



Logo by Terry Dolson

Richmond Writing Across the Curriculum Newsletter

Issue 14, Spring 2006

We hope everyone has a great summer. We've been lax about putting out a newsletter this year, so consider this our summer-reading issue! It's full of announcements and writing by people in our program.

By Joe Essid
Writing Center Director

Lee Carleton
Assistant Writing Center Director

Announcements & Notes

Welcome New WAC Faculty

We'd like to extend a belated welcome to Pam England in Dance, Jennifer Erkulwater in Political Science, Laura Middlebrooks in Spanish, and Pat Thompson in the Business School's PDP program. Thank you for extending our work across the curriculum!

Preferences for Fall 2006

Tutors, Fellows, and WAC faculty should complete the forms. Without a completed form, we may forget to fill your request. Forms are at our Web site, linked under "resources," then "forms."

Richmond WAC at the SWCA and EWCA 2006 Conferences

Three tutors and Fellows--Molly Bechert, Lynn LaVecchia, and David Roberts--joined Joe Essid for the 2006 Southeastern Writing Center

Association Conference in UNC Chapel-Hill. We presented a panel about motivations for tutors and writers and had a great time comparing notes with those working at other college and university writing programs.



Lynn, Dave, and Molly at UNC

Next year, the conference will be in Nashville, and we hope that a few of you will attend. Molly's and David's reflections about their experiences at the event are in this issue.

This summer Joe Essid will attend the European Writing Centers Association's annual meeting in Istanbul, Turkey. He'll present a short film made by tutor Lynn LaVecchia about the architectural challenges posed by our current office space, and Joe will hold a workshop for European colleagues who are designing or remodeling their centers.

Nominations for Tutor and Writing Fellow of the Year

We invite faculty to nominate a senior for this honor. We'll have an awards lunch at the University Club and present the winners with framed certificates and a gift. Please send nominations with a short rationale to Joe Essid at jessid@richmond.edu.

Photos!

Special thanks to Liz Hartley for putting together "Meet your Tutor or Fellow" photo gallery in print and online. As many of you have found, writers come in looking for Fellows or Writing Center Tutors and have no idea what you look like!

If you have not yet visited the gallery, try our "Appointments" link from the Web site, then "Find a Tutor/Fellow."

Liz's project was strongly supported by her classmates in my Eng. 383 class in the fall. We will continue the project next year, and we are looking for a tutor to help organize the Fall 2006 gallery. Please let Joe Essid know if you are interested.

TFUGE and the Future of Eng. 103

A book could be written about this, but whatever the results of the curricular vote, our program will be ready for a revised version of Eng. 103 or the proposed tutorial class that would take its place under the TFUGE plan. We will be calling upon our WAC and 103 faculty for advice during the implementation phase of these changes. We ask that you begin to keep notes now about what works and does not work to teach writing effectively in classes. We also want to identify a core set of competencies that you believe all our undergraduates need to write well at Richmond.

Tutor Training for Next Year

We will only offer one section of Eng. 383 next year, in response to strong growth in the number of tutors and Fellows available now. Students who would like to join us should contact Joe Essid for information.

Reflections on SWCA 2006
by Molly Bechert, Writing Center Tutor

When I got out of the UR van that had served as our limousine at the Southern Writing Center Association's annual conference, I promised my fellow presenter, Lynn, that we would get together soon to discuss our experiences and write a short reflection for the Writing Center's newsletter. Over the last few weeks, though, as Lynn and I struggled to find even a moment in which we would be able to discuss the conference, I realized how lucky we had been to attend the conference, to have spent an entire weekend with writing center directors and tutors who were eager to share their insights, their passions, and their concerns about the work that they do.

Free from the daily commitments that eat up my time at UR and surrounded by people who were truly interested in helping student writers, I was able to recognize the value of communication, of maintaining personal connections with other writing centers and, more importantly, among fellow tutors in our own center. My preoccupation with communication sprang from the subject matter of my presentation at the conference, which focused on the importance of personal relationships in keeping track of student tutors and Fellows at UR's Writing Center.

In the course of preparing my presentation, which included preliminary surveys and informal conversations with some of our own tutors, I had already come to the conclusion that talking to each other—either at a group meeting once a month or just while passing in the halls of the Writing Center—will allow us to gain new insights and improve our practices. But I was surprised at how much I learned from talking to just a few tutors and directors at the conference. I know from talking to friends who are tutors here that we all have interesting ideas, from how to better manage the online calendar

system to the best design for a writing center t-shirt. I look forward to the ideas that I know we'll come up with as our Writing Center continues to grow.

Reflections on SWCA 2006
by David Roberts, Writing Fellow

The "Let's Research!" theme of the conference is especially relevant for me. I plan to work on a variety of tasks in the Writing Center this summer and I fully believe that attending the conference has equipped me with the ideas to improve the effectiveness of the center to students.

One project I hope to complete is devising a more systematic way for Tutors—and especially Fellows—to receive feedback from their peers. While the conference gave me insights into how I might devise such a feedback mechanism, it more importantly gave me ideas on how to (and not to!) implement it. Moreover, it reminded me of an important lesson when using data to make inferences: misinterpreting the data (and making faulty changes based upon those misinterpretations) is likely as bad, if not worse, than not having the data at all.

The conference sessions stressed a cautious and deliberative approach to gathering data and making inferences from it. With this knowledge and critical analysis of data I hope to help the Writing Center do an even better job of serving writers after I graduate.

Technology and Literacy
by Lee Carleton
Assistant Writing Center Director

Though we often think of the word 'technology' as applying only to computers, lasers and other modern inventions, more basic technologies have become an invisible but pervasive part of our lives.

The our most important and pervasive technologies have to be language

and writing. This is why the Writing Center is central to the mission of UR and to the success of her students.

Sometime during human history, the tool of spoken language inspired a major acceleration in the development of our species by increasing the complexity of the brains that used this new technology, and allowing them to collaborate with one another thus enhancing their individual power significantly. Three to five thousand years ago when we developed writing, the power of the spoken word was enhanced by a technology that allowed communication in the absence of the speaker.

Now the definition of literacy is expanding further to include critical multimedia "reading" skills and the ability to compose and communicate in multiple media formats and compositions. As far back as 1996, Harvard's "New London Group" expanded the definition of literacy with their paper "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Constructing Social Futures" and noted the necessity of an expanded literacy at this time:

the multiplicity of communications channels and increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world today call for a much broader view of literacy than portrayed by traditional language-based approaches.

The complexity of learning and composing in these new media is such that a strong foundation in the primary technology of alphabetic literacy is a crucial prerequisite for the development of more technical literacies.

The communication technologies that have brought disparate parts of the world into closer contact are now the media with which we write and construct the global village that McLuhan foresaw. May we embrace this challenge with enthusiasm, creativity and an evolutionary perspective.