

Southern Discourse

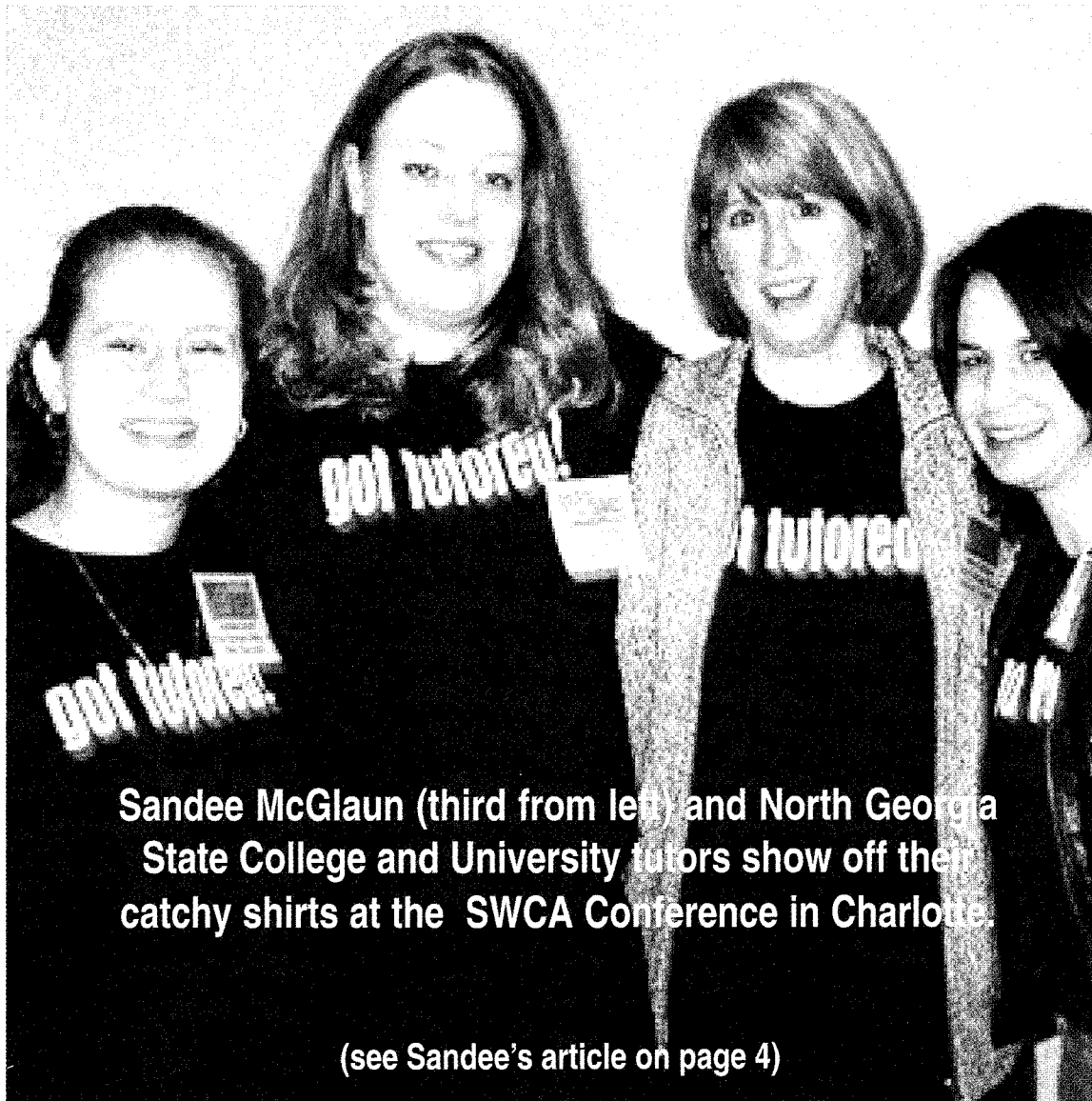
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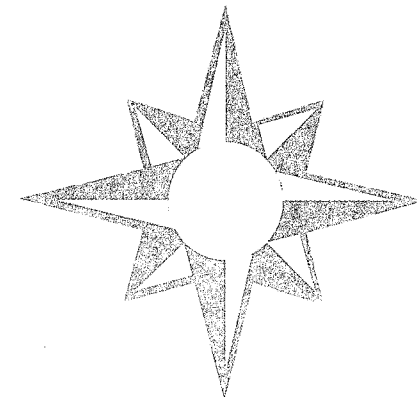
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Sandee McGlaun (third from left) and North Georgia State College and University tutors show off their catchy shirts at the SWCA Conference in Charlotte.

(see Sandee's article on page 4)



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From the Editor

By Christine S. Cozzens
Agnes Scott College

Southern Discourse Sparks Collaboration

I used to envy my husband the scientist—and the students and post-doctoral fellows in his lab—because they were always working together to solve problems, carry out experiments, and come up with ideas for more experiments and for new theories. Then I started editing *Southern Discourse*.

A publication is a truly collaborative venture, and I'm not just talking about how Nicolette Lee—my superb associate editor—and I work together to bring out each issue. Consider the conference in Charlotte, for example. Nicolette had worked on a poster that displayed SD and SWCA history along with free back issues and information on how to submit an article. The poster brought us many new friends and—we hope—future contributors. At the executive board meeting, the publication received a resounding vote of confidence from board members, which included a promise of full financial support (even though SD is not cheap) for the coming year and several exciting proposals about how the organization can make more use of this means of communicating with its members. And the SD planning meeting on Friday brought together loyal readers and past and future contributors for a brainstorming session that brings you results in this issue.

One result of that conversation is a new column, *Back to the Center*, where in each issue we will take you back to one writing center from our region, reporting on how that center solves the problems and dreams the dreams we all share. We'll visit writing centers of all sizes and with divergent missions so that you can see what other places look like and draw on them for your own work.

The brainstormers also wanted to see more stories about how writing center experiences influence career choices, managerial styles, leadership, ethics and other facets of life beyond the center. Sandee McGlaun launches such an effort in her wonderful essay, "Life After Tutoring." Please ask writing center graduates you know to consider telling us their own stories about life after tutoring.

