

## Chapter Four: The Oregon State University Writing Center— Its Own Entity

*History consists of myriad converging stories. Moreover, history, like evolution itself, [ . . . ] is filled with accidental happenings. Other combinations of people, places, times, and whatever would have led to a very different present.*

—Maureen Goggin, *xix*

As much as the Writing Center is a part of the CWL (and some years it has been the only part of it), it is also its own entity. For the students who visit, and perhaps also for the writing assistants, its surrounding structure is relatively invisible; they may not even realize that the Writing Center is part of the CWL. And while the Writing Center aligns with the philosophy and purpose of the CWL, it has its own mission. Further, it has its own pedagogy, which is shared with and used by the writing assistants (and often with the students when they learn how the Center runs). Thus, it is important to study the development of the Writing Center by examining its mission and philosophy; exploring some of its procedures; and considering the physical space, coordinators, writing assistants, training, and student make-up.

Both continuity and change figure in the development of the Writing Center. Although there have been three directors, seven coordinators, and too many writing assistants to determine accurately, the collaborative approach has prevailed. Although the training style has shifted sometimes, the emphasis on in-service training, as opposed to a required, credit-bearing tutor training course, has been consistent. Most of the significant changes, which are detailed in this chapter, have reflected either increased use of the Writing Center or changes in technology. Thus, as certain aspects of the Center have changed over the years, much has remained consistent—not static, but fundamentally the same.

## **Philosophy and Pedagogy of the Writing Center and its Correlation with Oregon State University's Mission**

The current mission of the Writing Center, formulated in 2004-05, is,

to support Oregon State University students, staff, and faculty in all facets of the writing process, to facilitate the growth of individual writers, and to foster strong academic and creative writing communities. The Writing Center fulfills this mission through mentoring and training a corps of undergraduate and graduate student writing assistants who work directly with students and with other Writing Center constituencies. Through both its campus and online services, the Writing Center also works with students at a distance and members of the Oregon community and beyond. (Ede "Assessment Report" 1)

Although this is a reformulated mission, it is not significantly different than the previous mission statements developed by the Writing Center staff, in conjunction with the director of the CWL.

All have addressed the purpose of enhancing peoples' ability to write, whether beginning or experienced writers. Too, all encourage the growth of both students and trained writing assistants. This particular mission statement explicitly integrates technology and emphasizes the importance of a community of writers.

This mission statement also aligns with Oregon State University's current mission statement (written in 1999 and revised in 2002) which seeks,

to stimulate a lasting attitude of inquiry, openness and social responsibility. To meet these aspirations, we are committed to providing excellent academic programs, educational experiences and creative scholarship.  
("Mission Statement")

Indeed, over the years the CWL has always tried to align itself with the various mission statements and long-range/strategic plans (Ede personal interview). And the OSU Writing

Center fits with these educational experiences and creative scholarship mentioned in the university mission statement. By emphasizing collaboration and peer teaching and learning, the experience is very different from sitting in a classroom listening to a lecturer, and even from engaging in a class discussion. And writing assistants find ways to work with all sorts of students—and with each other—which encourages creativity and new ways of thinking and behaving. Ede states that the OSU Writing Center is a “genuine community [ . . . ] that is different than in the classroom” (personal interview).

The Writing Center does not, of course, exist for the sole purpose of providing a good experience and a unique community for writing assistants, but rather it exists to serve and support student writers. To accomplish this, the balance of activities and their purpose at the Writing Center have changed over the years. While there was always an emphasis on collaborative learning, there has been a shift from more of an “alternate form of instruction”—a service to students, in which they participated in self-study in areas in which they were weak in order to pass the EDT—to a place for “collaborative [ . . . ] and peer learning” (Ede personal interview). The aim is to help students improve their writing ability and to gain confidence in themselves as writers; these “students” include the writing assistants, who almost inevitably gain self-confidence by assisting. Robertson concurs with these ideas and adds that another purpose is “to make writing a social process—that’s the very heart of it, and everything else [making writing fun, engaging, of personal value, strategical, and rhetorical] comes from that.” Dennis Bennett adds that all students should see themselves as writers who understand the writing process. Another purpose of the Writing Center is to support those students who might otherwise be forgotten (their professors have large classes or perhaps they are too shy to seek help during office hours) to increase their chances of success in college.

The OSU Writing Center fulfills its purpose in a number of ways. First, the writing assistants help students do the best work these students can with the given tasks, taking each assignment both as an individual task and as a way to teach students how to approach the writing process. This approach requires flexibility, since writing assistants help students with all sorts of writing assignments, whether or not the writing assistant is familiar with that particular field or style. Flexibility is vital because faculty look for different qualities in their assignments (often based on the field of study) (Bennett). Basically, writing assistants aid students with whatever assignment students bring to the Writing Center, helping students to both interpret the assignment and to respond effectively to it.

Further, the social process that Robertson speaks of is created by the Center's informal atmosphere. Although there is a routine, described later, writing assistants are flexible and friendly, making the Writing Center a "comfortable [and] non-threatening environment" in which students and writing assistants alike can improve their writing (Hogg personal interview). This can be hard to measure exactly, although the tracking statistics (feedback from students about their reasons for coming to the Writing Center and their feelings about the appointment, discussed in greater depth below and later in this chapter) attempt to get at this. Barbara Hogg states the Writing Center is successful with individuals: that students leave understanding more about writing, and often this is "felt" by the staff (personal interview).

Overall, students have expressed satisfaction in the services received at the Writing Center. These statistics were obtained from responses by students to certain questions after each appointment on what are casually called "Yellow Cards\*," and the compiled numbers and statistics appear in each year's annual report. On average, 85% of students who had used the Center between 1984-85 and 2004-05 reported they would use it again, 4% to 6% said they were

not sure, and 1% (but up to 7%) said they would not. In addition, since 1994-95, students have been asked how helpful they found the appointment. Between 67% and 89% indicated the session was “very helpful,” 8% to 15% reported it was “helpful,” and generally 0% to 1% said it was not helpful.

Both the large number of positive responses and the low number of negative or neutral ones need to be considered in context. For instance, the flush of excitement of making progress on a paper may wear off when students begin working on their papers alone again. Or students may feel uncomfortable being completely honest about their intentions or reactions when filling out the yellow cards. Students who report negative experiences may also be influenced by factors external to the Writing Center, such as being required to visit the Writing Center by a professor and/or expecting that their papers will be edited for them by the writing assistants and being surprised at having to participate in the session.

From its inception to the present time, the staff at the Writing Center have been clear that it is not an editing service or a “fix-it” place, which has sometimes caused frustration for students and for faculty. Writing Center staff agree that the goal of helping students become better writers is more valuable and enduring. Instilling this philosophy in writing assistants is a central purpose of writing assistant training. Thus, we can speculate, if not prove, that part of the reason the Writing Center is effective in fulfilling its purpose is that the staff and writing assistants share this philosophy and goal.

In sum, this mix of people, past and present, have created the OSU Writing Center. The passing on of this approach to writing center work has created a continuity, even as the larger environment (OSU and its mission and plans) has changed. As Maureen Goggin says in the epigraph at the start of this chapter, different people would have made a different history. Thus,

despite the different specific mission statements, different University strategic plans, different coordinators, different writing assistants, and different ideas introduced, continuity has been maintained due to the focus on collaboration and on teaching students to think as writers do.

