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30 October 1980

MEMORANDUM

To: Special committee to design the upper-division writing course (Profs. Dwyer, Faigley, Flowers, Gribben, Hairston, Harris, King, Kinneavy, Newcomb, Pavone, Slate, Walter, and Kruppa)

From: Joseph J. Moldenhauer, Chairman JJM

Subject: Organizational Meeting

It's time the committee convened to block out the work to be done on the three variants (Arts and Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Natural Sciences and Technology) and to discuss how to take up the matter of a possible Business-oriented fourth variant.

Please give to Pam a schedule of your fixed weekly obligations. We'll try to work out a mutually convenient time for plenary meetings and meetings of sub-groups.

In advance of our first meeting, please review the departmental legislation on "Writing in Different Disciplines." I enclose for your information something I read last night in the September 1980 ADE Bulletin, without other comment than that it does not conceive of a writing course employing the sorts of readings specified for "Writing in Different Disciplines."

JJM:psw
Enclosure

ADE Bulletin Sept 80

OTHER DEPARTMENTS . . . OTHER WAYS

This column provides department chairmen the opportunity to share with their colleagues new curricular approaches, innovations, departmental experiments, and other matters of mutual interest.

THE PLACE OF BUSINESS WRITING IN ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS: A JUSTIFICATION

William E. Rivers
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ALTHOUGH most English departments have augmented their offerings in some way in the past decade to meet the shifting interests of students and the changing demands of the job market, one of the most dramatic and controversial developments has been the rapid increase in the number of business writing courses now being taught in English departments. This phenomenon was recently documented by Francis Weeks, executive director of the American Business Communications Association, who reports that in 1978 over fifty percent of all business writing courses were taught in English departments whereas in 1971 eighty percent were taught in business schools.[1] The data that Weeks has collected confirm a shift that many members of our profession have perceived and responded to in various ways. Some have seen the trend as clearly positive. J. Paul Hunter of Emory University, for example, recently called the inclusion of business writing courses in English departments one of the "healthiest" curricular innovations of the past decade.[2] Many others, however, see this move as a "sellout" to "vocationalism" for the sake of maintaining enrollments and a violation of the English departments' traditional commitment to the liberal arts.

The understandable concerns of the latter group have generated faculty debates about the place of business writing courses in English departments. Since these debates are likely to broaden and intensify as the demand for business writing increases, perhaps it is wise to air the conflicting arguments in a published forum so that we can begin to deal with the issue in a professional way outside our individual enrollment and staffing problems, which always tend to interfere with objectivity. To that end I should like to suggest some reasons for moving business writing from business schools to English departments and then offer some justifications for teaching courses in "vocational writing" in departments traditionally devoted to broader, more obviously humanistic concerns. Although I do not presume to present here a complete picture of what business writing courses should be, I do hope that my comments will serve to mitigate the apparently widespread negative impression of such courses and—if nothing else—to generate a much needed open discussion of their role in the English curriculum.

The Growth of Business Writing Courses and Their Shift to English Departments

Although the desire to keep enrollments up is doubtless the reason some departments offer business writing courses, another more revealing reason is the increasingly high demand for the subject.[3] Without this demand any department hoping to maintain enrollments by adding business writing courses would see its utilitarian purposes unfulfilled. Furthermore, the two major reasons for this growing demand reveal much about why English departments are—and *should* be—teaching business writing:

1. Business leaders and alumni are placing pressure on colleges and universities—on business schools in particular—to put more emphasis on writing for students in business and other preprofessional programs.

2. Enrollments in business and preprofessional programs have risen sharply. (A large portion of this increased enrollment is due to the unavailability of jobs for liberal arts majors, a result, at least in part, of our failure to seek and encourage alternative careers in business, industry, and government for these students.)

Of these two reasons the first is more significant for our purposes. Business leaders have clearly seen a need for employees to write better. The emphasis, moreover, is on writing skills and not on "communications"—a term used to describe a wide array of subareas, ranging from interpersonal relations to advertising. What they have asked for is more work in basic language skills and composition—specifically composition applied to business—for their potential employees. English departments, since they have long counted composition as one of their areas of teaching expertise, are the natural and appropriate place for administrators to turn.