I'm grateful to everyone in Charlotte—the board, the brainstormers, people with whom I had conversations after a session or over lunch—for contributing these new ideas and more and for helping me think creatively about SD's future.

Each writer who sends us a proposal or manuscript also joins this exciting collaboration and becomes a part of the publication's evolving identity and mission. Isn't it time for your voice to be heard? ✨



Christine

Southern Discourse Publication of the Southeastern Writing Center Association

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work. *Southern Discourse* follows the style guidelines set forth in the current edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. To submit articles, queries, announcements, photographs, or other materials, send an email message to the editor at the address listed below. Photographs must have a resolution of 200-300 dpi; appropriate formats are JPEG, TIFF, or EPS. Completed manuscripts should be sent using MS Word via email attachment or disk.

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AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE
THE WORLD FOR WOMEN

What I Learned in Charlotte

By Chad Eric Littleton, The McCallie School

In February I had the opportunity to attend my first Southeastern Writing Center Association Annual Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina. In addition to attending, I also copresented a workshop during the final session of the conference. I must admit that I was somewhat reluctant to be a presenter, primarily because of the questions running through my mind. I mean, what in the world could I offer the seasoned writing center veterans who would be attending? After all, I am a relative newcomer to the writing center field, and my experience has been largely limited to the secondary school environment. Also, how would a conference primarily consisting of college writing center tutors and professionals offer anything for me? I found, however, that my fears were unfounded, and I learned a great deal not only from the presentations I had the opportunity to hear, but also from the experience of being a presenter. The following are some bits of wisdom I took away from the conference.

We're all writing center professionals.

There was a wonderful blend of participants and presenters from a variety of backgrounds, from undergraduate tutors to writing center directors with many years of experience. Each participant brought a unique perspective to the conference, and I felt that my colleagues were genuinely interested in hearing my ideas. This sense of community provided an atmosphere where all participants could freely express their views on writing center issues. I was also able to speak with many of the authors I had previously only known through their books and articles, such as Jo Koster, James Inman, and the keynote speaker, Patricia Lambert Stock.

There are a wide variety of panels and workshops.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that there were many panels and workshops led not just by directors but also by peer tutors; there really was something for everyone. I was able to hear presenters discuss the role of "counselor," the different "superhero" roles tutors take on, tutoring poetry, and using psychological tests to find learning styles. Undergraduate and graduate students led most of the sessions I attended;

however, directors and professors presented numerous panels and workshops as well.

College and secondary writing centers have more similarities than I previously thought.

Though secondary centers have a number of unique issues, they also face many of the same issues that college centers do. In our workshop, I learned that college writing centers deal with students "hanging out," disciplinary issues, privacy concerns, and other things that I had previously thought were unique to secondary centers. By interacting with one another, college and secondary staff can learn from each other, increasing the cooperation to ultimately benefit both, and more important, the students they serve.

Workshops are similar to writing conferences.

The best workshops parallel the writing conference by focusing as much or more on asking questions as on providing answers. Through discussion, I was able to see what concerns other centers are dealing with, as well as gain insight into how they deal with the issues my own center faces. Through this communication, we can reevaluate our own centers for possible changes and improvements. By presenting my ideas to others, I learned a good deal about my own tutoring style and ways to improve.

Writing centers must communicate with one another to continue to grow.

The conference gave me the opportunity to meet other writing center professionals so that I will be able to network with and learn from them throughout the year. Casual conversations from the conference can carry over to email exchanges that spark new ideas for discussion. This correspondence can also lead to collaborations on papers and workshops for future conferences, thus benefiting the entire writing center community.



Chad Littleton

My previous anxiety aside, I am glad that I attended the conference and presented a workshop. I would like to see more secondary centers participate in the future, as I believe they would benefit tremendously from the experience. I would also encourage more people to submit proposals, especially first-time presenters. It's a worthwhile experience that will provide opportunities for professional growth. I can't wait to learn even more next year. See you in Atlanta! ✨

Life After Tutoring

By Sandee K. McGlaun, North Georgia College and State University

Author Pythia Peay writes, "Often a calling is not so much a track to a particular profession as it is a commitment to a core set of values . . . that express themselves in a variety of ways over a lifetime." Working as an undergraduate peer tutor in a writing center set me on a path of realizing and articulating a set of core values as a person, a thinker, and an artist that have had a dramatic effect on my life after tutoring. These values—and my ongoing association with writing centers—continue to sustain me personally and professionally in welcome and surprising ways.

As a junior at Agnes Scott College in the early 1990s, I was—I admit it—a technophobe. I did not own my own computer, so when faced with a writing assignment, I sought out the most nonthreatening lab on campus I could find. Eventually I settled on a small lab located on the third floor of Buttrick Hall that called itself the Writing Center. With just a few computers facing large windows and a big wooden conference table in the middle of the room, the room was inviting, and there was usually some friendly person on site who would answer my computer questions. As I worked on my papers, I often overheard snippets of tutoring sessions, but I did not participate; I was an English literature-creative writing major, after all, and I already knew how to write well.

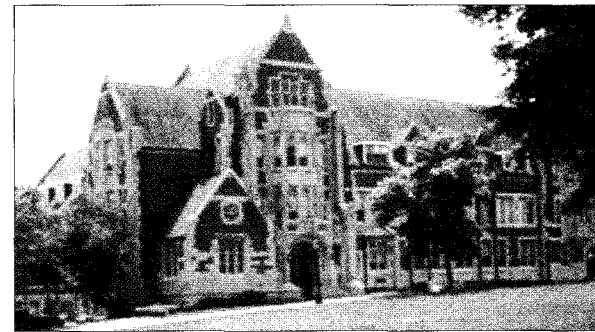
Gradually my questions about technology evolved into questions about particular word choices, then particular sentence structures, then paragraph organization, until finally one of the tutors suggested I sign up for a tutorial. I was reluctant—something about pride, something about fear—but I decided to give it a try. By the end of that year, I was a regular, and in the fall of my senior year, I found myself back in Buttrick 308, preparing to become a tutor myself.

Senior year: I complete a short fiction thesis, perform in several shows on campus and even direct a one-act play, and I am having a great time tutoring—and being tutored—in the writing center. But as the year draws to a close, I find myself in a bit of quandary. I have always known that I would go to college, that I would major in English and creative writing. But suddenly it's May, and I don't know what comes next.