### **What Happens in the Writing Center**

It is difficult to describe the routines for writing assistants and for students in the Writing Lab thirty years ago, as there is little documentation on exactly what they were. It is likely, however, that many of the features described below existed from the start: students being “checked-in,” an assessment of what each student was seeking, one-on-one help (as needed in regard to the work for the EDTs and on papers), and encouragement to return as needed.

Since at least 1980, assistance at the Writing Center has been available by appointment and on a walk-in basis (Ede personal interview). In general, students are placed with whomever is available, unless they request a certain writing assistant. Some students have regular appointments with specific writing assistants. Students who have never been to the Writing Center can learn what to expect during their appointment either while making the appointment on the phone or in person, or by visiting the web pages, which detail what they will find and what is expected of them.

One of these details is the suggestion for students to bring two copies of their paper, so the writing assistants have the option to look at and mark on one while students read the other aloud (“Tips”). However, students rarely do bring two, and although not all writing assistants ask students to read aloud—or read aloud for students to hear—it is a frequent practice. Reading aloud permits the writing assistants to see if students change any wording, i.e. self-correct. It also allows for both students and writing assistants to hear how the paper flows. Further, it engages

both students and writing assistants. Prior to reading the paper, however, writing assistants talk with students, asking them what they are struggling with, what they need help with, and anything else that seems relevant. They then work together for either a half-hour or an hour (depending on the length of the paper), going over as much of the paper as possible or focusing on a troublesome section. Sometimes, they work together at the computers available in the Writing Center.

When busy, the Writing Center is a noisy, active place. Several tables are set up in the main work room adjoining the waiting area. If these are filled (or too noisy!), the writing assistants and students can use a room on the other side of the waiting area or even the conference room (if it's not in use for a meeting). It's not unusual to see a writing assistant working with a student while working at the reception desk, where writing assistants take shifts answering the phone, setting up appointments, and greeting students.

Writing assistants use a variety of tools to help students. The provided pencils are constantly disappearing. Handouts about grammar, punctuation, and citations issues are available in a file cabinet, and a collection of books—reference, text, and style, among others—are in a bookcase behind the desk. Additionally, writing assistants often model effective writing and student behavior by using a dictionary, thesaurus, handbook, or other book to address questions and concerns.

Following their appointments, students are asked to fill out an information and evaluation form, mentioned earlier. Until 2004, students completed a form known informally as a yellow card; currently, they provide information online. Both processes generate statistics on use and satisfaction. Sometimes students schedule another appointment, depending on when their paper is due and/or how they are feeling about both the paper and the appointment. When students

are referred by a faculty member, sometimes the writing assistant fills out a “blue form”<sup>\*</sup> reporting what they worked on, and students submit this form to their professors.

When not meeting with students, writing assistants generally sit in the waiting area and talk. Sometimes they try to do schoolwork, but usually the conversation is too interesting. Writing assistants who are in plays have been known to practice their lines, and others have been seen napping on one of the two couches. This casual conversation and general feeling of ease contributes to the feeling of community mentioned by Ede.

During the final week of classes (“dead week”<sup>\*</sup>), a different atmosphere prevails. There are no scheduled appointments, and no one covers the desk, which generates about 100 extra hours to accommodate students on a walk-in basis only (this policy was implemented around 2001) (Robertson). After signing in, students wait—sometimes a long time. Because students often bring long papers, appointments usually last as long as needed. In addition, the coordinator helps out more than usual during this week, as well.

This is, of course, a general view of the routine in the Writing Center, as it has been since 1980. Variation occurs because, as the pedagogy dictates, flexibility is necessary; thus, writing assistants evaluate each students’ needs and work with them accordingly.

### **The Space of the Communication Skills Center/Center for Writing and Learning**

The CSC, as previously described, began in the Armory (the McAlexander Fieldhouse), where conditions were not ideal. In 1979, it moved to the first floor of Waldo Hall, where several rooms were available for its use (Pederson “Yearly Summary”). Built in 1905, Waldo Hall is one of the older buildings at OSU, and, while changes have been made, it has not been modernized

much. Over the years, the Writing Center has expanded in the northern half of the first floor. (Maps of the CSC/CWL are available in Appendix A.)

In 1980-81, room 122 was changed from a classroom to an office and resource room, moving the clerical workers (Barb Hogg and various student workers) from the hallway. This room was further divided by an acoustic divider, and in an interview, Ede reports that the resource section was frequented by writing assistants, CSC staff, and OSU faculty. This divider also served to separate students using tapes from those working individually with writing assistants, which helped reduce the noise.

In 1986, the CSC began drafting plans for expansion, as more space was needed, especially for the Writing Lab, which had been forced to turn away students needing help due to a lack of space for conferences. When Ede learned that the Radiation Safety offices would be leaving Waldo Hall, she requested use of their vacated space. The following year, the CSC was given the requested space, which was next to the CSC, reducing the overcrowding in the Writing Lab and providing room for classes and office work. The Writing Lab expanded into two rooms, separating the students working with writing assistants from those working alone (with tapes and/or workbooks). The main office for the CSC is down the hall, and the coordinator's office is across from the Writing Lab's entrance.

In 1989-90, in anticipation of the establishment of the WIC program, plans were made to place the WIC director's office in a former darkroom across a small hallway from the CWL's main office and to reorganize the Writing Lab to make it more efficient to manage the expected increase in use due to the WIC program.

As computers were incorporated into the Writing Center in the early 1990s, the use of the space changed again. The computers were placed where the students used to work with the

EDT tape players. (Recently, three computers were placed against the wall in the room that holds the computers to allow writing assistants and students to fill out the information/evaluation forms mentioned earlier.) As more students began using the Writing Center, however, space was at a premium. In the 2001-02 *Annual Report*, Ede states that,

the Writing Center has to find additional space to hold appointments. In the center, there are 5 workstations where writing appointments are held. During busy times of the day, appointments regularly overflow into the conference room. At times when the conference room has been reserved for meetings, however, students are forced to use less than acceptable places to work in [e.g. the hallway]. (3)

Additional space was found by developing a satellite\* Writing Center in the Information Commons in the library (discussed more fully later in this chapter). When Academic Success broke off from the CWL in 2004-05, the assistant director of the CWL and the Writing Center Coordinator were able to have adjoining offices.

The size of the CWL has not changed in a number of years, and it does not appear that there is any more room (at least adjacent) in which to expand, despite the growing numbers of writing assistants and users. In the future, increased demand for conferences will be addressed via greater staffing in the Information Commons and in other satellite locations.

### **The Writing Center Coordinators**

As can be seen in the following table, since the CSC opened, there have been seven Writing Center coordinators. All (apart from Kit Andrews) have stayed at least two years; most have remained longer. There are differing amounts of information on each coordinator; as a

result, some of the coordinators are discussed more fully than others. Much of this information was gathered from individual interviews.

Table 4.1: The Writing Center Coordinators

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• 1979-85	Roberta (Sager) Lundeberg
• 1985-90	Lex Runciman
• 1990-92, 1993-97	Jon Olson
• 1992-93	Kit Andrews
• 1997-2000	Matt Yurdana
• 2000-05	Wayne Robertson
• 2004-present	Dennis Bennett

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Sources: Ede's Annual Reports and Lundeberg (personal interview).

