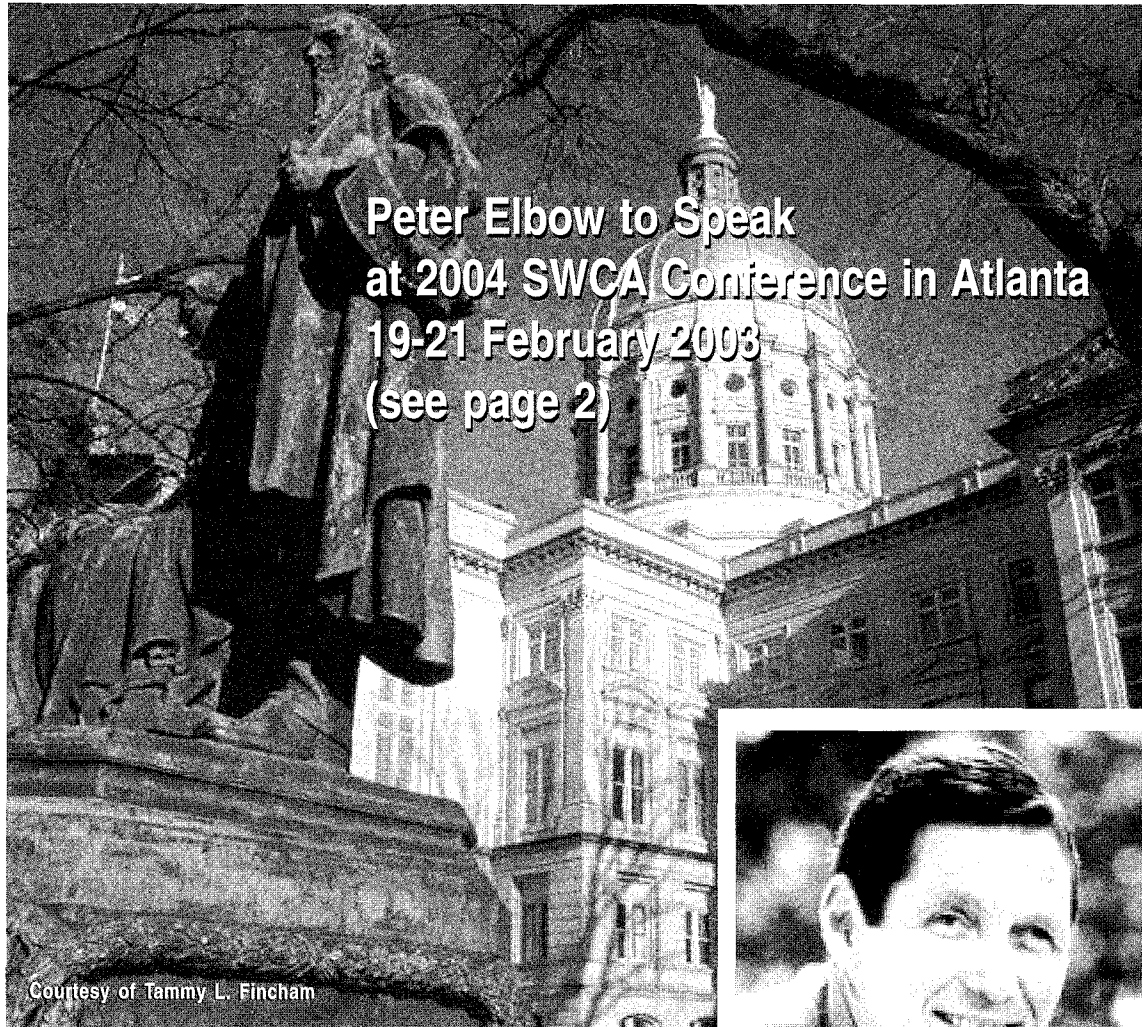


# Southern Connections

Publication of the Southeastern Writing Center Association

Fall 2003 • Volume 7, Issue 1



Courtesy of Tammy L. Fincham

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### Deadlines

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**Summer 2004**  
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**Fall 2004**  
15 September 2004

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AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE  
THE WORLD FOR WOMEN

## From the Editor

By Christine S. Cozzens  
Agnes Scott College

### Under the Harvest Moon

This issue of *Southern Discourse* brings a full harvest of important SWCA business items and other interesting ideas to your door. Please pay special attention to Donna Sewell's article "Looking for a Few Good People" on page 4. As always, the new board will hold the future of the SWCA in its hands. We hope that by using the U. S. Mail to carry out the election, members who can't come to the annual conference will still feel they have a voice. Lift your voice to nominate someone—maybe yourself—and later on to vote for the candidates of your choice.

Everyone in our writing center is excited about Peter Elbow speaking at the conference in February. In preparation for his visit, we read *Writing Without Teachers* during orientation and had a fruitful discussion of this provocative and unusual book. When *Southern Discourse's* managing editor Nicolette Lee emailed Elbow to set up an interview for the fall issue, she found that he was in London for a month, but he graciously offered to be interviewed long distance, and that's what Nicolette did (p. 3). His ideas about writing have been an important if little acknowledged influence on writing centers over the years.