A couple of public relations internships with theatres and arts organizations quickly taught me that while I loved the writing and the theatre, the promotional cold calling involved left me, well, cold. Poring over job listings in the college's Career Services office the summer after graduation, I came across an advertisement for something called a "literary internship" at Denver Center Theatre Company. I had not even known that theatres had "literary interns," but the only thing I loved as much as writing was theatre, so I applied. Denver Center hired someone else, but the literary manager there forwarded my application to Actors Theatre of Louisville, and in November 1992, I packed my bags for Louisville, Kentucky, where I was introduced to the profession of dramaturgy.

I worked in the literary department of Actors Theatre from November of 1992 until June of 1993. I described my job in a letter written to my Agnes Scott

writing center director: Dramaturgs have a rather varied job description; indeed, one of their main functions seems to be going around explaining to everyone just exactly what it is that they do. A brief explanation: there are two main areas of dramaturgy, production dramaturgy and new play development. Production dramaturgy involves



Buttrick Hall at Agnes Scott College, where Sandee began her tutoring career.

working on established plays, conducting research for the director and cast, writing program notes and scholarly articles, and serving as an extra pair of eyes and ears in the rehearsal process. Dramaturgs working on new plays, in addition to conducting research, work directly with the playwright, serving as a respondent to the text, helping the playwright refine and clarify the writing and making sure that what the writer wants to say is what's coming across on paper and in production. Although I had never dramaturged a show prior to working in Louisville, my tutoring experiences stood me in good stead.

A dramaturg, like a tutor, serves as an "early" audience member for the production as a whole in the case of production dramaturgy and for the play, the writing itself, in new play development. At Actors Theatre I worked on the development of two new plays, one of which was presented at the Humana Festival of New

American Plays, and I consulted with two acting apprentices who were writing and performing their own monologues. Since then, I have applied the skills I first learned as a tutor to dramaturgical work in several professional and community theatres in Georgia and Ohio, questioning, responding, and writing: being, as former ATL literary manager Michael Bigelow Dixon described it, the “playwright’s advocate.”

Interestingly enough, the connections I identified between my experiences as a peer tutor and a dramaturg became the subject of my first professional conference presentation as a graduate student at Ohio State University: “Life After Tutoring: Collaboration and the Creative Process in the ‘Real’ World (or, at least, in the Arts).” As a peer tutor, I had relished the hours I devoted each week to talking one on one about writing. As a dramaturg, I not only dialogued with individual playwrights about their work but also taught several playwriting workshops. All that writing talk encouraged my own creativity, and I found it immensely rewarding to share my love of language with others. I wanted to teach writing.

Ohio State University had an excellent composition program, and they also had reputable programs in creative writing and dramaturgy. It was a match. As a graduate teaching associate in the department of English, I went through a week’s training program that emphasized writing as a process of drafting and revision and introduced the practice of peer response. Aside from slinging half a stack of syllabi across the room in a gesture of nervous enthusiasm, I found that my first day in the classroom went well. Here, there were obvious connections to be made between tutoring writing and teaching composition. My tutoring experiences had prepared me especially well for specific tasks, such as conferencing individually with students about their papers. At first, I was surprised and saddened by how much students feared these conferences—until I remembered own experiences as a reluctant tutee. Once the students realized that conferences were simply conversations in which we talked about their essays and their rhetorical choices, they

relaxed—just as I had. More important, they came back.

The focused questioning I engaged in as a peer tutor strongly influenced my method of responding to students’ writing. After several years of classroom teaching, I am still much more likely to ask questions than to assert an absolute correction. My students sometimes wish I would just tell them “how to fix it,” but they know—because I teach them—that it’s not that simple. My comments and questions in the margins of their papers are a part of the teaching-learning conversation that we are engaged in, and such conversations are always much more productive and interesting when characterized by questions instead of proclamations. That was a lesson I learned first as a peer tutor.



Sandee (pictured far right) and North Georgia College and State University tutors have fun playing “dress-up” at the Museum of the New South in Charlotte.

There have been other direct connections. I tutored as a writing consultant in Ohio State’s writing center for a year, and later I rediscovered tutoring from the tutee’s perspective, as I visited the center with my dissertation on rhetoric and feminist theatre. Being able to talk through my ideas as they changed and developed was invaluable to my progress, and that experience reminded me of just how effective one-to-one writing talk is.

I might well have completed my dissertation without the writing center’s support. But I would not be the writer or teacher I am today had I not found myself sitting in Buttrick 308 that fall afternoon in 1991, awaiting tutor orientation. My graduate studies in

rhetoric and composition introduced me to the specific vocabulary of drafting, rethinking, and revising. But it was my experiences as an undergraduate peer tutor and tutee that really taught me—showed me—that both writing and learning were processes, recursive, collaborative, ongoing. It was tutoring that taught me that writers make choices, and those choices have effects; that choices can always be revised, that the text, written or lived, can always be improved. The learning curve arcs across a lifetime. Tutoring taught me a new way of understanding writing and learning and, thus, a different way of being in the world. Director of a writing center now myself, I try to remember these lessons as I imagine and, no doubt, shape my tutors’ lives after tutoring. ✨

Balancing Act: Collaboration in Writing Center Administration

By Marcy Trianosky, Hollins University

Marcy Trianosky received the 2002 SWCA Achievement Award. At the annual conference, the award recipient from the previous year is invited to give a speech at the awards presentation ceremony for the current year. This speech was delivered on Saturday, 15 February 2003, at the awards presentation lunch that closed the conference in Charlotte.

When I was asked to give this talk as a recipient of last year's SWCA Achievement Award, I immediately thought that an appropriate topic might be how writing center administrators might become more adept at collaborative administration in their centers. As we all know, the demands on our time are multiple and complex. I've done some reading about theories of collaboration in writing centers and writing program administration over the past two months, thinking about how we can apply these theories to concepts of collaborative administration in our centers, and I want to share some of those thoughts with you today.

One of the most difficult concepts I've struggled with in trying to figure out how to be a truly collaborative administrator of my writing center is how to balance my responsibility and authority as director with my desire to keep my tutors directly involved in the running of our center. For me this difficulty turns on the idea that my writing center, like yours, has an institutional context, and that context is not particularly collaborative.