In general, all Writing Center coordinators have the same responsibilities:

- hiring and training writing assistants;
- scheduling writing assistant hours;
- developing training and meeting agendas;
- running weekly meetings;
- handing problems of all sorts with an "open-door policy";
- conferencing with students in the Writing Center;
- being a liaison with the faculty;
- giving presentations about the Writing Center in classes and in other groups;
- giving WIC training presentations;
- being the connection with various extra-OSU projects (such as tutoring 5th graders);
- being the point person for technology;
- answering WritingQ\* questions;
- ensuring that the OWLs are completed in a timely manner

#### Continuity in Coordinator Responsibilities

As stated above, the basic responsibilities of the Writing Center coordinator have changed little over time. One of the primary responsibilities has been hiring and training writing assistants. In fact, it seems that a large portion of their time is spent on writing assistant-related activities. When writing assistant funding was limited to work-study, most writing assistants were

hired via job announcements in the Financial Aid office. As increased funding became available, Writing Center coordinators developed faculty referral sources.

Once hired, either as a for-credit, work-study, or regular student wages writing assistant, all assistants are trained. The training began formally under Roberta Lundeberg, who was coordinator from 1979 to 1985. She had new tutors observe her work with students at first, and later she observed them—i.e. they shadowed her and then she shadowed them. This practice is still used, as learning how to help students involves watching how it is done well. In most cases, though, experienced writing assistants are shadowed instead of the coordinator. Wayne Robertson states that when choosing writing assistants to be shadowed, he looks for writing assistants who ask effective questions, who help students to delve deeper into their papers, and who are able to sit in silence with students, allowing the students to think and to make decisions (personal interview).

In addition, the training includes weekly meetings. When the meetings first started, they focused on various topics, including how to work with students, discussions of how tutors should handle various incidents, and on reviewing grammar. The focus of the meetings has not changed substantially over the years, although there is less focus on grammar and more on working with NNES writers and students with disabilities. The meetings are run by the coordinator and all writing assistants are expected to attend. Lisa Ede, too, participates in the meetings.

Writing assistants are also expected to read a packet of material during the first two weeks of the term (and sometimes during the course of the term, as well), although it's unclear whether this was practiced from the start. Often the reading is discussed in the weekly meetings, and those students working for credit sometimes explore some of the articles in their journals (required during their first term of work in the Writing Center). The readings used to come in a packet

form; now writing assistants are required to read all of *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. In addition, the Writing Assistant Handbook, created by Bennett, is online at the Center for Writing and Learning Online Portal\*, and it contains a welcome, a training handbook (adapted from Western Oregon University's *Writing Center Internship Workbook* by Katherine M. Schmidt, PhD), a training grid with the necessary resources attached, information on keeping a journal (in general, one entry for each day worked, either blogged on the portal site, word processed or hand-written), and syllabi for new and for returning Writing 406/506 students (Projects in Writing for undergraduate and graduate students). The Portal and its blogging feature permit discussion to occur both in the weekly meetings and online.

A benefit of the weekly meetings is that they contribute to building a sense of community among the writing assistants. This sense of community was mentioned in Chapter 2 (both Ede and Hogg commented on it), and although there are many more tutors than in previous years, community—and its inherent support—still exists. Further, this community includes all those connected with the Writing Center. Although writing assistants may not have much contact with Ede while actually working in the Center, her presence at and participation in the meetings contributes not only to the sense of community, but to the continuity of the philosophy, purpose, and pedagogy of the Writing Center mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Training occurs on an informal and often individual basis, as well. Coordinators have always been available to writing assistants, with an “open door” policy. Writing assistants are encouraged to ask questions when they need help, even in the middle of an appointment with a student. As Dennis Bennett puts it, “I spend a lot of my days being interrupted. [. . . I] have an open door policy [and am] always available for consultation [with writing assistants, faculty, and students].”

Indeed, another consistent duty for coordinators has been acting as a liaison with faculty. In some cases, this is in regard to problems; other times, the coordinator works with faculty who want to encourage or require their students to come to the Writing Center.

Coordinators also connect with faculty by giving presentations in classes. As stated in the previous chapter, sometimes these presentations focus on the services the Writing Center offers; others cover various topics, such as an introduction to college writing, writing resumes and cover letters, conducting and using peer feedback, etc. Robertson reports that this contact is beneficial: he estimates that a quarter of the students in the classes he visits come to the Writing Center. As noted earlier, since the start of the WIC program, the coordinators now regularly participate in training sessions for those faculty taking the WIC seminar.

In addition to the preceding responsibilities, Writing Center coordinators typically work a few hours a week in the Writing Center. Sometimes they work with students with certain difficulties (for instance, Robertson worked with a deaf student). In addition, as Robertson puts it, having coordinators conference with students facilitates their relationship with writing assistants, as the assistants see them doing the same work and realize that the coordinators truly understand the challenges writing assistants face. Sometimes, too, the coordinator must work with students because the Center is very busy (such as during Dead Week) or because not enough writing assistants are there to cover the schedule (due to student walk-ins, an influx from a certain course, or to writing assistants canceling their shifts).

In fact, scheduling, another ongoing coordinator duty, can be one of the more difficult aspects of the job. The coordinator must ensure that there are enough writing assistants available both in the Writing Center and at the satellite Writing Center in the library (discussed later). This requires working around each writing assistants' personal schedule. Bennett calls scheduling the

“bane” of his job; he hopes to simplify its demand by developing a software program to facilitate the process.

Finally, coordinators also work individually with writing assistants as needed. When writing assistants want to do a special project (either because they are working for credit or simply because they are interested), the coordinators provide assistance and supervision. Further, they read all the journals and projects done by the for-credit students (although Ede also reads and grades them). As the number of writing assistants has increased over the years, the demands on coordinators have similarly increased. In addition, all of the coordinators pursue particular interests not always specifically focused on the Writing Center, which is explained in the following section.

### The Individual Coordinators and Their Specific Contributions

All of the coordinators came to the Writing Center with their own interests, and all seem to have either expanded on or developed other interests while working there. Some of the interests directly benefitted the Writing Center, such as the development of the webpages, while others indirectly affected the Writing Center. This section explores these interests and provides information, obtained from personal interviews and from the annual reports, about each coordinator.

Roberta Lundeberg grew into the capacity of the Writing Lab Coordinator, starting as a tutor in 1979 (and probably becoming the coordinator later that year) and staying until 1985 (when she completed her masters degree), handling the mixture of duties required. In a personal interview, she stated she didn't feel that she was asked to do anything that was not under the aegis of her position and that everyone did what was needed. She had gotten into writing center work

by accident, beginning while she was a graduate student (getting a Masters of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education, English, and Anthropology) at OSU. Her neighbor, she reports, knew Interim Director Lisa Pederson, and Lundeberg was interviewed and hired. She was the only graduate student among five tutors and worked with the EDT students and in Study Skills. Over time, she began hiring tutors (and the number of tutors had increased to twenty by the time she left) and developed the tutor training program. Lundeberg now works for the OSU Extension Service, running their 4H Horse Program (Lundeberg).

When Lundeberg left in 1985, Lex Runciman was hired as Coordinator for the Writing Lab. Runicman has an MFA from the University of Montana and a PhD from the University of Utah. Runciman was a writing instructor in the English Department before being hired as the Writing Lab Coordinator, and his experience benefitted the CSC. He was able to make changes, such as revising materials, including the faculty referral form, and developing new ones, including a promotional handout. An additional change Runciman made was to introduce the term *writing assistant* to replace *tutor*. According to Ede, the idea for this was based on an interaction with his daughter, who associated *tutor* with remedial work, not collaborative learning (personal interview). (Runciman wrote an article called “Defining Ourselves: Do We Really Want to Use the Word Tutor?” which was included in *Where Are We Going? Where Have We Been? The Writing Center Journal Tenth Anniversary Issue*.) Further, Runciman and Ede developed workshops for courses in business and political science.