Furthermore, the teaching of business writing, like the teaching of freshman composition or advanced composition, is clearly consistent with the liberal arts orientation an English department should have. Any composition course, even one that deals primarily with situations that are clearly drawn from the business or "vocational" world, must confront the almost infinite number of options in word choice, sentence structure, and organization that will affect the final composition and its reception by the reader. The many combinations available thus require the student and instructor to raise questions about the accuracy, effectiveness, appropriateness of tone, and ethical validity of everything written. These questions are finally all "people" questions in that they deal

with relationships among people and with relationships between people and objects and concepts. For this reason the study of composition, especially the study of applied composition with its particular attention to a real-life audience, is most certainly a "liberal art."

Some critics like to point out that the "content" of business writing courses is not "humanistic." The answer to this objection seems obvious to me: no composition course is truly "humanistic" in "content." (The only exceptions to this statement would be those courses that use "humanistic" readings from literature, history, or other such areas to illustrate certain writing principles.) Furthermore, the purpose of a composition course is not to teach a certain "content" or body of knowledge but to develop a "skill." Studying and teaching language "skills," however—because of the "people" questions involved—are pursuits well within the humanistic tradition.

Are Business Writing Textbooks Nonhumanistic?

Those who regard business writing courses as nonhumanistic usually back up their general arguments by pointing out particular characteristics of business writing textbooks that seem to them antithetical to humanistic concerns. Although I have used and continue to use these texts, I do not defend them absolutely; in fact, I have openly criticized aspects of them. However, the features usually cited show that business writing does not belong in a "humanities" department—the sample letters and reports, checklists, and formulas—are often the most effective elements, and they are clearly not at variance with humanistic goals.

The danger critics see—that the samples, checklists, and formulas will encourage students to write as automatons without any consideration of language, people, or values—is real. However, the critics overlook two facts that tend to lessen or even eliminate this possibility. First, all the *good* business writing texts I have seen contain clear, straightforward, emphatic warnings against blind, indiscriminate, or unethical application of the formulas suggested in the text. Although some critics facilely dismiss these warnings as inconsistent with the thrust of the texts, I consider the admonishments sincere and valid, and I echo them constantly as I teach my course. This point brings me to the second one: each business writing class is taught by a humanist (at least for the sake of argument we will assume that in English departments the instructor will be a humanist) who repeats and amplifies the warnings of the text, who raises questions about the value judgments necessary in certain situations, and who constantly points to the many structural and linguistic choices available.

Advantages of Business Writing Courses

But perhaps the best way to answer the objections to business writing texts is first to define the strengths of a business writing course and then to explain in that context the value of the samples, checklists, and formulas. Business writing courses, as I see them, have two basic advantages over traditional composition courses. First, if the business writing courses are built on concrete, "real-world" business documents and situations, students are generally more interested than they are in freshman English, and they therefore work harder. They simply find the study of language in this context more practical, so that they learn more about language and how it can and *should* be used. This is not to say that we should do away with traditional freshman composition courses. On the contrary, business writing courses work best when they can build from a solid freshman composition program. Furthermore, I think most educators and laypersons will agree that students generally need as much work in composition as possible.

The second distinct advantage inherent in a good business writing course also derives from students' working with materials and situations they will see later: learning in this context, students are more likely to remember and apply their skills when they find jobs. One of the most frustrating aspects of teaching any composition course is the constant difficulty, and frequently the impossibility, of seeing any improvement in students' language skills. But perhaps even more frustrating is the difficulty of knowing whether students who do acquire skills will retain or develop them further after leaving the classroom. In my opinion the best way to ensure some degree of continuity is to develop in students the habit of raising questions about the style and organization of everything they read and write. Once established, this critical habit will ideally stay with them after they graduate, so that they will later monitor and improve their own writing. The potential beauty and distinct advantage of a business writing course is that the teacher can develop that questioning habit of mind with documents and through situations very much like those the students will see the rest of their professional lives. Thus the transfer of that questioning habit of mind from the academic to the professional context is much more predictable.

Efficacy of Textbook Features

Given this questioning approach to composition and the advantages inherent in a business writing course, the efficacy of certain features in the better business writing texts should be obvious:

1. Sample letters and reports help to give students a realistic, concrete sense of what they might later have to write. That sense is indispensable in helping a business writing course do what it should do. True, some textbook examples are trivial; some are poorly conceived and written; a few are downright misleading. A careful and conscientious teacher, however, can use even the poor examples by leading students to see the flaws in them. Once students realize textbook examples are not perfect—a perception that is usually not long in coming—they quickly develop (and enjoy exercising) a critical ap-

proach to everything the text presents. But even textbooks with good examples can provide only a few samples for examination and criticism. Consequently, I always bring into class supplementary letters and reports I have collected (or have had students collect) so that students can exercise their critical skills on additional materials from the "real world."