Academic institutions are known for their emphasis on "distinctions of academic rank" (Harrington 53-54). Tenure and promotion are the stuff of our daily lives as administrators and as faculty members in academia. But a victim mentality that emphasizes only the gap between the less hierarchical collaborations we see in our writing center tutorials and the intensely political collaborations that are required of us as administrators is a stance that promotes the misunderstanding of the goals and limits of collaboration. And that is part of what I want to talk about here. Collaboration, as "[Molly] Wingate reminds us.. [is] in itself ...neither good nor

bad; collaboration's goals and contexts must be articulated carefully if good results are to follow" (quoted in Harrington 57).

What this means in practice is that our ideas about collaboration in our writing centers with our tutors and our ideas about collaboration with administrators and faculty on our campus must be informed by a clear articulation of our goals for those contexts. We need to articulate what we want from our collaboration with tutors in the writing center and what we want from our colleagues in our institutions.



Marcy (pictured far right) has a quick collaboration with Bob Parham (left) and Phillip Gardner at the recent SWCA Conference in Charlotte.

So what might we ask of ourselves, and our tutors in the center, and of our colleagues in our institutions as we try to sort out the complexities of collaboration in "a reality dominated by institutional hierarchy" (Harrington 7)?

I think I can boil it down to two basic principles, which we can apply to our relationships with our tutors and to our relationships within our institutions.

First of all, let go, but don't go too far. When

working with administrators, it is easy to get frustrated if they don't understand the importance of writing and writing centers that we experience every day, and which we believe in with such enthusiasm. And at times local politics become so intense that we must pull back and let things unfold as they will, regardless of our wish and hope that things were different. That's when we need to let go. But, don't go too far. Don't forget to return to the table with faculty and administrators, to be persistent and positive in your attempts to remind your colleagues of the importance of writing in the curriculum and the importance of the work in your centers. As difficult as this sounds, I find this principle even more difficult to apply in my

work with tutors. Why? Because working with tutors is intensely personal. Our tutors are human beings. They have lives. And I find that our emotional lives and our intellectual lives often collide.

But how can I let go when a tutor needs to cry in my office? How can I avoid being late for class if a tutor stops me on Front Quad to talk about the disappointment she felt in creative writing workshop last night when her manuscript was badly “dissed”? These are moments for getting close, not letting go. Of course, we all know the value of stepping aside eventually, of letting our tutors be the smart, thoughtful, imaginative people they are—letting them go, letting them move on in their lives and in their careers.

The second principle I want to suggest for successful collaborative administration in a writing center is this: share information, but know when to shut up!

Okay, this one’s tough for me, because any of you who know me, know that I have a hard time shutting up! I wish Sonja Bagby were here—I know she’d back me up on this. Anyway, this is an especially difficult task when working with administrators and faculty, because often our enthusiasm about writing and writing centers makes us want to lecture our colleagues about how to do things and why. Sharing our knowledge about writing centers and writing is crucial to fulfilling our responsibilities as writing center administrators. We are the experts in presenting knowledge about the importance of one-on-one tutorials, the importance of personal attention to further students’ writing abilities. So share your knowledge and your enthusiasm. But know when to back off.

This is a principle that is also more difficult in practice when talking about our role with tutors. And that’s because our tutors are experiencing our institution in an entirely different way. They’re students, to state the obvious. And this means that sharing with them all our woes about administrative hassles and faculty politics is not appropriate—it’s too much of a burden to expect them to absorb all of that. But, and this is important, we must teach our student tutors—graduates and undergraduates—to understand the institutional context within which they work. We must help them to work in an informed way, within the context of our institutions and within the context of our professions. I share discussions held at faculty and committee meetings with my tutors. I help them understand how changes in the writing requirement will affect our center and their work. I trust them to take in this information and use it to make their tutoring more informed and intelligent. But I also know when to stop—when to take my venting about my frustrations with my institution elsewhere—usually to the WCENTER list! So this is our challenge: to balance the personal and professional demands of our

writing centers through intelligent, humane collaboration with our tutors and our colleagues. To share our emotional lives as well as our intellectual lives, to share our knowledge and our expertise. And to balance all that sharing with pulling back when we need to.

As I conclude my remarks to you today, I want to share an insight provided by Christine Cozzens in a session yesterday. Christine, as most of you know, is a long-time SWCA board member and editor of our regional publication, *Southern Discourse*. One of the wonderful things for me about writing center conferences is the synergy of being with all of you, of listening to new ideas in your conference presentations and getting energized all over again about this wonderful career we have chosen in writing centers. So I’d like to share something that Christine said in the terrific session she led yesterday with Phillip Gardner. In talking to us about the shift we need to make in writing center theories to embrace a more positive image of ourselves and our practices, Christine said, “Why aren’t we talking more about writing? It’s about writing.” Well, “duh,” I thought. Of course! It’s about writing.

Most of us got into this field because we love writing, and as teachers we have a desire to communicate that love for writing to others and to help them achieve a level of writing ability appropriate to our institutional settings and to our students’ goals.

But to teach writing we have to keep being writers. We have to write ourselves—journals, poetry, essays, professional papers, and conference presentations, messages to the online discussion groups, even letters to family and friends. All of these are ways we can keep ourselves connected to the writing process, to the joys of writing, by writing ourselves.

So. . .don’t forget to write! Thank you. ✨

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SWCA All Shook Up:

Pictures from the 2003 SWCA Conference in Charlotte, NC



Donna Sewell, Allison Brimmer, and James Inman meet Elvis.



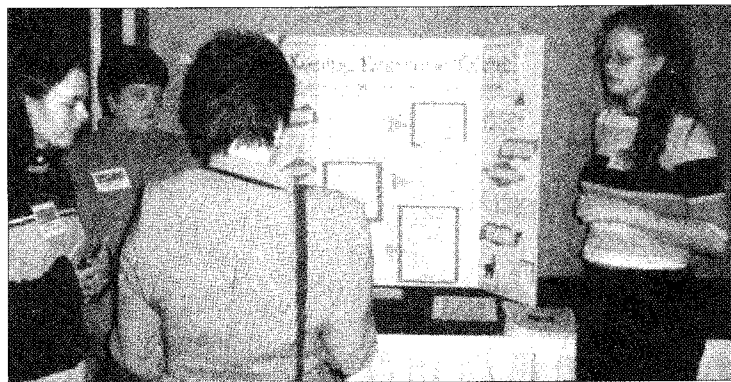
Saint Augustine's College tutors and director enjoy Saturday's breakfast.