In 1987, both Runciman and Ede worked with other faculty to develop OSU’s WIC program, which was instituted as part of a new general education curriculum in 1989. Although the WIC program was never part of the CSC, Ede and Runciman were involved in planning it through the following year, in part because the plan included establishing the director of that

program in the physical location adjacent to the CSC. The following year, Ede was acting director of WIC while candidates for the permanent director were interviewed. Runciman was hired as the WIC Director, beginning that job in July, 1990. At present, Runciman is a professor of English and the Director of the Writing Center at Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon, and he publishes widely.

After Runciman became WIC director, Jon Olson was hired in 1990 as the Writing Center Coordinator, although Olson and Runciman worked together frequently on preparing the Writing Center for the WIC program and on training and supporting professors in the various departments which were implementing WIC. Olson has a PhD in English with an emphasis in rhetoric and writing from the University of Southern California.

The following year, Olson continued to work closely with Runciman on the WIC program, but also encouraged writing assistants to get involved in the Conversant Program\*. This program, coordinated by Barbara Hogg, matched native speaking students with international students. The purpose was to talk informally and to both improve the foreign students' grasp of English and the American students' understanding of other cultures.

A temporary shift in positions occurred during 1992-93 when Lex Runciman accepted a teaching position at Linfield College and Jon Olson became Acting WIC Director. Kit Andrews was Acting Writing Center Coordinator for that year. Andrews was a graduate of OSU who had been a writing assistant. After he completed his PhD at the University of Oregon and a stint in the Peace Corps, he was looking for a temporary position. The timing worked well in that a one-year position was open in the CWL at that time (Ede personal interview). Andrews is currently an Associate Professor at Western Oregon University in English, Writing, and Linguistics ("Andrews").

Jon Olson returned to his position as Writing Center Coordinator in fall 1993 when a permanent WIC Director, Vicki Tolar Burton, was hired (she started in August 1993). Throughout his time as Writing Center Coordinator, Olson had a strong interest in developing the use of and access to technology in the Writing Center. Under his leadership, the Writing Center acquired computers and started an e-mail writing hotline (WritingQ\*) and developed its first presence on the World Wide Web. In addition, Olson applied for and received a \$34,000 Technology Resource grant to buy three Power Mac computers.

During Olson's tenure, the number of workshops offered by the Writing Center also increased, as did their locations. More workshops were taken into dormitories and other places, and also whole classes came as groups to the Writing Center. Further, the Writing Center stayed open during the summer term for the first time starting in 1993.

Olson left OSU in 1997, moving to Pennsylvania State University, where he is the Director of the Center for Excellence in Writing. His commitment to writing centers remains strong: he was the President of the International Writing Centers Association from 2003 to 2005 and remains on the Board as Past President ("Jon Olson"; "About IWCA").

Matt Yurdana was hired as Coordinator in 1997 and worked in the Writing Center until 2000. He has an MFA in poetry from the University of Montana. Yurdana built on Olson's technological work, "restructur[ing] and expand[ing] the CWL and Writing Center's web pages so that they [were] more useful and comprehensive" (Ede "Annual Report 1997-98" 7). He also applied for a grant to develop the Online Writing Lab (OWL). Yurdana also furthered the image and accessibility of the Writing Center in other ways: redesigning the CWL and its programs' logos (in Appendix B), refurbishing the Writing Center (oak instead of metal and plastic), and instituting a satellite Writing Center Desk in the OSU Library.

In addition, Yurdana created an ongoing series called *The Craft of Writing*, which “present [s] a variety of OSU faculty and other well-known academic and professional writers to talk about how they draft, revise, publish, utilize, and think about writing in their field or discipline” (Ede “Annual Report 1997-98” 8). The first writers to present included novelist James Welch, environmental scientist Jane Lubchenco, essayists Kathleen Dean Moore and Chris Anderson, and poet Robert Wrigley. The talks were well-attended by undergraduate and graduate students and by faculty. The series has presented several speakers every year since its inception and currently exists as an Associated Students of Oregon State University (ASOSU\*) sponsored organization with the Writing Center Coordinator as advisor (Ede personal interview).

Yurdana seemed to be the coordinator most strongly affected by the low salary mentioned in Chapter Three, as he was the only income source for his family (Ede personal interview). When efforts to obtain a substantial raise for Yurdana failed, he took a job as a technical writer at Hewlett-Packard and left at the end of the winter, 2000 term (Dempsey “Statement in Lieu” 1).

Wayne Robertson had been a passionate and committed writing assistant during the fall and winter terms (1999 and 2000) of that year, working for credit as a graduate student in English, majoring in composition and rhetoric. In need of someone to coordinate the Writing Center for the spring 2000 term, Ede asked Robertson if he would be willing to do so while finishing his graduate degree (Robertson). He agreed, realizing that it was a valuable opportunity. Because he was a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA), Robertson could not be paid for his work; that term, he reports, he took classes, taught two sections of writing, and worked approximately twenty hours a week in the Writing Center. He put off completing his thesis until the summer and defended it in September 2000. Robertson applied for and won the permanent position, beginning in fall 2000, at a salary of about \$23,000 for a nine-month appointment (Robertson).

Robertson, who first worked at and then ran a school teaching English in Japan for over three years, is interested in how people from other countries approach writing—and what they find difficult about writing in the United States. To that end, he made a film called *Writing Across Borders*, in which he interviews students from various countries; makes suggestions for faculty working with international students; and explores the ways in which testing, teaching, and classroom procedures are obstacles for international students. The project, which extended over three years, was funded by the CWL and WIC and won a 2006 Bronze Telly Award, an award that recognizes excellence in various television commercials and programs and for videos and films (“The Awards”). The film is available in DVD format at the OSU Bookstore (<http://www.osubookstore.com/>) (Robertson).

In 2004, OSU adopted a new strategic plan. One of the foci was student retention, which manifested as improving student support services. To this end, Academic Success became a free-standing program, well-funded by the university. Wayne Robertson began working half-time in the ASC and, in 2005, was promoted to assistant director of the CWL (which also, as mentioned before, began receiving more money for salaries and for writing assistant pay). A full-time coordinator was needed for the Writing Center, and thus an assistant coordinator was hired in 2004. The combined shift in the overarching reporting to the vice provost of Academic Affairs and the new university strategic plan enabled the CWL to hire more staff. Robertson reports he is very happy in his current split position because, “I get to write my job day-to-day.” Further, he is allowed to take risks and to follow up on ideas. In addition to his paid job, Robertson served for two years as the member at large of the board of the Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association (PNWCA)\*, for which OSU hosted the spring 2006 conference. He is currently a member at large on the executive board of the IWCA (Robertson personal interview).