With this issue, *Southern Discourse* welcomes new columnists Pam Childers and Sonja Bagby and the debut of "Compass Points," their column about collaboration (p. 6). To all you writers who'd like a regular gig to keep your writing muscles limber, we have room for one more column. I welcome suggestions for column topics as well as offers to write one. You only have to do it three times a year.

One last but important bit of news, the SWCA executive board has announced an annual prize for the best article or articles in *Southern Discourse* each volume year. An independent panel will judge the contributions, and the prize of \$100 will be awarded at the annual conference. For this year only, all contributions to issues in the new format through last year will be eligible (volumes 5:2 through 6:3). I am grateful to the board for this vote of confidence and happy to be able to honor the good writers who contribute to *Southern Discourse*.



*Christine*

# Introducing Peter Elbow

By Nicolette Lee, Agnes Scott College

For me, it is a very odd concept to talk to someone whose book you have read. I am constantly wondering if the author will speak the way he or she writes, hold the same ideologies, or even have any personality at all off the page.

All of these curiosities came alive when I was asked to conduct a phone interview with the keynote speaker for the 2003 SWCA conference in Atlanta, Peter Elbow. Although we read *Writing Without Teachers* (March 1976) for our tutor training this year at Agnes Scott College, Elbow has written many more books about writing, teaching, and learning since.

Obviously, the writer's block he describes experiencing during his graduate studies did not last long. He has also gone on to edit or help edit three more books: *Nothing Begins with N: New Investigations of Freewriting* (January 1991), *Voice and Writing* (November 1995), and *Writing to Learn: Strategies for Assigning and Responding to Writing in the Disciplines* (February 1997).

Now an emeritus professor of English at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Elbow has also had a long career of teaching writing. He has taught at UMass since 1987, where he directed the Writing Program from 1996-2000. At present, he is organizing a presentation about the man he names as his biggest influence, Ken McRorie, for the annual CCCC conference. Today, he continues to teach graduate seminars at UMass.

Given Elbow's background, you can see why I was a bit intimidated to interview him. But, once I began speaking to him, he was no longer a laundry list of accomplishments. His voice gave him life, and his words made it clear to me why he has written so many books. He has so much to say about writing.

When I asked him how his theories on writing related to the concept of a writing center, he described the dual "ally and adversary relationship" that a teacher has with a student. "In a regular grading situation, the teacher gets felt often by a student as the adversary in addition to the ally because of the grade," acknowledges Elbow. The tutor on the other hand "is one-hundred percent ally...that

makes for the best learning and the best relationship and the best closeness." Related to his depiction of the doubting and believing games in *Writing Without Teachers*, "What the writer's mostly need is someone who can really understand what they're saying even if it's said badly...the tutor has an easier time [at the believing game]...you [the tutor] distance yourself."

As we discussed this year's conference theme, "Getting Back to Writing," Elbow immediately saw the similarities between this credo and his own writing hierarchy. "I love the theme 'Getting Back to Writing' because it feels to me that the actual act of writing is the main thing...All these other things are great. That is not to say giving it to an audience isn't great, but as you go down that line if you move to the second one [step] and it stops the writing, then we [the tutor] should stop."

"It's taken me a long time to realize that everyone wants to write," Elbow admitted. "Because when you operate in a school setting...you're making people write when they often don't want to, and so that can blind you to the fact that they actually do want to write...So, 'Getting Back to Writing' is getting back to this amazing fact that people want to write. In Elbow's opinion, "The question is how much can we arrange our school setting to heighten that." Elbow reflected on the role of writing centers: "I love to see a writing center that can be a place for pleasure in writing and not just duty in writing."



Peter Elbow

Curious as to whether or not he still freewrites, I asked Elbow how much his theories still apply to his own work. He said, "I'm still a fanatic about freewriting." In fact, he said, "I got braver in freewriting...[and] over the years, I have [developed] a freewriting muscle, which is when I get stuck or perplexed or in a diary if I'm trying to figure something out. I can just go. I just let my fingers fly, and that's very, very important to me." All he has to do is "open the door and let the words out." While he does not freewrite as deliberately as he did when he wrote *Writing Without Teachers*, he finds himself freewriting "at a million places." "I'll often put the caps lock on [my computer], and I just write myself without stopping and let them [the words] see where they go."

Although he admitted, "there's a closer physical relationship to the body to writing when you write by hand," he was quick to acknowledge the importance of technology to writing. The notion of "writing it wrong" was extremely controversial when *Writing Without Teachers* was published, but Elbow noticed some curious

# Looking for a Few Good People: SWCA Announces Elections

## Donna N. Sewell, Valdosta State University

The Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) needs you. It's that time of year when we begin looking for a change, looking to bring new people into the organization and into the organization's leadership.