Patricia Lambert Stock gives the keynote speech at the conference.



Suzan Phillips from Winthrop University speaks on "The Feng Shui to Writing."



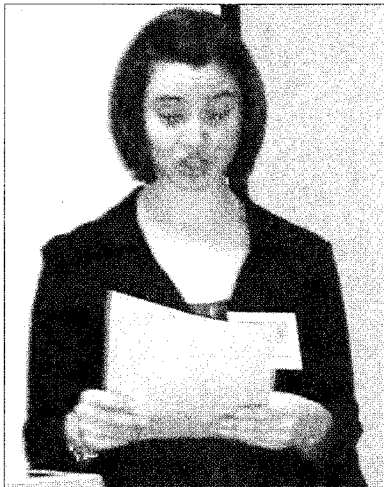
Hollins University's poster session is "Keeping Everyone Talking."



Agnes Scott College tutors (above) present SWCA Achievement Award to director Christine Cozzens (right) with a short skit.



Jennifer Liethen Kunka, Jerry Mwangbe, and Stone Shiflet dine elegantly at Saturday's breakfast.



April Baker from Winthrop University presents the "The Whole Process."

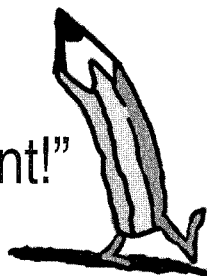


Together (from left) Marci Trianosky, Debra Dobkins, Christine Cozzens, and Mary Guthrow lead a panel on woman-to-woman tutoring at women's colleges.

What's the Point?

The Absurd Logic of Illogic, or, Mama Always Said, "Don't Point!"

By Peter Carriere,
Georgia College and State University



"Don't take grammar and punctuation rules too seriously, even though you need to know them," I told my senior seminar class. "The fact is, they're mostly illogical, but with a degree you will be expected to know them, logical or not."

Then I showed them a few instances of logic gone bad, as in the seventeenth-century attempt to make the apostrophe, a benign little curled virgule, an indication of possession.

"What's this mark between the 'n' and the 's,'" I asked, writing "John's car" on the board. They knew it showed possession. But they had no clue about its origin.

"One way to show possession in English," I continued, "has always been to use the possessive pronoun: for example, the word 'his' in 'John his car.' Now, the apostrophe's main job is to indicate something left out, as in the line 'My Bonnie lies o'er the ocean,' where the apostrophe tells us that the 'v' is left out of 'over' and we need to slur through the word. In a burst of myth-making insight, sixteenth-century scribes, probably accompanied by a terrific effusion of handshaking and shouts of Eureka, leapt to the conclusion that the apostrophe must indicate that the 'hi' is left out of 'his': hence, 'John's car.'"

The students brightened. Light bulbs above their heads began to glow all around the room.

"Ah, but what about 'Mary's car'?" I asked.

The light bulbs began to dim.

"As we use it, there's a gender problem, isn't there?" I noted. "'Mary's car' must mean 'Mary his car.' We seem to have an accepted, etched-in-stone agreement

error here, which is absolutely illogical, and nobody seems to care! Ah, me," I lamented. "Where are the grammar cops when we need them?"

But this logic problem did not arise out of the natural development of a living language. Nope! It was created by those sixteenth-century rationalists who attempted to impose logic on English grammar when the language was doing fine without it. As it happens, the "s" for possession may be traced back to Old English, where it was a standard feature of the language. The word for "king" was "cyning" in Old English, and the possessive form, as in "the king's crown" was actually "cyninges" (without the apostrophe). So "Mary's car" does not really mean "Mary his car."

But who said that the imposition of Latin rules of grammar and punctuation on English made any sense? Okay. Some people in talk radio, perhaps, but who else?

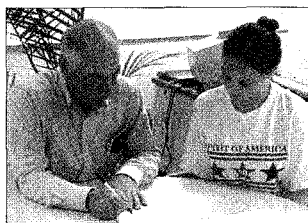
And what about spelling. Linguists tell us that words like "grass" used to be pronounced as "gærs," and one theory about why it changed is that humans naturally try to make things easier on themselves, even pronunciation. So now we have "grass" instead of "gærs" and everybody's happy. So how about making things easy on ourselves by adopting a position of less is more for punctuation, which is close to what the *Chicago Manual of Style* suggests for the comma, whose use should be "mainly a matter of good judgment, with ease of reading the end in view" (165).

The illogic of being too correct is well illustrated by the word "children," a prime example of grammatical redundancy. It turns out that one way to form the plural of some words in English (back when monsters like Grendel ate thanes) was to inflect it with "ru": one "cild" but two "cildru."

But what about the "en" part? It turns out that the "en" suffix also indicated the plural: one "ox," two "oxen." Of course, human offspring are too important for the plural to be left up to only one suffix, and besides, aren't two plurals better than one? According to Dr. Wayne Glowka, what happened is that the "u" dropped off of the "ru" plural, and a redundant "en" was added. Hence, today we have "children," a word with two plurals!

How about the word "woman"? From the OED, here's the way it was used in the ninth century: "Minutia hatte an wifman. . . ." The idea of "woman" originally meaning "wife man" is interesting enough, but as Albert Baugh points out in his *History of the English Language*, "often the gender of Old English nouns is quite illogical (56)." "Wifman," it turns out, was a masculine noun.

WHAT'S THE POINT: Continued, Page 11



Peter Carriere tutors a student.

The OWL's Nest

Praising Collaboration and Saying Goodbye



By Donna Sewell, Valdosta State University, and James A. Inman, University of South Florida

Collaboration has long been a hallmark of writing center work, and nothing changes when the focus turns to OWLs. Indeed, collaboration there may be all the more important and compelling. Opportunities for collaboration abound in OWL design, construction, and use.