Dennis Bennett was hired as Assistant Coordinator in August, 2004 and promoted to Coordinator in July, 2005. Bennett has experience in technology and writing center work from Washington State University, where he worked in the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology doing assessment and instruction. At the time, he was also working on a PhD in Literature, although he has yet to complete his dissertation and oral exams. Bennett was hired by the Student Advising and Learning Center at WSU, and enjoyed that “technology-rich, writing-intensive environment” enough to decide to put off completion of his PhD. From the start, Bennett took over most of Robertson’s day-to-day tasks, but he also used his technological experience to initiate several important projects. First, he updated the CWL and the Writing Center websites, which he now maintains. He also created an online application to track appointments, converting the old “yellow card” that was filled out by the writing assistant and the student. Perhaps most significantly, Bennett developed an online “portal,” a website for writing assistants and staff (including Bennett, Ede, and Robertson) to discuss readings, difficult sessions, training, and more. Finally, Bennett was elected to the board of the PNWCA as the member at large in spring 2006 (Bennett personal interview).

All of the coordinators, then, have brought different types of experience and expertise to the Writing Center. Furthermore, each has built on what was developed by the previous coordinators, lending stability and continuity. Most, too, have continued their involvement with writing center work, writing, and/or teaching, as well.

### **The Director in the Writing Center**

Since beginning as director of the CWL, Lisa Ede has been actively involved in the Writing Center. Although she doesn't conference with the students who come in with their papers, she works closely with the coordinators and with the writing assistants.

As previously stated, Ede is active in the weekly training meetings. Sometimes she facilitates the discussion, and other times she participates in the activity. Thus, Ede has worked closely with each coordinator over the years. While she is their supervisor, her style is more of a colleague, an equal. She also respects the individuality of the coordinators, allowing them to pursue other interests, such as teaching, integrating technology, and filmmaking.

Ede reports that although she has gotten along well with every coordinator, there have been challenges with working with each. She states the challenges fall into three general categories: control and collaboration, status issues, and negotiating work issues. For instance, one coordinator in particular wanted to earn more money by teaching in addition to his work in the Writing Center. Another, Ede felt, was overextending himself by working too many hours with students in the Center. Others expressed frustration that Ede is in a tenured position, while they were not. In one case, a coordinator behaved inappropriately, and Ede had to take disciplinary action. Finally, one coordinator struggled with Ede over Ede's level of involvement in the Writing Center; according to her, he felt that she should be more distant, like a department chair, and let him handle all aspects of the Writing Center, including the training of and the weekly meeting with the writing assistants. In all of these situations, Ede states she attempted to negotiate with each coordinator, establishing a solution that she hoped was acceptable to both her and the coordinator (Ede personal interview).

Ede reports that she also works with the writing assistants, in particular those working for credit. She reads and comments on the journals (and now the blogs on the portal) that all first-term writing assistants earning credit keep. She also suggests projects for later for-credit terms, often reading multiple drafts and, finally, providing a grade for each student. Her mentoring has also contributed to the success of writing assistants: one writing assistant was the 2005-06 student representative to the Board of the Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association; another former writing assistant runs the Writing Center at Yakima Valley Community College, while another is the Writing 121 Coordinator at OSU; still others have published articles and spoken at conferences (personal interview).

Ede has also published widely, about both writing center work and about rhetoric and collaboration. Some of Ede's numerous journal articles have been published or republished in books, including "Writing as a Social Process: A Theoretical Foundation for Writing Centers," originally published in a 1989 edition of *the Writing Center Journal* and republished in 1995's *Landmark Essays on Writing Centers*, edited by Christina Murphy and Joe Law. She also wrote "Writing Centers and the Politics of Location: A Response to Terrance Riley and Stephen M. North" in 1996 and "Some Millennial Thoughts about the Future of Writing Centers" (with Andrea Lunsford) in 2000, both published in *the Writing Center Journal*.

Ede's interest in collaboration has led to writing and/or editing numerous articles and books collaboratively with Lunsford and with others (*Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing* in 1990, *The Selected Essays of Robert J. Connors* in 2003, and *Essays on Classical Rhetoric and Modern Discourse* in 1984). In addition, her textbook, *Work in Progress: A Guide to Academic Writing and Revising*, specifically encourages students to visit writing centers (providing helpful guidelines for these visits) and is going into its seventh edition and will be published under the

new title *The Academic Writer: A Brief Guide for Students*. Her most recent book is *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location*, published in December 2004.

A much cited and referenced article is “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy,” published in *College Composition and Communication* in 1983. Ede and Lunsford won the CCCC Braddock Award for this article. Among other awards, Ede also won the National Writing Centers Association Award for outstanding scholarship on writing centers in 1990. Further, Ede is on the editorial board for several leading journals in the fields of rhetoric and of writing centers, including *The Writing Center Journal*. She also presents at numerous conferences every year, and has been invited to give keynote and other talks (Ede “Performance Evaluation” 5). Ede’s significant amount of scholarship, publication, and renown has likely contributed to decision to keep the CWL open and funded.

Ede’s involvement with the people of the Writing Center (staff and writing assistants), as well as her scholarship about writing centers, illustrate her clear commitment to furthering both the people involved and the knowledge about writing centers.

### **The Writing Assistants**

The following figure shows the number of writing assistants who have worked at the Writing Center for at least one term between 1980-81 and 2004-05 (zeros indicate that the information was unobtainable).

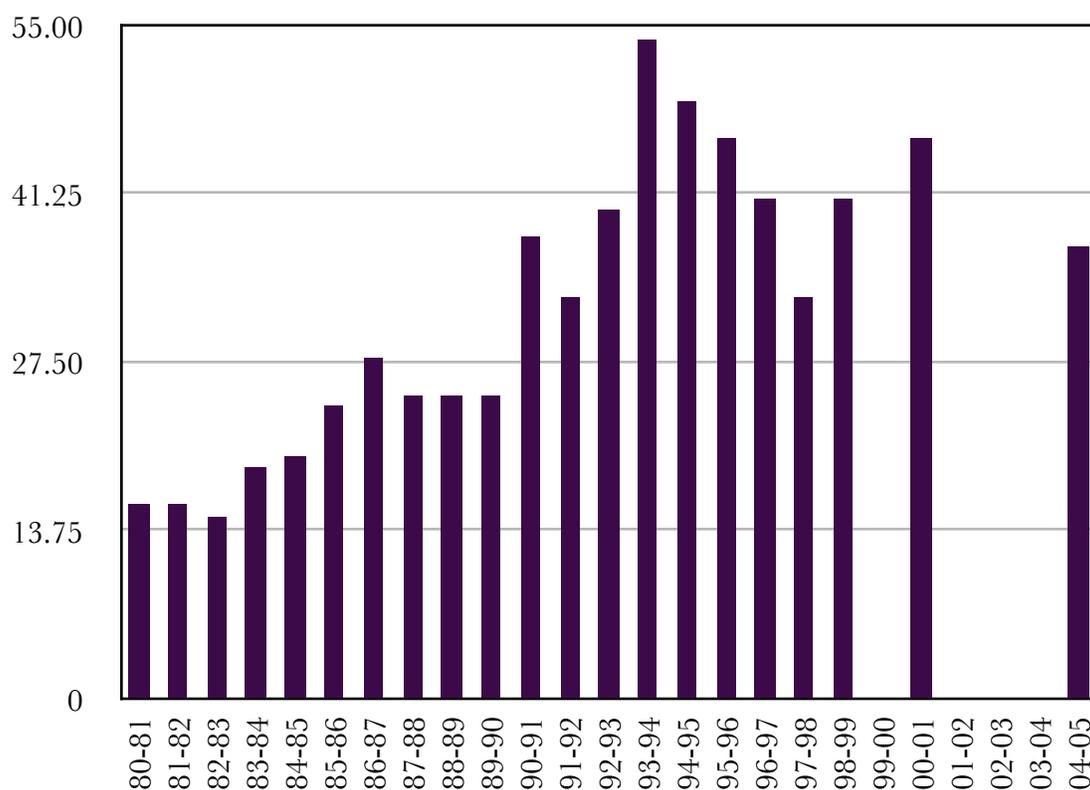


Figure 4.1: Graph of the Number of Writing Assistants per Year. <sup>a</sup>

Source: Ede's Annual Reports.