Under James A. Inman, current president, SWCA has established initiative teams to explore issues involving awards program expansion, evaluation, membership expansion, online expansion, and organizational concerns. These teams have added another twenty-four people beyond the executive board members who are actively pursuing the goals of SWCA.

As outlined in our Mission Statement, SWCA works to advance literacy; to further the theoretical, practical, and political concerns of writing center professionals; and to serve as a forum for the writing concerns of students, faculty, staff, and writing professionals from both academic and nonacademic communities in the Southeastern region of the United States, including North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, and the American Virgin Islands.

If you know someone with ideas and a commitment to the goals of this organization, SWCA wants you to nominate that person for any of the positions we have available: president, vice president, secretary, and two at-large board members. The duties of each position are listed below (SWCA Bylaws revised and approved April 2002).

### President

The president of the association will chair the executive board; moderate the annual general business meeting; serve in an ex-officio capacity on editorial boards of journals, on all committees (including planning the annual conference), and coordinating state representatives; and serve as liaison to the International Writing Center Association. Term: two years.

### Vice president

A vice president will be elected who will work closely with the president. The vice president shall assume the duties of the president in the president's absence and shall

undertake such responsibilities as delegated by the president, including serving as parliamentarian during the annual business meeting. The vice president shall be responsible for issuing a call for nominations and developing a slate of nominees in time for voting by the annual conference. Term: two years with no immediate succession.

### Secretary

The executive secretary will be in charge of taking minutes at all business meetings and will serve as custodian of the organization's membership records. The secretary will work with the treasurer and the conference director in managing the membership list. Term: two years (renewable).

### Members-at-large

Four members will be elected to serve on the board to ensure a total of at least ten members. Term: two years, elected in alternating years.

Executive board members will have the following responsibilities.

- To meet annually preceding the SWCA conference.
- To set annual dues (the fiscal year begins on July 1) and to allocate financial support for the publication of *Southern Discourse*.
- To work in conjunction with the International Writing Centers Association.
- To serve as liaison between the SWCA and related organizations.
- To sponsor the annual conference, conduct the business meeting, and report to members at the annual conference.
- To review and propose revisions in the bylaws as needed.

Nominations may be sent via postal mail or email, but they must be received by **1 November 2003**, to be considered. Please include the nominee's name, institutional affiliation, mailing address, and email address in the nomination form. Send nominations to

Donna Sewell  
Dept. of English  
Valdosta State University  
1500 N. Patterson St.  
Valdosta, GA 31698

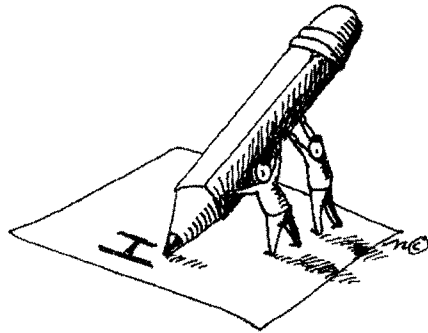
E-mail: [dsewell@valdosta.edu](mailto:dsewell@valdosta.edu)  
Phone: 229-333-5946

LOOKING FOR A FEW: Continued, Page 5

# Call for Proposals: "Getting Back to Writing"

## Submission Deadline: 31 October 2003

The Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) will hold its annual conference February 19-21, 2004. The conference will be sponsored by The Writing Center at Kennesaw State University, located in the northern suburbs of Atlanta. Peter Elbow, Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, will be the keynote speaker.



This year's conference theme, "Getting Back to Writing," puts the emphasis on the writing that our students bring to the tutorial and the interaction between the tutor and tutee as they respond to that writing. These activities are at the heart of the work we do in our writing centers. The year 2004 marks the twentieth anniversary of Stephen North's article, "The Idea of a Writing Center," whose challenging ideas about the writing center tutorial were further complicated by North ten years later in his article, "Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center.'" The conference theme and North's thought-provoking reflections challenge us to look closely at the complex collaborative activity of the tutorial and its implications for our writing centers. Proposals are invited that examine the intersection of the tutorial with tutor training, writing center administration, faculty expectations, institutional missions, and administrative pressures.

Some questions to consider:

- How do we assess the activity of the tutorial effectively? How do we know when our writing centers are really working?
- How do the relationships between tutors, writers, directors, faculty, and institutions affect the tutorial interaction?
- How can tutor training address the multiple roles that tutors play in the highly contextualized environment of an institution's writing center?

- How do writing centers respond to administrative and institutional pressures while maintaining an emphasis on writing improvement through tutoring?

We welcome proposals that address these and related themes. We encourage submissions from staff, administrators, and faculty affiliated with writing centers at all education levels. We particularly want to encourage proposals from peer tutors, since their work is crucial to the success of many writing centers. We encourage you to consider ways in which your proposal will actively engage your audience.

Proposals are invited for poster sessions, twenty-minute individual presentations, three to five person panels, and ninety-minute workshops on topics related to the conference theme. A new award will be presented this year for the best poster session (see announcement on page 7).

For detailed submission guidelines, please go to the SWCA web site: <http://www.swca.us> and go to the link for the 2004 conference.