James Inman and Donna Sewell

Perhaps scholarship about OWLs is where collaboration is most easily observed. Books like *Wiring the Writing Center* and *Taking Flight with OWLs: Examining Electronic Writing Center Work*; articles in *Writing Center Journal*, *Computers and Composition*, and *Writing Lab Newsletter*; webtexts in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*; and the CD-ROM *The OWL Construction and Maintenance Guide* all chronicle the way collaboration shapes OWL ventures. Collaborative identities sometimes even outshine individual identities. Who among us would not think of Jennifer Jordan-Henley, for instance, when the name Barry Maid comes up, and vice versa. Their hard work with the Cyberspace Writing Center Consultation Project has etched them together in our minds, reminding us almost subconsciously just how important collaboration is. We know, even, that many people think of us in the same way—when they hear Inman, they think Sewell, and vice versa. At first, we'll confess that we weren't sure what to think of that, but now we've grown to like it and to think it represents well the importance of our collaboration to us both.

It's our experience in the field that graduate and undergraduate students often excel in collaborative ventures, so we want to point especially to their efforts as important. Muriel Harris lists many tutors and coordinators who helped shape the Purdue OWL (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/lab/owl/history.html>), for

instance, and her acknowledgment underscores just how important students are in all writing center activities. An example from our region is this year's SWCA Peer Tutor Achievement Award winner, Leah Cassorla. At Valdosta State University Cassorla, an undergraduate writing tutor, oversaw the collaborative construction of a new and innovative OWL (<http://teach.valdosta.edu/writingcenter>), a space that allows for synchronous tutorials as well as shared viewing of the original document. Many graduate and undergraduate students from our region present accounts of their research and practice at local and national conferences, and their expertise and interest have collaboratively enriched their centers. We need always to recognize the particular efforts of our region's graduate and undergraduate students; it's one of the most important things we can do.

And, finally, speaking of collaboration, we want to close with an invitation. We have enjoyed the opportunity to write about OWLs and OWL issues for *Southern Discourse* over the last few years, but we want to move on to other collaborative ventures, so we ask for new collaborators to step forward. If you are interested in continuing the column for *Southern Discourse*, please contact Christine Cozzens. You will enjoy working with her. ✨

WHAT'S THE POINT: Continued from page 10

Is it logical to never split an infinitive because in Latin the infinitive form is one word, whereas in English it's two? Is it logical to punish people for using double negatives when Shakespeare used them and selling popular songs today would be impossible without lines like "I ain't got no satisfaction"?

Language is illogical, and we've compounded the inherent illogic of language two ways: first by imposing Latin grammar rules on English, and second by tying punctuation rules to those illogical Latin ones in an attempt to be logical! Besides, it's often the illogic in language that creates the ironies that delight us, as in this epigram on a dog collar by Alexander Pope: "I am his Highness Dog at Kew;/ Pray tell me, Sir, whose Dog are you?" Or the ironic juxtapositions of Huckleberry Finn, who describes a woman's beautiful hair done up "like a chair back." Or Washington Irving's ironic exclamation from "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," that "no good ever came of reading and writing." Or the illogic of insisting that the comma, a mark used to indicate a pause in the voice, "is pronounced with a short sob," which those who wrote *Of the Orthographie and Congruitie of the Britan Tongue* did in 1617 without realizing that it's illogical to "pronounce" a vocal silence!

To insist on forms of correctness based on illogical rules tied to illogical rules strikes me as pretty absurd. And to insist on putting commas in just because a rule calls for it, whether it's needed or not, also strikes me as absurd. Makes me sometimes stare at the horizon with an empty coffee cup and ask, "What's the point?" ✨

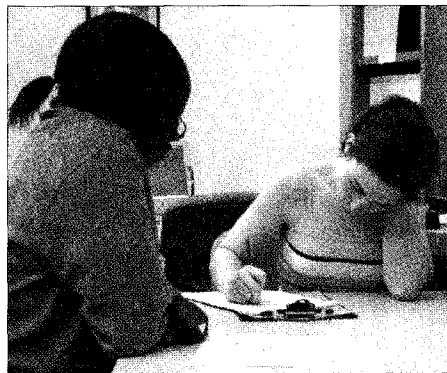
A Profile of the Center for Writing and Speaking at Agnes Scott College

By Nicolette Lee, Agnes Scott College

Every week I sit down with my tutoring partner of two years, Maria Banjo, and I never know exactly what we're going to learn from each other that day. Last week, we spent the entire session discussing a paper in the brainstorming stage. She had all of the ideas already in her head. All I had to do was pull them out and make them stick to paper.

She wanted to write her paper about representations of African Americans in film and how these representations further societal stereotypes. Wow. What an interesting idea for a paper, I thought. This is going to be wonderful. I asked her what type of examples she would use. For this paper, she planned to argue that Halle Berry and Denzel Washington, having recently received Oscars, only won acclaim for roles that perpetuate negative stereotypes of African Americans. Wow again. She had obviously thought about this a lot, but I never had. We talked for awhile about what these stereotypes mean and how they are manifested in film roles. It was one of the most intellectually stimulating conferences I have ever had.

But, this feeling is not unusual in our center. We try to foster conferences that spark dialogues and minds, both of the tutor and the tutee. We do not want that spark to die at the end of the conference but to last until the student finishes the assignment and moves onto the next. Our director, Dr. Christine Cozzens once said about our Center, "We should really call it the 'center for intellectual engagement among students outside of class.' When students work with tutors on their writing or speaking assignments, the resulting dialogue is a two-way street, with both learning from each other. Students who come to the Writing Center or the Speaking Center for



Nicolette Lee (right) collaborating with Maria Banjo.

help go away with a sense that they've really made progress and that it was surprisingly enjoyable to work that way."

History

Our Writing Center began as The Writing Workshop in 1987 when Linda Hubert, the chair of the English department, wanted to expand efforts to help students write better. In 1996, the English department wanted to expand the program to include more writing across the curriculum. The Theatre and Dance Department had also expressed interests in fostering speaking skills, so the Writing Center joined with the newly initiated speaking center in the joint goal of improving students' communications skills.

Although we are formally and ideologically the Center for Writing and Speaking, the two centers share different spaces, and students still refer to us separately as the "Speaking Center" and the "Writing Center." So, the Writing Center most definitely has its own separate identity.