<sup>a</sup> Data was unavailable for the years that list zero writing assistants.

The overall numbers do not reflect the variations in schedules: some writing assistants worked only two hours a week, others worked ten; in addition, some worked only one or two terms, and others worked every term. Still, the numbers increased quite steadily as the Writing Center grew, from five in 1979 (Lundeberg) to around 16 in 1980-81 to a peak of 53 in 1993-94. A possible reason for the increase may be the “effort to extend writing instruction through evening hours in residence halls, workshops with a variety of classes, and computer networking” (Hogg “Annual Report 1993-94” 7), as these may have required more writing assistants or perhaps the alternative spaces and/or computer work may have appealed to other types of writing assistants. For the last ten years, the numbers have been somewhat lower, with a

dip in 1997-98, followed by a relatively steady increase. Currently, the general number of writing assistants ranges between thirty-five and forty (Ede personal interview).

Writing assistants have included undergraduate and graduate students working for credit, work-study, or regular student pay. Some students and members of the community have also volunteered in the Writing Center. Certainly, the increase in money available to pay writing assistants attracts more applicants. In addition, Ede describes the opportunity in all classes she teaches, sometimes inviting students to apply to be writing assistants, and other faculty, especially in the English Department, recommend students who they feel would be good writing assistants. In fact, in 2000, the primary way of finding writing assistants was faculty endorsement. Potential writing assistants are then contacted by the Writing Center staff, offered an interview and a tour of the Writing Center, after which they submit a writing sample if they are interested in applying. The combination of faculty input and active recruiting provides “a larger and more qualified base of assistants to choose from” (Ede “Annual Report 2000-01” 5). Although the screening process was not quite as extensive in previous years, the record has been good: Ede reports that she has only regretted two or three writing assistants hired in twenty-five years, and Robertson states that his choices improved as he “trusted his gut” more over the years (Ede personal interview; Robertson).

A minimum requirement for writing assistants is that they are good writers. However, Ede acknowledges, being a good writer doesn't necessarily make one a good writing assistant, and “some people who are less strong [writers] can be effective writing assistants.” She continues, “All writers encounter difficulties, and empathy and a genuine desire to help others” is vital (personal interview).

Although some of the students who visit the Writing Center believe or expect that the writing assistants are experts in all types of writing and know all of the mechanics, that is neither the case nor a requirement. Robertson states that he doesn't expect himself or the writing assistants to "know all"; rather, he wants them to read and learn about collaborative and Writing Center work. Further, he wants writing assistants to understand and to hold to the values of the OSU Writing Center, discussed earlier in this chapter, in regard to how to work with students and what to do in a session: "to talk about writing, and [to] ask the right questions and get the student [to] be their best in a session," which, he believes, develops over time, taking at least one term to really understand. Still, he reports, he and Bennett both encourage flexibility and breaking the guidelines when necessary.

Robertson believes that nearly half of the writing assistants who work for two or more years "will do something beyond, above just being a writing assistant, depending on their interests," related to the Writing Center, such as work on the website or develop materials. He further states that being a writing assistant is excellent professional training and that these students "create effective change in whatever they do. [. . . They are] our greatest contribution to the state [of Oregon]," as many go on to graduate schools and/or to teach, using the philosophy of student teaching and learning as a foundation (Robertson).

Although many writing assistants are undergraduate English majors, others are majoring in a wide variety of departments. For example, in 2001-02, the forty-one writing assistants came from sixteen different majors, including economics, biology, political science, history, graphic design, forestry, chemistry, psychology, and, of course, English.

The training received by writing assistants has been discussed earlier in this chapter (in Continuity in Coordinator Responsibilities), and some information about the early training is also

available in Chapter Two. In general, training has always been a priority, one which is regularly tweaked and adjusted and added to by the coordinators. In addition to changes implemented by the coordinators, suggestions and feedback from writing assistants are welcomed, and samples of journals and projects (required for those writing assistants working for credit) are available for newer writing assistants to look at and read. The training by shadowing the coordinator or an experienced writing assistant, which began during the 1970s, is still used. And after their initial training, writing assistants are monitored subtly; the Coordinator listens to the interactions around him when he walks through the Writing Center (Robertson), following up individually if necessary. In addition, writing assistants may provide feedback to each other or to the Coordinator if they have concerns or suggestions.

In sum, because writing assistants are not expected to know everything and are expected to model good studying and writing behavior by looking in reference books and asking for help as needed, they don't feel as if they are entirely responsible for the students with whom they are working. This access to help creates an atmosphere of safety for writing assistants, allowing them to learn how to teach and to be taught simultaneously. And because writing assistants feel comfortable, they are better able to work with students effectively.

### **The Students Served**

Increasing numbers of students have been served at the Writing Center, as the figure on the following page demonstrates. The numbers, with each contact equivalent to a half-hour session, were generally between 3500 and 4300 student contacts a year through the 1980s and 1990s. These numbers reflect overall contacts, not numbers of students; that is, they do not account for students who visited the Writing Center more than once or regularly. The numbers

began climbing in the early 2000s, then jumped to over 6000 in 2001-02, with the highest number being 6969 in 2002-03.

Students across campus use the Writing Center, as the tables in Appendix C demonstrate. In the 1980s, most of the student contacts from all the schools increased over time steadily, particularly in Business, which quadrupled the number of student student contacts in the Center more than doubled during that time The number of pharmacy contacts between 1980 and 1989. The number of engineering and of science student contacts increased from only four in 1980 to over 140 by 1989. Many of the schools—agriculture, education, home economics, forestry, and University Exploratory Studies Program (UESP)—stayed consistent.