Direct all question about the proposal process to

Marcy Trianosky, Proposal Committee Chair  
Hollins University  
Roanoke, Virginia  
[mtrianosky@hollins.edu](mailto:mtrianosky@hollins.edu) ✨

### LOOKING FOR A FEW: Continued from page 4

Anyone may nominate, but nominees must become SWCA members (if they aren't already), and only SWCA members may vote in the election. All questions regarding membership status may be directed to Christina Bourgeois, [christina.bourgeois@ece.gatech.edu](mailto:christina.bourgeois@ece.gatech.edu).

After nominations are received on 1 November 2003, nominees will be contacted to ensure that they do want to run and asked to submit brief biographies for the election.

Voting will occur via postal mail, and new board members will be announced at the SWCA conference at Kennesaw State University 19021 February 2004.

It's time, then, to start thinking about who you want to nominate. Get those people's names and contact information to me. I'm waiting to hear from you. ✨

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

*Southern Discourse's* logo is also a fine metaphor for what we will share with you in future issues. We chose the name "Compass Points" because this regular column will explore collaboration in all directions. We will act as guides traveling through a spectrum of topics: some that will hit "close to home," and some that will be "down the road" for our writing centers.



Sonja Bagby

The column will focus on ways that writing centers collaborate horizontally (cross-curricular collaborations within institutions) and vertically (collaborations both hierarchical within an institution and also between secondary and college). Since we direct a secondary (Pam) and a college (Sonja) writing center, we will further collaborate on the writing of each column to discover and consider ways in which writing centers collaborate within and among schools. This first column will focus on how we define those compass points.



Pamela Childers

This summer at the IWCA 2003 Writing Center Summer Institute, Jon Olson, Jill Pennington and Pam led a plenary session on horizontal and vertical collaborations. Forty participants considered possible collaborations that may have initially started as horizontal or vertical but ended involving both. For instance, one vertical collaboration started with community colleges, universities, and secondary schools talking about how they could prepare students for writing at other academic levels. But the group realized that they wanted to discuss ethical issues

in writing centers, training of tutors, theory and pedagogy. In other words, they became peers collaborating in horizontal ways with common issues.

Sonja began to explore collaboration's true meanings in order to facilitate growth in the WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum)/Writing Center Program at the State University of West Georgia during the summer. She thought that maybe it was time to look at collaboration purely. What is collaboration? What should we know about it? What should we do to collaborate effectively and successfully with others? We don't think of working together administratively as "collaboration," do we? Should we?

Pam and Sonja knew that K-12 teachers are far ahead of some universities in terms of teaming and creating partnerships in research and teaching. Austin and Baldwin report also that collaborative practices differ considerably across fields. Collaboration is less widely practiced in "word disciplines" like sociology or political science and is rare indeed in fields like philosophy or literature (Bayer and Smart). We in education could and should capitalize on new knowledge and ideas of teaming, cross "disciplinary" partnerships, and project collaborations from industry and business. However, saying collaboration is very different from doing collaboration. Just as we don't understand writers' struggles unless we write; when we expect collaboration of our students, we might not know or understand the sacrifices and burdens of true collaboration until we "do it."

At the State University of West Georgia, changes are taking place in the English department—a new chair and a new branch of first-year writing with two new codirectors. There is definite horizontal and vertical positioning within the collaboration, which is comprised of a tenured professor who is the chair in English, the two FYW directors who are nontenurable MA lecturers, and Sonja, an ABD writing center director who is adjunct faculty and administrative staff. As part of this new organizational structure and an extension of their commitment to a partnership, beginning this fall English FYW faculty have begun to tutor three hours per week in SUWG's University-Wide WAC Writing Center. The horizontal and vertical nature of this new structure was fraught with tension and anxiety at the earliest planning stages, even alongside the pure excitement of acquiring more staff for the center.

The unfolding of Sonja's collaboration parallels the annual anxiety that Pam, an endowed chair and writing center director, encounters each school year at The McCallie School as she begins her collaboration with a science colleague, who is a class dean and physics teacher. According to Austin and Baldwin, collaboration among faculty often raises issues of power, influence, and professional identity.

The differences in departments, ages, sexes, levels of degrees and positions could lead to some sticky problems of team teaching a senior interdisciplinary elective course, plus collaborating on presentations and publications for another year. Each summer the two colleagues participate in new intellectual and educational experiences that they want to include in what they implement the next year; they have strong personalities, and they want to learn more and share what they have learned to improve the learning of students and colleagues. The tension in this vertical and horizontal collaboration has become the key to the excitement of the collaboration. The writing center has become the place where WAC, teaching and learning become centered on the compass.