2. Formulas or models are no more than *general patterns* that *might* work as frameworks through which to convey a particular message or body of facts. They help answer the age-old question "How do I write this?" Ironically, the critics of business writing forget that formulas and models have been used extensively by humanists who have raised the same basic question. For example, before he wrote *Paradise Lost*, John Milton in effect asked, "How do I write an epic?" and looked to the models provided by Homer, Vergil, and others to derive a formula. *Paradise Lost* is not a poor poem because it was written to fit the epic conventions; neither is it a good poem because it follows those conventions; it is a great poem because of the perceptions about man's physical, intellectual, and spiritual condition that Milton distilled into the language and story he placed in those conventions. Only a few years later Richard Blackmore, using the same basic formula, wrote several unsuccessful epics. Alexander Pope gave the same conventions a comic turn and produced two great mock-epic poems. In all three examples success or failure lay not in the formula but in the writer and what he had to say. Most students who are taught to question all writing situations and who are given appropriate and ample feedback on writing assignments see very quickly the risks inherent in formulas and thus learns that how well a formula is used is what counts in writing. Though dangerous, formulas are valuable because they provide a place to start—a framework within which to hang ideas, even if that framework is ultimately augmented or rejected entirely.

3. Checklists, at least those in the better texts, reinforce the critical approach to models, formulas, and writing in general by encouraging students to examine their own letters or reports and answer many different and complex questions about organization, style, tone, and coverage.

Deceiving Rhetoric?

There is one other criticism of business writing texts that we must consider. Many who read these texts or hear about their techniques believe that the "buffers" and "reader benefit" these books emphasize are designed to deceive a customer or colleague by pleasing him or her in some way. To some extent these worries are legitimate, for a writer bent on deception can misuse any rhetorical technique. Business people, however—with the exception of those disreputable ones who inevitably turn up in any group—know that deception is poor business. Businesses must be people-oriented; to remain in business, they must be sure to please the customer with their products and service and even with the way they do business. "Buffers," "reader benefit," and other rhetorical devices in business writing are entirely appropriate as long as they do not deceive and as long as they create an atmosphere of legitimate concern. Given these constraints, what is wrong with suggesting ways to humanize situations that are often reduced to a mere recitation of facts and figures? While critics are right to warn about the danger inherent in teaching easily abusable rhetorical techniques, we face this danger any time we try to help people learn to use the language and their minds. For this reason, the teacher's role in guiding students to make value judgments is essential. Thus business writing courses belong in English departments, where attention to ethical considerations is encouraged.

Alternative Course Content

In an effort to "solve the problem" of making business writing courses more "humanistic," some of our colleagues have made some interesting suggestions. Several have proposed that English departments continue to call these courses "business writing" but teach them in such a way that they are in reality traditional, and therefore "acceptable," courses in advanced composition. The need to reject this dishonest proposal should be obvious. Various other suggestions for alternative course content, however, have been innovative and useful. For example, in an article published in the May 1979 issue of the *ADE Bulletin*, Arthur Waltzer describes several assignments that would, in my opinion, have an enlivening and broadening effect on a business writing course. The assignments he and others at the University of Minnesota designed (apparently with the conscious aim of "humanizing" their business writing courses) included the analysis of the arguments in a particular trade journal in order to gain a sense, or an "index," of that industry's values; the comparison of trade-journal and academic-journal articles on the same topics; and the study of past business-social controversies.[4]

From Waltzer's description, however, I get the very clear and disturbing impression that his course is built entirely on *published* business writing and thus completely and consciously insulated from everyday, "real-world" business documents. His approach therefore leads him away from the two basic advantages I believe are the strengths of a business writing course. Since most students will never have to write an article or comparative essay in their professional careers—and, furthermore, since they know they will not—a course based exclusively on such assignments will not work well, for it will seem to students another course filled with artificial academic exercises. Yet, the same exercises and others like them will work well if they are part of a course that begins with and makes continual contact with the functional, routine unpublished writing that is done in business. Students can then see these more "humanistic" exercises as refreshing alternative ways of developing the critical skills

they will need to write effectively in a purely business context.