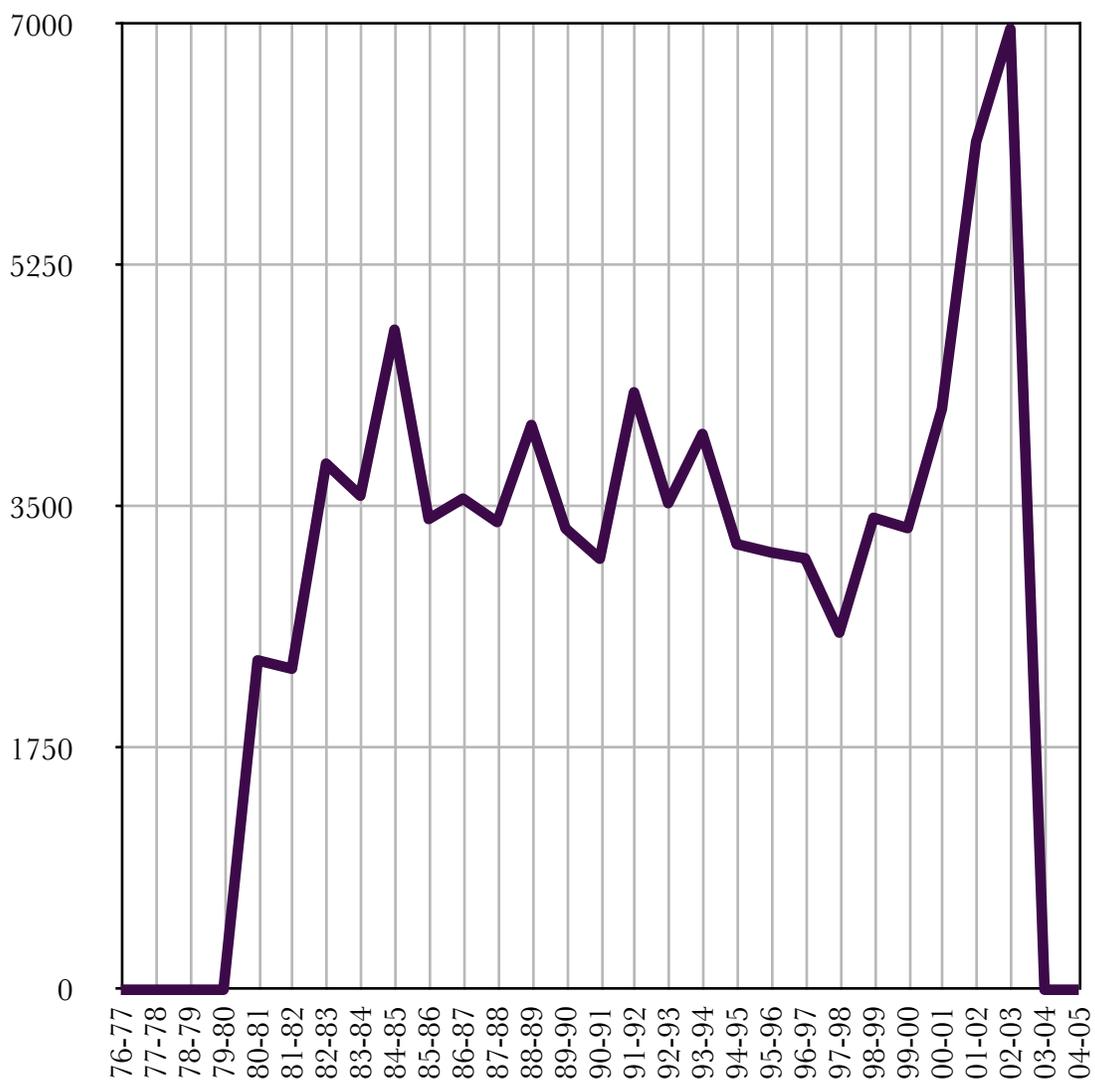


Figure 4.2: Graph of the Numbers of Overall Student Contacts 1976-2005. <sup>a,b</sup>

Source: Ede's Annual Reports, Pederson's *Yearly Report*.

<sup>a</sup> Each contact equals 1/2-hour appointment.

<sup>b</sup> Data was unavailable for the years that list zero student contacts

During the 1990s, the number of business student contacts decreased steadily, returning to numbers lower than in 1980. Science, agriculture, and liberal arts student contacts approximately doubled. Other schools fluctuated, reaching a high in the mid-1990s and then

decreasing. Although the WIC program began university-wide in 1990, its impact did not seem to affect the numbers of student contacts in the Writing Center, at least not in the 1990s.

In the past five years, the number of business student contacts in the Writing Center again increased, doubling its number to over 750 contacts. Health and Human Sciences Department contacts have increased dramatically (perhaps because more writing is required in the combination of the former colleges of home economics and health and human performance). Pharmacy student contacts have increased almost twofold, and oceanography had one high year in 2002-03. Liberal arts student contacts have risen fairly steadily, but engineering, after an increased the number of contacts, has been declining.

These numbers demonstrate not only the increase in student use over the years, but also the variations within different schools whose students use the Writing Center. There is also a range of use among the four (or five) undergraduate years, graduate students, and others. Table 1 in Appendix D illustrates the student usage by year during the 1980s. As can be seen, increasing numbers of students used the Writing Center, especially first-year, seniors, and graduate/post-baccalaureate students. Numbers of sophomores likely declined because, having completed a required writing class (which many students do in their first year), many had little writing to do until their junior or senior years, depending, of course, on their majors. Seniors likely came for assistance, as higher level courses often require more writing.

In the 1990s, fewer undergraduates seemed to use the Writing Center. Certainly, the number of first-year students declined; there were 759 contacts in 1990-91, 1554 in 1993-94, and only 484 in 1998-99. The number of seniors peaked mid-decade and then declined. Only graduate and post-baccalaureate students continued to increase in their use of the Writing Center.

During the current decade, numbers are again increasing. Use by first-year students has risen (although it was lower between 2003 and 2005). Interestingly, sophomore use is higher. Use by juniors has nearly tripled in five years; likely, they are using the Writing Center when taking their WIC course, which is always an upper-level course. Use by seniors has climbed as well, and use by graduate and post-baccalaureate students remains high. The numbers of faculty or staff members using the Writing Center has also increased from the 1990s, as has use by members of the local community.

In addition, many of the students who seek assistance at the Writing Center are Non-native English Speakers (NNESs). During the University's focus on international students in its long-range plan starting in 1983-84, there were 1542 NNES (38%) contacts in the Writing Center. Since 1982, the percentage of NNES contacts in the Writing Center has been between thirty and forty percent of the total contacts—as many as 2267 in 2004-05. There are no statistics to indicate how many NNESs come consistently; however, reports suggest that a number of NNESs meet with writing assistants (usually the same one) weekly, and, in fact, have standing appointments. (As stated earlier, the training for writing assistants has increasingly involved working with NNESs.) It's clear that the Writing Center both serves many students from myriad departments and that it serves students well.

### **Changes in the Writing Center**

As is the natural way of evolution, changes have occurred frequently in the Writing Center. Most, however, did not alter the fundamental nature of the services the Center provides, despite there being different coordinators, different writing assistants, increased number of writing assistants and of student contacts, and more. Some changes were more significant, in that

they had a lasting impact on the actual services or the way services could be offered in the Writing Center; among these are the increasing engagement with technology, the summer session and satellite Writing Center, the elimination of the EDT, and the recent budget improvements.

### Technology

Over the years, as technology improved in the world at large, it changed in the Writing Center, as well. When the Center opened, the technology consisted of tape players and headphones (Perkins), and pens, pencils, and paper. Jon Olson, however, managed to acquire three used computers in 1991 or 1992, which he integrated into Writing Center use. By 1993 and 1994, writing assistants worked with students at the computers. Later, three Power Mac computers were added.

In 1995 and 1996, Olson created WritingQ, an e-mail “hotline” for users both on and off the OSU campus to ask short questions and receive answers to them (the responses were checked for accuracy by two hotline staff members, who may have been specially-trained writing assistants). (Ede’s recollection is that only either she or Olson answered these questions.) This service is still available, although the numbers of queries it receives is minimal.

In addition, the Writing Center developed a webpage, for which Olson received additional education in a summer workshop in the Communication Media Center’s EdWeb ‘96 series. Again, the website is still in use. The webpages have been revamped and updated over the years by Yurdana, Robertson, and Bennett. At present, it provides information about the Writing Center in general, tips on how to get the most out of an appointment and what to expect, and a links to the Portal and the OWL. The OWL began in the late 1990s and is a service in which students can e-mail a paper to the Writing Center, where a writing assistant trained in responding

to essays by computer reviews it and provides feedback online within a day or two. Use of the OWL has expanded, with increasing numbers of writing assistants trained to respond effectively to the papers submitted on it (Robertson). Anyone visiting the website, which may include people not connected to OSU as well as students at the Corvallis and the Cascades campuses, faculty, and prospective students, and others, can also see some pages of the Online Portal, as well.