To be successful, collaborators must know the dynamics of the collaboration process and be prepared to cope with collaboration's challenges as well as reap its rewards (Austin and Baldwin). Some lessons from our collaborations that we find necessary for ongoing success are

- Be committed to the collaboration. Whatever happens personally or professionally, be devoted to building a successful, long-term partnership.
- Be sure that goals are compatible or shared, and that student learning is the primary mission.
- Communicate! Make sure the real stakeholders or decision makers are present at every discussion of guidelines and policy.
- Acknowledge concerns about changes taking place. Discuss them openly to help change go more smoothly.
- Share information, positive or negative. Do NOT go over another's head to complain or seek redress—talk to your collaborative team first.
- Take responsibility. When you are wrong or something goes wrong, admit it, apologize, and make amends.
- Listen *accurately*. Don't hear emotions in what the person is saying; listen for what he or she is *stating*.
- Try to participate in professional conferences together, submit proposals for papers, discuss your experiences and learn from others. These activities will help cement your partnership early—to show yourself and others that you are, indeed, a research team.
- Share the work equally. Even with busy schedules, check up on each other through regular meetings or lunches.

We will continue to update you on our collaborations in coming issues. Please write us with your questions or ideas: Pamela Childers, [pchilder@mccallie.org](mailto:pchilder@mccallie.org); Sonja Bagby, [sbagby@westga.edu](mailto:sbagby@westga.edu).

Works Cited for "Compass Points" at right

## SWCA Announces Graduate Poster Award

By Jennifer Liethen Kunka, Francis Marion University

It's time to take that great conference idea you've been thinking about all summer and put it into action! The SWCA is pleased to announce a competition to honor the best poster at the 2004 SWCA Conference, to be held February 19-21 in Kennesaw, Georgia.



Agnes Scott College tutors present a poster on "Seeing Eye to Eye" at the 2002 SWCA Conference.

Posters will be evaluated on the originality, content, and presentation. All posters accepted for the conference will be automatically entered into the competition. A subcommittee of the SWCA Awards Committee will review all submissions and select the recipient(s). The recipient(s) will be honored at the annual Awards Brunch during the conference and will receive a prize of \$100.

The new award is designed to encourage more conference attendees to consider presenting their work as posters. We are looking forward to learning from your creative and constructive ideas!

### Works Cited for "Compass Points"

- Austin, Ann E. and Roger G. Baldwin. *Faculty Collaboration: Enhancing the Quality of Scholarship and Teaching*. George Washington University School of Education and Human Development. 1992. ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education Washington DC. | ED347958.
- Smart, John C., and Alan E. Bayer. "Author Collaboration and Impact: A Note on Citation Rates of Single-and Multiple-Authored Articles." *Scientometrics* 10 (1986): 297-305.

# A Profile of the Writing Center at Winthrop University

By Jane Bowman Smith, Winthrop University

## History

Founded in 1976, the Winthrop Writing Center was originally a “grammar lab,” aimed at assisting freshmen whose final exam in composition was a stringent test of their proficiency with grammar. Almost immediately, however, the faculty assigned to the center expanded its mission to include actual writing tutorials and then added graduate assistants in English to the staff. Undergraduate tutors replaced faculty tutors in 1996. If numbers are any indication, our center’s importance on our campus continues to grow: over the past four academic years, Winthrop students’ use of the center has more than doubled, from 1,535 tutorials (1999-2000) to 3,360 (2002-2003). Students come from all four colleges—Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, the Richard W. Riley College of Education, and the College for Visual and Performing Arts—to work on their writing. Approximately 50 percent of our clients are freshmen; seniors, often enrolled in the “writing intensive” class required in each field of study, compose roughly 25 percent of our clients. A recent re-working of our General Education program has instituted a significant writing component in all general education classes, and we are expecting even greater student and faculty use of the center as a result.

## Location

Bancroft Building, presently home of the English, speech, history, political science, social work, and math departments,



Jennifer Beattle and Suzan Phillips file important writing center documents. (Photographed by April Baker)

## By the Numbers

**Winthrop University:** a state-supported, liberal arts institution of approximately 5,200 undergraduate and 1,400 graduate  
**Director:** Jane Bowman Smith (six years)  
**Consultants:** three graduate assistants, and from five to ten undergraduate tutors, primarily but not exclusively English majors  
**Student visits:** in 2002-2003, 3,360 half-hour appointments  
**Hours open per week:** forty-five hours (eight hours in a one-month term)  
**Recruitment of consultants:** potential tutors take WRIT 500, a three-hour class (faculty, director, and tutor recommendations)

as well as the writing center, was once a dormitory; the renovation of the building transformed four dorm rooms into tutoring space and an office, and we have worked to make the center “student-friendly” with posters and plants. Steadily increasing center use has changed our perceptions of a space that once seemed very large. Despite a smaller tutoring area than we now need, however, we have more than adequate storage space: we kept all four of the dorm rooms’ closets! The tutoring space has room for six tutoring

tables, a station for two computers, and a comfortable chair for independent work. Students and tutors may use books for almost any subject taught on campus, handbooks, created handouts, journals on writing and tutoring, and our web site: [www.winthrop.edu/wcenter](http://www.winthrop.edu/wcenter). Faculty members are encouraged to send copies of their syllabi, assignments, and models of student work for center use.