Since the abiding concern in our whole debate seems to be finding ways to reconcile business writing and the liberal arts, perhaps the best way to support my objections to narrow, academically circumscribed alternative business writing courses is to look at the advice and practice of two men who were clearly in the liberal arts tradition. It would be hard to find two thinkers whose work had a greater impact on the European humanist movement than Cicero and Quintilian. The "Ciceronian ideal" (or concept of *humanitas*), echoed and amplified by Quintilian, is the foundation of our concept of the humanist. Both Cicero and Quintilian were rhetoricians and teachers of rhetoric. Their perception of the need to educate the whole man took them far beyond the confines of the Roman forum in the curricula they designed for their students. Yet they were careful to ensure that their students maintained contact with that forum and its practical demands, for it was the crucible in which their students would ultimately be tested. Cicero and Quintilian openly and bluntly criticized the many schools of rhetoric that neglected this responsibility. In particular they condemned the theoretical, abstract curricula that produced an artificial rhetorical style—a style that repeatedly failed the test of the forum.[5] The forum in which our business writing students will be tested is the workaday business world. I think we can, and indeed *should*, keep them in touch with their forum while attempting to refine their sense of values and their critical tools in an effort to lead them toward that Ciceronian ethical and intellectual ideal.

The Profession

The shift of business writing courses from business schools to English departments is, I believe, a healthy tendency. English teachers naturally bring to the study of business writing situations an attention to style and organization more intense than business school faculty have the time or training to give. And although most students will be exposed to sound considerations of business ethics in their professional programs, the ethical questions a humanist will raise, especially in relation to language, should have a positive impact on students' attitudes toward writing in particular and the business world in general.

This shift has, however, created two important professional needs. First, English department members, especially those who teach business writing, need to develop a positive, professional attitude toward the course. I sense in some of my colleagues in English departments an underlying but clearly negative attitude toward the business world and its writing. This attitude is apparent not only among those who do not teach the course but also (alarmingly) among those who teach business writing and even those who write about how to teach it.[6] Obviously, such an attitude can have a direct influence on the quality of classroom teaching and, consequently, on the level of student performance. I hope what I have said here will begin to erode that negative feeling. But perhaps the most effective way to mitigate these negative attitudes among business writing teachers and other English faculty members is to arrange meetings between them and business people who are willing to talk about what they do and, in particular, about what they have to write. Perhaps in this way we can break down the negative, abstract concept of "the business world" many of us as academics hold and begin to see that world as made up of people with needs, wants, ideals, convictions, well-developed senses of right and wrong, and even a sensitivity to what we teach. Once we know that their values are not so foreign to ours, that their "world" has a validity we can understand, and that they as thinking people deserve our respect, then I believe that negative attitude will resolve itself into the healthy, positive, but critically guarded approach necessary for the proper understanding of, and instruction in, any topic.

Second, we need a consistent forum for discussing the teaching of business writing in English departments. Currently, the major outlets for the exchange of ideas on business writing are the publications and meetings of the American Business Communication Association. The ABCA is a strong, growing organization, but its orientation is largely toward business school programs, since most of its members are in business schools.[7] Throughout its publications and functions it strives for balance, and it will certainly remain the key organization for all who teach business writing. It is not, however, the ideal forum for those of us who teach business writing in English departments, simply because we need to define our roles among ourselves, identify our special problems, and refine the special skills and orientation we have to bring to our students. To my knowledge no consistent forum exists or has ever existed for this purpose. Coverage of business writing in MLA-affiliated organizations and their publications has only been sporadic. Whether the near silence on business writing in English-oriented journals is due to editors' biases or to instructors' reticence is hard to know. However, with the dramatically increasing number of English professors teaching business writing, we need now, more than ever before, to air our ideas, frustrations, and hopes.[8] That airing, whether it comes through existing or new avenues, will lead us all, we may hope, to a fuller understanding of what business writing courses taught in English departments should be like and a better appreciation of how business writing courses can further our progress toward creating liberal arts programs that not only encourage students to look critically at their world but also help them better to live and work in it.

NOTES

[1]Weeks's figures are estimates he presented at the Midwest Regional American Business Communication Association meeting, 7 April 1978, in Dayton, Ohio.