Other changes have also involved the use of computers. A recent innovation has been the shift of the conference evaluation form from paper to online, as discussed briefly earlier. The new form is somewhat more extensive, allowing students to explain why they might not return, to indicate which activities they worked on (analysis will allow seeing if it matches what the writing assistant indicated), which activities they found most helpful, how they perceived the writing assistant, and whether they will keep working on the writing assignment after the completion of the session (“Writing Center Session Information”). It also allows for automatic, up-to-the-minute tracking of these statistics (freeing up time for the CWL’s Administrative Assistant), and provides more privacy for the student. The online form is accessed first by the writing assistant, who fills out the first part of the form detailing length of session, what was worked on, the type of writing assignment, and the stage of writing the student is at (“Writing Center Session Information”). The student then completes the form and submits it electronically.

Perhaps most significantly, Bennett developed the CWL Online Portal (as has been discussed earlier in this chapter). It is a website for writing assistants and staff (including Bennett, Ede, and Robertson) to discuss readings, difficult sessions, and more. Topics such as working with international students, ways of approaching certain assignments with students, and feelings and experiences with basic writers are explored. Often, topics are presented by the coordinator, who encourages the writing assistants to think and explore various aspects of the topic in preparation

for that week's meeting. Students seem to feel free to express their concerns and observations, more so, perhaps, than they might in person. Not only do the coordinators and director respond, but students "speak" to each other, providing support and suggestions. During spring term 2006, Bennett expanded the portal's use to include a writing assistant handbook and training manual.

### Expansions: Summer Term and the Satellite Writing Center

Beginning in 1993, the Writing Center began staying open part-time during the summer terms. During the first year, this was possible due to funds from a WIC grant funding a pilot program for this purpose. Ede reports that the summer term writing assistants were as busy with equivalent numbers of student contacts (305) during those eight weeks as during a regular term (taking into account that there were fewer writing assistants, no support staff, and that the Center was open only twenty hours a week). The student contact makeup seemed to vary a bit during the summer, consisting of more students recently out of high school, those in the Upward Bound summer program, and more graduate students. In addition, more than half of the contacts were from weekly visits by students, many more than during the regular terms. As Ede concludes,

In even more ways than were initially anticipated, then, this pilot program demonstrated a clear need for the Writing Center to remain open during the summer session. Now that the Writing Center's ability to fulfill those needs during summer session has also been established, continued support for the Writing Center in summer sessions is highly recommended. ("Annual Report 1992-93" 5)

In addition to the increased numbers of hours offered during the summer term, the Writing Center developed a satellite Writing Center Desk in the Information Commons at OSU's Valley Library in 1998. This took time and negotiation to develop, and Matt Yurdana worked closely with Loretta Rielly at the Valley Library to explore this possibility. The satellite desk

offered evening hours several days a week, including Sundays, and it increased the number of hours offered over time. The satellite runs a bit differently than the Center itself: students sign up for their own appointments on a posted form, and there is no phone (and thus no need for phone coverage). Because it is located in an area which offers academic assistance in various subjects—now enclosed from the surrounding, busier parts of the floor—it has a different atmosphere, as well.

### The English Diagnostic Test

As has been stated previously, the EDT was a test required by five colleges for a number of years as part of the graduation requirement which was administered by the Writing Center. Although it brought in some money from these departments, the EDT did not truly fit with the philosophy of the Writing Center (Ede personal interview). Fewer schools required it in the 1990s: only 58 student contacts for the EDT were recorded in 1992-93 compared with 953 the previous year, and there is no mention of or statistics about the EDT in the 1993-94 annual report. The WIC program, which emphasizes Writing Across the Curriculum, requires all students to participate in at least one intensive writing course in their majors, thus fulfilling the need not only for basic writing skills for every student, but also for more advanced and field-specific ones.

### Budget

For most of the CWL's and the Writing Center's existences, the budget has been a source of great concern. As explained in the previous chapter, the CWL always had more money than just that \$3,768, but not enough to function without worry and attention to the budget. Indeed,

the paucity of the budget was reflected in the low salary for the Writing Center coordinators; although information is not available for every year, one Coordinator left specifically because of the low salary, and the Coordinator who followed him started the job at about \$23,000 a year—in 2000. We can surmise, then, that the salary was even lower in the earlier years of the Writing Center.

In addition, there was little money to pay writing assistants, who either had to be on work-study, work at the Center for class credit (for which they paid the university), or volunteer. Further, the money budgeted was often not enough to pay for the entire school year, and Ede had to request money from alternate sources, including the Oregon Emergency (or E-) Board, at least once.

With the move back to central administration in 2001, these budget problems eased substantially. Money was earmarked for writing assistant pay, allowing the director and coordinators a broader base from which to choose writing assistants. Although ongoing concern exists about the budget (due to state budget difficulties, as explained in Chapter Three), this is a significant change and one which Ede hopes will continue. And coordinators received a substantial increase in pay, with the current coordinator earning over \$40,000 a year.

## **Conclusion**

The OSU Writing Center has been a mixture of continuity interspersed with change. The aspects that have been continuous—the training of new coordinators and of writing assistants, of Ede's close involvement with the Center, of an ongoing philosophy and pedagogy—have all contributed to the actual continuity. And the changes have only enhanced the ability to provide services effectively; they have not altered basic Writing Center theory and practice.

The Writing Center follows theories and practices similar to those mentioned in Chapter Two. The writing assistants educate students about the writing process as they assist those students in becoming stronger writers. And these writing assistants are undergraduate and graduate students, a common but not universal circumstance. Writing assistants are only distinguished by their disciplines (that is, some effort is made to match a student with a writing assistant who has experience writing in the discipline in which the student is requesting help)—and this is not always possible—and undergraduate writing assistants may work with a graduate students. The training for writing assistants is fairly extensive and done on-site; that is, writing assistants do not take a special, credit-bearing class, as is the case in some institutions. The coordinators' job is likely very similar to those of other coordinators, but at OSU, they answer to and confer with a director who is active in the Writing Center; this is likely somewhat different than the situation at many universities. The range of students who seek assistance in the Writing Center is likely quite similar to that in other schools in that it has a significant number of NNES contacts. Further, the balance of the students who visit the Writing Center likely reflects the population of both the student body and, perhaps, the locale of the OSU.

This basic theory and practice mentioned earlier is part of the Writing Center's culture. In fact, the Center could be said to have several overlapping cultures: that of the professional staff (the coordinator and the director), the coordinator and the writing assistants, the writing assistants and the students, and the writing assistants themselves. All of these overlap and influence and affect each other. For instance, the interests of the coordinator at the time certainly affects the direction of the Writing Center's activities (such as Jon Olson's interest in technology and Matt Yurdana's development of the *Craft of Writing* series). The types of students who visit

the Center, too, affect the culture, depending on, for instance, the reason they are visiting, their majors, or if English is their first language.

And external events influence the culture of the Writing Center. The budget available to pay writing assistants changed the way many writing assistants were chosen; there was more choice for the coordinator and the director and, likely, a more consistently high quality of writing assistant. So as Peter Carino suggests, discussed in Chapter One, the OSU Writing Center does not exist in a vacuum; it has its own culture unto itself, but is also part of the larger culture around it.