### Tutors and their Training

Each fall, the director offers WRIT 500, The Theory and Practice of Tutoring, a three-hour academic course that is an elective in the writing minor and the professional communications track in the English major. Students from other majors are encouraged to take the class as well as an elective. Besides assigned reading and writing, students in the class observe for five weeks in the center and then practice tutoring with a mentor tutor's guidance; if they qualify, they tutor on their own for the last five weeks of the semester. To qualify for tutoring, students must demonstrate success in the class—partly through their writing, but also in their ability to listen and establish rapport with others. The tutors discuss each student's work with the director in staff meetings, and only those students who fully meet our expectations are allowed to tutor on their own. In another meeting, students are evaluated once again to determine whether or not they should be offered a paying position in the following semester.

### Outreach

Fortunately, the center has not had trouble attracting student clients, and we have actually tutored faculty and staff members as well. As is true in most communities, however, conventional wisdom is sometimes stronger than reality, and the center must deal with some faculty members and students who believe many of the myths about writing and thus see the center as a "fix-it shop," a place where only weak writers appear to work on their basic skills. Like other centers in our region, we work continually to educate faculty across the campus about writing and writing instruction as well as to clarify our mission. We help to make connections among freshman writing, the intensive writing faculty and their courses, the new General Education Program, and the Teaching and

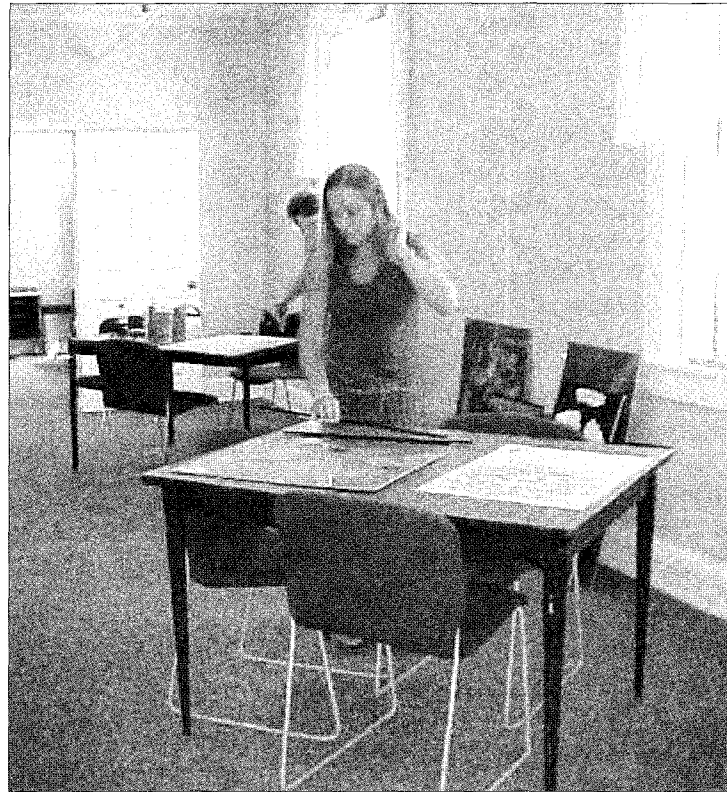
Learning Center. Perhaps because center surveys have suggested that the professors themselves are our most effective advertising tool, we are very aware of the need to maintain positive, effective relations with the faculty across the campus. We also work to address students directly whenever possible: this past summer, for example, the center was included in the freshmen orientation tours, which fortunately took place during our regular

summer hours. Approximately 160 visiting freshmen (in groups of about twenty) toured the center and met a tutor, who explained our mission and how to get help with writing.

### Final Thoughts

Like many centers, our mission is to help students become better writers for the long term; we aim to do much more than produce better pieces of writing. Our center is fortunate in that we have consistently drawn talented, committed students to tutor. They work hard to become professionals by taking a three-hour class, raising and discussing issues or problems in monthly staff meetings, and creating handouts; they have also regularly traveled to both the Southeastern Writing Center Association Conference and the International Writing Centers Association Conference to present their research. And both students and tutors benefit from our collaborative atmosphere. As one of our graduate assistants said, "The center has given me a space in which to grow, not just

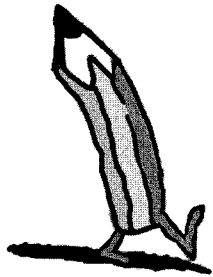
intellectually, but as a whole person, and I learn about myself in the process of helping someone else."



Jennifer Beattie thinks about the best location for decorative posters in Winthrop's Writing Center. (Photographed by April Baker)

# What's the Point? A New Mark: The Perception Point

By Peter Carriere,  
Georgia College and State University



The picture at the right has become a cliché of composition theory. It illustrates the problem of objective “correctness” as determined by an authority figure. Depending on how your mind works, you will see either an old woman or a young woman in the drawing. If you’re a perceiver of uncommon acuity, you will see both. Here’s how: the curve that defines the left side of the young woman’s chin defines the left side of the old woman’s nose. You may be able to see it more clearly if you put your finger over what appears to be the left eyelash and nose of the young woman. The young woman’s ear is the old woman’s left eye. The line across the neck of the young woman is the old woman’s mouth, and the young woman’s revealing neckline is the old woman’s chin.