[3]J. Paul Hunter, "Facing the Eighties," *The State of the Discipline 1970s-1980s*, A Special Issue of the *ADE Bulletin*, 62 (Sept.-Nov. 1979), 2.

[4]Perhaps the clearest indication of the increasing number of business writing students is the current scramble among publishers to contract and market new business writing texts. The exact current enrollment in business writing courses is difficult to determine. In 1978, however, the number was approximately 250,000, according to an estimate made by Lynn Denton, director of the Applied Writing Program at Auburn University, as part of a market analysis for a textbook proposal. One publisher underscored the accuracy of this figure by informing Denton that an independent research agency hired to ascertain the size of the business writing market had arrived at almost exactly the same number. Since the estimate is over two years old, it should probably be raised by ten to fifteen percent.

[4]Arthur E. Waltzer, "Business Writing and the Liberal Arts Tradition," *ADE Bulletin*, 61 (May 1979), 25-26.

[5]See Osborn Aubrey Gwynn, *Roman Education from Cicero to Quintilian* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1926), pp. 97-99, 119-22, 159-70, 205-07; *Quintilian on Education*, ed., trans., and intro. W. M. Smail (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), pp. xxiv, xl.

[6]Regrettably, despite the descriptions of several practical business writing assignments, most of what Waltzer says in his article clearly suggests a negative attitude toward business and business writing.

[7]Of the two periodicals published by the ABCA, the *ABCA Bulletin* is the more helpful to English teachers because of its pedagogical emphasis. Though the *Journal of Business Communications* also seeks essays on scholarly topics and teaching methodology, it apparently receives and therefore prints mostly articles on quantitative research in business communications, not on writing. This emphasis seems to be what many members want. In concluding an article evaluating the contributions to that journal ("A Content Analysis of *The Journal of Business Communication*: Toward a Body of Knowledge," *Journal of Business Communication*, 15 [Winter 1978], 45-51), Bette Ann Stead calls for the publication of "more rigorous scientific research" (p. 51).

[8]I should add here that there are indications that the profession is becoming more receptive to recognizing the place of business writing in English departments. The *ADE Bulletin* has now published two articles in two years on the topic. And the MLA Convention Program Committee has accepted, for the first time in its history, a special session on teaching business writing. The participants, however, had presented the proposal in slightly different forms—for three consecutive years before the program was accepted for the 1980 convention.

THE WRITING PLACE AT BUFFALO: THE FIRST YEARS

Tom Reigstad

Director of the Writing Workshop at Drake University and former Coordinator of Writing Instruction at the State University of New York, Buffalo, Learning Center

Tutor: Okay, Bill, have you been here before? Can you take a few seconds to fill out this form? It just asks what your major is and information like that. [*Student completes form.*] All right, what is the reason that you brought this draft in?

Student: I wasn't sure . . . the instructor said it was only supposed to be a page, but it took me a lot longer. We were supposed to summarize an article and take the main points. But I put a lot of baloney in it.

Tutor: Well, why don't you read it out loud to me?

Student: "The article I read was about a fight between a printing company which is one of the largest religious presses in the world, and its employees. . . ." [*Student reads two-page essay aloud.*]

Tutor: There's a lot of information in there. When you picked out facts from the article, how did you go about it?

Student: What I really wanted in this article was to say how, after all the bargaining, it was a simple strike that got workers what they wanted.

Tutor: So, it was the *process* that you wanted to bring out?

Student: Yeah, labor versus employer, the long struggle.

Tutor: Maybe the history of the company could come earlier and be minimized a bit, if it's the struggle you want to emphasize. How could you arrange that? [*Conference continues.*]

ALTHOUGH no two conferences are alike, the opening phases of this conference typify the basic tutoring approach of the one-to-one sessions conducted daily at the State University of New York, Buffalo, Writing Place. After asking the student to explain the purpose of the draft, to state the problem in his or her own words, and to read the draft aloud, the tutor works on helping the student present the thesis economically and then goes on to deal with reorganization (letting the student do the rearranging of sentences and sections) and spelling errors, in that order. After the session, the tutor enters the appropriate information on a record form. This conference model emerged as Charles R. Cooper, in response to the "crisis in composition," developed the concept of the Writing Place in the fall of 1976.