Institutional Environment

Our institutional environment shapes that identity. Agnes Scott is Liberal Arts College for women with approximately 900 students. Our curriculum is notoriously writing intensive with required writing courses in a student's first year to help them adjust to foster their writing skills before they focus their studies. The campus is small and intimate; we have two major academic buildings, one for humanities and one for sciences. Luckily, the small size of our school and campus allow us to develop a particularly close relationship with our faculty and staff, which has proven to be an invaluable resource to the Writing Center.

Location, Location, Location

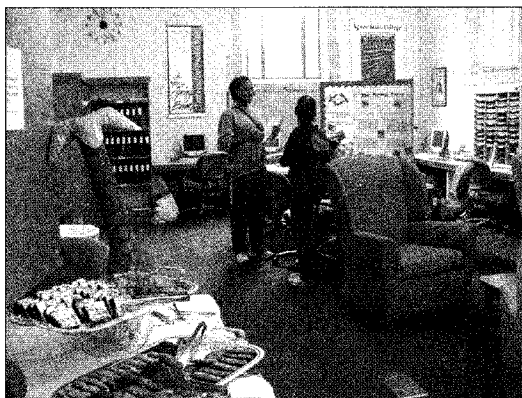
The Writing Center relocated in 2001 to the 24-hour wing on ground floor of the newly renovated McCain Library. Because of our constant accessibility, students have come to view the writing center as a place not only for tutoring but also studying and working on papers alone. The Center is one large room itself with 10 computers available for students, a display screen for presentations, a modest office, and a supply room. Our walls are lined with various resources available to students at all times, including handouts on a plethora of writing issues, sample student papers recommended to us by professors from all different disciplines, and reference materials. Recently, we have begun development on a new Website to become an added resource to both students and faculty (<http://www2.agnesscott.edu/depts/english/wc/index.html>).

Staff

Currently, our staff consists of eleven tutors and one director, Dr. Christine Cozzens. Two senior tutors share the responsibilities of coordinator, but ideally, one graduate-level student would fill the position. Our tutors have various academic backgrounds but all are strong students and writers. To apply as a tutor, students must submit two writing samples, a letter of interest, and supply the names of two faculty members for recommendations; they must also have a certain GPA.

Making a Tutor

Hiring itself is a collaborative process occurring in the spring semester in which all writing center staff read, evaluate, and discuss applications. Training then begins with a two-day intensive workshop in the following fall before classes start and continues throughout the year in weekly meetings. Tutors are assigned readings on writing center theory, perform skits to imitate possible sessions, and read and respond to sample papers as if belonging to a tutee. Tutors work ten hours a week but not only on tutoring. Each tutor is also assigned to team jobs, which include publicity, special events, outreach, resources, and editing our biannual publication for writers, *The Paper Chase*. Most tutors are invited to continue working at the center for the remainder of their time at Agnes Scott College.



The Agnes Scott Writing Center holds its annual open house.

The Conference and the Tutees

Our writing conferences are usually made by appointment. Students can sign up for thirty-minute or hour-long slots on a schedule posted directly outside of the center, with a maximum of two hours per week. Recently, we began offering walk-in hours on Monday nights from seven to ten, during which two or three tutors are available for short conferences for brainstorming or last minute touches on a paper. They have been received with an overwhelmingly positive response from students. We attract students from a variety of majors, from biology to economics to English, for a variety of writing assignments, from cover letters to lab reports to senior theses. Though our tutees vary widely in age, in the fall most of our business comes from first-year students anxious about “college writing.” To meet the demand of these

students, we make class visits to all the first-year English courses, speak during orientation events, and distribute general information about the writing center to them.

Theory

The theory most imperatives to our writing center is collaboration. We strive to help students become better writers, not just help them make better papers. Applying our mantra of collaboration, we have instituted a Partner’s Program, in which a student needing regular writing help (often times an ESL student) is paired with one tutor. They meet together one hour each week to work on writing assignments or general English issues. Also, we offer a course tutoring program, in which a tutor will work with a professor in a selected course, attending classes, doing the reading, and offering regular tutoring hours specifically for the students enrolled in that course. In this program, tutors develop a special collaborative relationship with the faculty member, giving him or her suggestions for upcoming writing assignments, while also being a constant resource for the students.

New Programs

Recently, we have begun a series of Writing Center Workshops, including how to write a personal statement. Our Careers in Writing series brings professionals in different writing fields on campus to show students how they can apply their writing skills after graduating.

Struggles and Solutions

Of course, like any writing center, we have our hardships. Currently, we are struggling to attract business in the spring semester. We are planning a “Writer’s Block Party” for the entire campus in April, including fun activities like a Scrabble tournament and a scavenger hunt. The Writing Center is also becoming more involved in the annual Agnes Scott College Writer’s Festival; we plan on holding a public reading for all the semifinalists on campus. Also, we are constantly trying to improve our relationship with the faculty, so we have begun work on faculty hand-outs, which would provide information to faculty on such topics as how to foster effective peer tutoring in the classroom.

Identity

When it comes down to it, though, the Agnes Scott Center for Writing and Speaking gets its identity from the people who work in it. To me (as biased as I am), the life of our writing center is our tutors, each of which treats their job as if it were not a job at all. Tutors organize all of our events, tutors create all of our publicity, and tutors write all of our publications. Agnes Scott College is the self-proclaimed “World for Women,” in which students are encouraged to take responsibility and make their own future. Our writing center is no different. ✨

Highlights of the February 2003 SWCA Executive Board Meeting and the Business Meeting

By Christina Bourgeois, Georgia Institute of Technology

Executive Board Meeting

The board met on Thursday evening, 13 February 2003, to discuss a variety of organizational issues. This was the first time the board had met since its summer retreat in June 2002. Those in attendance included James Inman (president), Donna Sewell (vice president), Christina Bourgeois (secretary), Karl Fornes (treasurer), Christine Cozzens (*Southern Discourse* editor), Deanna Rogers (2003 conference chair), and members-at-large Mary Alm, Jane Love, Jennifer Liethen Kunka, and Jerry Mwangbe.

Of pressing concern were issues surrounding membership and voting eligibility for Friday morning's elections. Because of problems with past membership tracking and management, now being handled by the Membership Policies and Procedures Committee (Bourgeois, Cozzens, Fornes), current records reflected only twenty-three members at the time of the conference. Since our membership records were inaccurate, the board voted unanimously in favor of extending voting privileges to everyone present at the business meeting the next day. In the future, with improved membership tracking in place, only members will be allowed to vote.