Obviously, if you insist that there is only one correct way to perceive the drawing—because you just don’t perceive the other possibility—you’re being closed-minded. The “correct” way to interpret the drawing is to leave it open to three possibilities: it’s either a young woman, an old woman, or both.

The point is that the writer’s point may not be the reader’s point: in which case deducting points for infractions of all but the most egregious and misleading errors becomes a pointless exercise. Which may be why every study in the last hundred years suggests that grammar and punctuation rules learned from workbook exercises don’t transfer to student writing.

Take this rule from the 1991 Steck-Vaughn *Language Skill Book*: “Use a comma to set off words like yes, [sic] no, [sic] well, [sic] and oh [sic] at the beginning of a sentence.” Here’s a sentence from the exercises that follow the rule: “Oh I still have a lot of work to do” said Mrs. Loster. According to the rule there should be a comma after “oh” (another rule addresses the one after “do”). But what about this exchange:

“I didn’t use your food.”

“Oh. Well. . . . That’s OK.”

Or “Oh, well. That’s OK.”

Or “Oh. Well that’s OK.”

Or “Oh, well. . . . That’s OK.”

Or, well, you get the point. Oh, and it’s a matter of authorial intent here, isn’t it? Woe unto the poor kid who uses punctuation creatively to indicate vocal intonation, stress, and pause according to his own perception.!!!!

Here’s another rule from the Steck-Vaughn workbook: “Use an **exclamation point** at the end of an exclamatory sentence and after words such as

Oh and Oops that show strong feelings.” So who’s to say that any given phrase does or doesn’t “show strong feelings”? The student who writes the essay or the teacher who grades it? In this case the author knows best it seems to me.

So here’s a test. Which of the following sentences is punctuated correctly:

You won the lottery. Oops! You won the lottery?

You won the lottery? Oh. You won the lottery.

You won the lottery! Oh? You won the lottery?

Right! They all are, so it’s a pointless exercise you say? Not really. The way you punctuate each sentence depends on your perception of intonation, stress, and pause, and the punctuation you choose becomes your tool for indicating these subtleties to me. Your use is yours, not mine. But the rule doesn’t cover these situations. Naturally, if I’m writing a string of workbook exercises I’ll include



From “Activities in Psychology.”  
Portland, ME: Walch, 1982.

WHAT'S THE POINT? Continued, Page 11

## By Bob Barrier, Kennesaw State University

Here are some details about what we have planned at Kennesaw for February. Please check our website [www.kennesaw.edu/swca](http://www.kennesaw.edu/swca) for information and updates.

Besides Peter Elbow's visit and address, we are organizing special panels on computer technology, teaching, and tutoring and on regional opportunities for publishing in academic journals.

The conference hotel is the Northwest Atlanta Marriott, convenient to Interstates 285 and 75, yet located in Northwest Atlanta's Interstate North Office Park about a mile away from the noise and traffic. The rates are a reasonable \$89/night (plus tax), and ten rooms per night have been set aside at student rates of \$79. These will fill up quickly. Contact our website or call 1-800-228-9290 for reservations.

The hotel, twenty-two miles from Atlanta Hartsfield Airport (shuttle service provided), features 398 rooms and a very unusual 400-plus seat conference building in the courtyard. Marriott provides a free shuttle to Cumberland Mall and the Cobb Galleria area, two miles away. Perimeter Mall and Lenox (still the largest in the southeast) are both about seven miles distant. Chattahoochee National Recreation Area is one mile away, and downtown Atlanta is within twelve miles.

For those arriving Thursday night, we are planning a reception on campus at the Legacy Gazebo and at a nearby lodge. There will be an open-mike entertainment at the Gazebo with refreshments and prizes for best entertainment. Shuttle service to the campus (twelve miles away) will be provided. In addition we are

making plans to have a room available Friday night at the nearby Dave and Busters, with music, games, and food.

Marietta itself is only six miles down US 41, and the award-winning Theater in the Square will be performing Warren Leight's *Side Man*, a Tony award-winning comedy, on Friday and Saturday nights. If enough are interested in attending, we can obtain special rates for the performance. Though many events are yet to be announced, that weekend will feature performances of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Atlanta Ballet and at the New American Shakespeare Tavern and *My Fair Lady* at the Alliance Theater. All of these events and more will be listed on our website.



There are fountain shows every hour until 9:20 p.m. in Centennial Park in downtown Atlanta. (Courtesy of Centennial Park)

The registration of \$90 for faculty and \$65 for student also covers two brunches and a luncheon Friday, as well as breakout refreshments. Vegetarian, vegan, and sugar-free foods will be provided, and those with special dietary requests are urged to contact us for accommodations.