To provide individualized assistance to more students than could be effectively handled in a fifteen-week credit-bearing writing course, Cooper designed the Writing Place as a component of the university's basic-skills department (the Learning Center), which he directed. In planning for the Writing Place, he sponsored a conference on the theme "What to Say to a Writer" and invited several directors of other university tutorial writing centers. Out of the conference, particularly with the help of Northwestern University's Robert Gundlach, came the

format for the tutorial meetings at the Writing Place, the model in which tutors have continued to be trained ever since.

In this model the tutor functions as a facilitator. Early in the session, the tutor attempts to get acquainted with the student and to establish a comfortable rapport. Then, after having the student fill out a few items on a record form, the tutor asks what the assignment is, whether the student understands it, and when it is due. The tutor determines the type of discourse required, the intended audience, and the appropriate persona for the writer and then tries to find out what approach the student is using or planning to use for the paper.

If the student has *not* brought in a rough draft, the tutor explores with the student first the various ways of gathering or producing ideas and materials and then some of the possibilities for organizing the ideas and materials. If the student *has* a partial or completed rough draft, the tutor asks the student to read it aloud and to mention, before beginning, what the tutor should listen for. As the student reads, the tutor interrupts whenever it seems appropriate to ask the writer about choices and alternatives. Instead of jumping in and solving problems for the student, the tutor tries to help the *student* see the problems and find the solutions. At this stage, the tutor throws the questions back to the student and, before making specific suggestions, gives the student every chance to come up with answers. Tutors do not do mere correcting, nor do they do any writing for the students. Rather, tutors ask questions and give advice.

At the end of the conference, the tutor may recommend readily available specific self-help materials (handbooks, reference works, etc.) if they seem appropriate. The tutor may also suggest that the student revisit the Writing Place or attend some other tutorial center (such as the Reading and Study Skills Clinic), the choice depending on the individual problem. After the student has left, the tutor documents the conference by filling out items on the record form.

The steadily increasing use the Writing Place has had since it opened reflects the thoughtful planning that went into its procedures, philosophy, and facilities. Not only have more people visited the Writing Place each year, but it has attracted a wide range of students—undergraduates and graduates, law students and nursing majors, and many nonnative speakers. After collecting and tabulating the record forms of tutorial sessions over the years, we have composed a profile of the most frequent client: a freshman, undecided about a major, who brings a writing assignment from a Learning Center or an English course. Most often, the client asks for help organizing or revising a paper in the explanatory or personal/expressive mode, and the tutor most often helps the client understand the assignment and organize information. Usually the client comes to the Writing Place for only one visit during the semester (tutors use separate record forms for clients' initial and return visits).

In addition to the careful planning, the conscientious record keeping, and the nondirective, supportive tutorial technique, other factors have contributed to the growing popularity of the Writing Place: the attractive physical setting, the autonomy of the unit, the well-qualified staff, and the attention given to scheduling and publicity.

When the Learning Center first moved into the newly constructed education-department building, the administrative staff worked closely with the university's facilities-planning department in designing the ample space allotment. Amid the Learning Center complex—study and reading areas, conference rooms, offices, an audio-tutorial laboratory, and a lounge—and directly adjoining a modest library stocked with textbooks, workbooks, reference books, works of fiction and nonfiction, and many current periodicals is the Writing Place. From the outset, this area was attractively appointed with coordinated items for function and comfort. The sixteen- by twenty-foot blue-carpeted room was equipped with six large rectangular butcher-block tables, each surrounded by oak chairs with blue fabric seats. Over the years, various materials have been added: a book stand containing writing handbooks and self-help handouts; a dictionary and a thesaurus on each table; examples of drafts and finished versions of works by professional writers, along with brief statements on the composing process by writers like Donald M. Murray and Mark Twain, posted on the brightly painted walls; a large cardboard sign on the wall listing "Things to Do While Waiting for a Tutor"; and nameplates reading "Writing Tutor," which tutors place in front of them on the table to identify themselves to students.

Unlike many other tutorial services, the Writing Place, though funded by the Learning Center, is independent of any academic department. Writing labs are often created in lieu of classroom instruction in composition or as adjuncts to composition courses, particularly remedial courses. Since the Writing Place has no such ties with the English department or any other instructional body, it does not provide written reports to individual departments or instructors on specific tutoring sessions with specific students. Neither are students formally referred to the Writing Place. The Writing Place tutors do not grade papers, nor do they criticize the grades given to papers brought in by students. The Writing Place is a drop-in tutorial center; students (undergraduate and graduate), staff members, and, occasionally, members of the community come voluntarily.

