Assembly, the SWCA includes in its designated region North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, and the American Virgin Islands. Membership in the SWCA is open to directors and staff of writing centers and others interested in writing centers from public and private secondary schools, community colleges, colleges and universities, and to individuals and institutions from beyond the Southeastern region.

Adopted by the SWCA Executive Board 31 May 2003.