Additional discussion and news regarding membership included the following: Karl has established an online, password protected membership database limited to board access only at this time for use until the Membership Policies and

Procedures Committee determines a more permanent solution.

Based on a motion made by Donna, the board is considering changing the bylaws to limit the number of SWCA members per institution who can vote during elections. Institutions with a large tutor population in attendance at a conference have a voting advantage over institutions with fewer members in attendance. This motion was tabled and will be revisited during the summer board meeting.

The board voted unanimously to increase the cost of membership fees from \$15 (individual) and \$25 (institutional) to \$25 and \$40, effective July 2003. The increase will help to support *Southern Discourse* and to fund other initiatives. The board also discussed whether or not membership should be a prerequisite for presenting at the conference. This motion was discussed and tabled until the summer meeting.

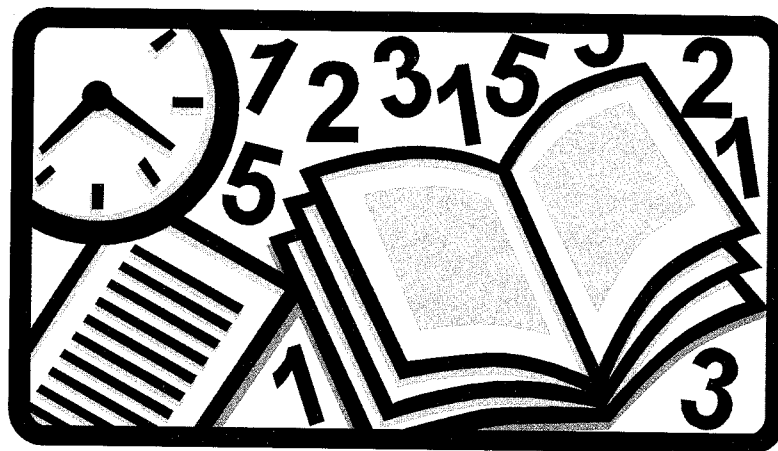
In other news, the board accepted a proposal from Kennesaw State University to host the 2004 conference. Next year's annual meeting will be held in Atlanta, GA and will be coordinated by Robert Barrier and his team of writing center tutors and faculty. The board is now seeking proposals for 2005, 2006, and beyond.

Business Meeting

Deanna Rogers, 2003 Conference Chair, and Deborah Bosley, director of University Writing Programs, opened the Friday morning business meeting by welcoming everyone to Charlotte. James Inman, SWCA president, also made a few opening remarks before acknowledging the conference coordinators, introducing board members and the five initiative teams, and explaining the voting procedures.

Donna then led the election. Nine people had been nominated by mail for two at-large positions. Additional nominations were taken from the floor. Voting resulted in the reelection of Mary Alm and the election of Pamela Childers.

Christine Cozzens encouraged audience members to consider writing articles and contributing creatively to *Southern Discourse*, and Christina Bourgeois clarified membership policies. ✨



Is "To Google" a Verb?

by Jo Koster, Winthrop University

We're not sure if there's a verb "to google," but we do know that in the past if you did a Web search for "SWCA" or the Southeastern Writing Center Association, you'd get a variety of hits, some relevant and some not, but not one clear home page for our association. As of February 2003, that's all changed. Now you can find all the information you'd like about SWCA at our new home page: www.swca.us.

Special Announcement

For the first time ever, the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) and the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPWTW) will host a joint conference.

This historic event will take place on **23-25 October 2003** in Hershey, Pennsylvania. Visit the conference website (www.wc.iup.edu/2003conference/) to find out more about conference activities, accommodations and registration (attendees must register before **17 July 2003** in order to receive the pre-registration discount).

Ben Rafoth, conference coordinator
(brafoth@iup.edu)

Traci Augustosky, program chair
(taugustosky@hotmail.com)

The website was designed by Jane Love of Furman University, with content contributed by the SWCA Online Initiatives Team: Karl Fornes, University of South Carolina, Aiken; Tracy Hudson, Winthrop University; Jo Koster, Winthrop University; Julia Makosky, University of South Florida; Dan Melzer, Florida State University; and Alice Trupe, Bridgewater College of Virginia. Board members Christine Cozzens, Christina Bourgeois, and James Inman also contributed.

On the new SWCA site, you'll find information

about membership and dues, your *Southern Discourse* subscription, and our conferences—past, present, and future. You'll also find minutes of board meetings, the SWCA by-laws, information about proposing to host the conference, and a list of FAQs about SWCA. Finally, you'll find a handy links page to other sources of writing center information online.

We hope you'll surf the page soon and use the handy "Contact Us" link to let us know what you think. The page is a work in progress, and we want to expand and develop it with other material you'd like to see posted. So please—tutor us! Help us revise the page and make it suit your needs better. That's why it's there! ✨

Join SWCA Now and Save Money!

As of **1 July 2003**, SWCA membership dues will be increased from \$15 (individual) and \$25 (institutional) to \$25 and \$40. Membership includes voting privileges, discounted conference registration fees (discounts for an unlimited number of registrants when you have an institutional membership), and three issues of *Southern Discourse* per year (with two additional copies of each issue for institutional members).

If you did not renew your membership right before or during the conference in Charlotte, you still have time to join at the old rates—\$15 (individual) and \$25 (institutional)—and your membership will last until **30 June 2004**. In other words, you get a year and a half of membership privileges at the old yearly rate!

But you must join before **1 July 2003** to take advantage of this offer. Don't delay! ✨

Name: _____
Center or Department: _____
Institution: _____
Mailing Address for copies of *Southern Discourse*: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____
Email Address: _____ Writing Center Web URL: _____

2003-2004 Membership

Individual \$15 Institutional \$25

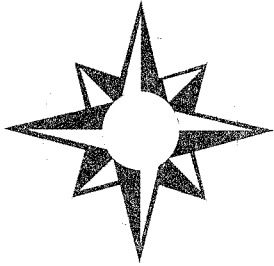
The membership period extends from **1 July 2002** to **20 June 2003**

Mail application with check to:

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

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Decatur, Georgia 30030-3797

**SWCA will hold its next annual
conference in Atlanta in 2004.
Dates to be announced soon.**

Courtesy of Getty Images