Another unique characteristic of the Writing Place is the quality of the tutoring staff. Each year a graduate teaching assistant—usually a Ph.D. candidate in English instruction who has a solid background in composition theory, research, and methodology—is appointed by the Learning Center to devote full-time (20-25 hours per week) attention to coordinating the operation of the Writing Place. In addition to tutoring several hours each week, the coordinator is responsible for scheduling,

publicizing, and, most important, recruiting and training the tutoring staff. Although the staff includes some Learning Center writing instructors, three or four of whom tutor approximately two hours a week each semester, most tutors are either volunteers or students who tutor for academic credit.

The coordinator and one other graduate teaching assistant, who serves as a full-time tutor, usually recruit tutors who are undergraduate or graduate students in English education at SUNY at Buffalo or who are English teachers in local colleges and secondary schools. Whether the tutors simply volunteer their time or enroll in a designated credit-bearing course in the English instruction program (Writing Place Practicum), they all receive intensive (6-15 weeks) training. During the training seminars conducted by the coordinator and his or her assistant, participants initially examine how writers compose, what problems beginning and experienced writers encounter, and how writing can be taught through individual conferences. The tutors read pertinent articles, role-play conference situations, talk about their tutoring and writing experiences, practice the tutoring technique developed by Cooper, become familiar with the record-keeping system, and collect data on some of the students they tutor. Generally, volunteer tutors must attend the first six training sessions and tutor at least three hours per week in the Writing Place, whereas students who tutor for credit must attend all seminar meetings throughout the semester, tutor three hours per week, and carry out some sort of semester-long project (for example, keeping a tutoring journal, videotaping and analyzing conferences, or writing case studies).

Normally, the Writing Place has three or four tutors on duty during its daytime hours and one or two during evening hours. Tutors put in anywhere from three to twelve hours per week, depending on the degree of their commitment. The number of hours of weekly operation has steadily increased, from twenty-three in the fall of 1976 to thirty-two in the fall of 1978. The present hours, Monday through Friday from noon to four and Monday through Thursday evenings from six to nine, have been settled on through trial and error over the years. For example, after the first year, the Writing Place staff found that Sunday evening hours were not well attended and that the limited weekday afternoon hours, originally noon to two, ought to be extended. The Writing Place has attempted to make itself more accessible not only to resident students by setting up an adjunct location with a trained tutor on hand in a populous campus dormitory but also to nonuniversity writers by designating a special "community night" each week.

One last important ingredient that has figured in the success of the Writing Place is its commitment to extensive publicity. Before each semester begins, the Writing Place staff advertises the tutorial service by circulating posters throughout the university, posting them at strategic spots around the campus, printing them in the campus newspaper, and bundling them up and sending them to various departments for distribution in classrooms. Most students find out about the Writing Place from their teachers, from the campus newspaper, and from the posters. The posters are also sent to the English departments of local secondary schools to inform teachers who might be interested in participating as tutors. The Writing Place has been the subject of several feature stories in campus and community newspapers. One other way in which the Writing Place has publicized itself is by functioning as a model for other schools and colleges that are interested in setting up tutorial writing centers. For example, the State University of New York, Buffalo, Writing Place hosted workshops and in-service training sessions for the Buffalo Writing Place Project, in which five city schools established writing places during 1977-78 with the help of an Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title IV grant.

Despite the constant struggle for a sufficient number of tutors and the scarcity of research projects based on Writing Place activity, the Writing Place has demonstrated a positive flexibility and has achieved an impressive record of tutoring service to growing numbers of clients. With the increased attention recently given to basic writing skills at this university, due particularly to a study, led by Charles R. Cooper, of the poor writing abilities of entering freshmen, the Writing Place should become more and more popular. In the final chapter of his report on the study of freshman writing skills, *Writing Abilities of Regularly-Admitted Freshmen at SUNY/Buffalo—Fall Class 1979* (Cooper et al., 1979), Cooper reaffirms the need for tutorial writing centers in academic environments: "All students, graduate and undergraduate in all departments and programs, should be able to receive drop-in tutorial assistance with their writing projects."