Nearby restaurant facilities are Allie's American Grille (onsite), Houston's, Nathaniel's (Continental), and Pappadeaux (seafood). Though the hotel is secluded within the office park, there are seventy restaurants and fast-food facilities within a mile. Atlanta's major restaurants are from seven to fifteen miles away. And no matter what the weather for dining and meeting, we can expect special coverage, for the headquarters of the Weather

Channel is within the office park itself.

What's the point? The question is not just

ones that illustrate the rule. But when I'm alone and writing for myself I create situations not covered by the rule. So I use some logic and make my punctuation fit the circumstance as I perceive it. We all do. We have to because the Latin rules imposed on English in the eighteenth century don't always match what we do. Or say. Or, say. Or. . . .

So there's a point at which correct pointing becomes rather pointless, wouldn't you agree? Taking away points for pointing according to authorial perception that just happens to conflict with authority perception becomes an exercise in hypocrisy. Like knocking off points for not seeing the old woman in the drawing. Like going up to a kid trying to learn to ride a bicycle and kicking him for falling off! Both situations leave me wondering: "What's the point?"

# Presenting the Written Word at Conferences: An Alternative to Oral Presentations at Professional Meetings and Conferences

By Jerry M. Mwangbe, Kennesaw State University

Last spring, I responded to a call for papers for a diversity conference by submitting an abstract of a paper that focused on globalizing the classroom. When the conference organizers notified me about the status of my abstract, they asked me to present my paper as a poster. Initially, I considered their response as a second-rate acceptance of my abstract and was somewhat discouraged. I soon realized that my perception of poster presentations was naïve and falsely negative.

Coincidentally, during the summer meeting of the SWCA executive board, the board resolved to encourage prospective presenters at the 2004 conference to submit poster presentations. I accepted the responsibility to tell *Southern Discourse* readers about the advantages of posters. This is the first part of a two-part article on poster presentations. Part I focuses on the “why” of poster presentations and Part II will focus on the “how” of poster presentations in the humanities.

It is difficult to find literature that traces the development of poster presentations at professional conferences. But the impact and effectiveness of pictographic presentations are as historical as the story of the development of any form of systematic writing. As early as 3200 BCE, the Egyptians and Sumerians developed the first forms of writing. These early forms of writings were pictographic—the *cuneiform* of the Sumerians and the *hieroglyphics* of the Egyptians. Even the Chinese adage summarizes this point: “A picture is worth a thousand words.”

According to Jeff Radel, of the University of Kansas Medical Center, while there may be no “formal history” of poster presentations,

Posters began as an alternative to oral presentations at scientific meetings, often at smaller meetings, in a room away from the mainstream, and often as a means for students to report their work. As meetings have grown, the poster presentation has become the primary means of communicating findings. This has also resulted in the need to produce useful, clear, and self-contained posters....

A poster is a visual communications tool that engages colleagues in conversation and gets main points across to as many people as possible (Hess and Liegel). It serves as a medium of visually presenting the results of a research



The Hollins University writing center presents a poster on “Keeping Everyone Talking” at the 2003 SWCA Conference.

in the form of a visual display. Simply put, a poster is a static, visual medium (usually of the paper and board variety) a presenter uses to communicate ideas and messages (Tham). Poster sessions of professional organizations typically occur as part of an annual conference. They may occur during some

portion of each day, or during an extended period on a given day of the conference and are usually housed in a special display room. It is expected that the poster presenters are available during some or all of the scheduled poster session to answer questions (Deakin).

Besides the fact that there are a growing number of professional organizations that use poster sessions as an important part of their national conferences, there are several reasons why the poster presentation is not a bad idea after all. Marilyn Levine provides five basic reasons why one should consider submitting a poster presentation. She argues that a poster presentation fosters increased participation by scholarly society members. In the case of the SWCA conference, participation in a poster session suggests that you are contributing to the idea of inclusivity within the writing center community.

In recent times, there have been more abstracts submitted for panel presentations than the spaces that are available for such presentations. Despite the attempts by conference organizers to increase the number of panels, there are still a substantial number of worthwhile proposals that must be rejected only because of the lack of space or they do not fit the thematic design of a panel discussion. Poster sessions serve as an effective remedy for this situation, since they provide the flexibility that is absent in a traditional panel presentation (Levine).

Many researchers consider the poster format a superior method for the presentation of their data. Despite the use of overhead transparencies and other electronic multimedia forms, many panel presenters are still unable to provide the audience with adequate time for the assimilation of the information being presented or to establish a theoretical connection between the presenter's ideas and existing theories and practices. On the other hand,

A poster "can allow for a clearer and more reflective process of presentation, especially of statistical or visual information. Papers traditionally presented in areas such as geography, demographics, linguistics, economics, art history among others, can be perhaps better presented in the poster format" (Levine)

Also, the participants of the conference can absorb at their own pace, the claim, evidence, and conclusion of a presentation.

In addition, the presentation time allotted to individual presenters on a panel, usually fifteen to twenty minutes, is often inadequate. The allotted time

includes the presentation of the speaker, presentation of the work, and a question and answer period. Since most writing center research usually operates on the periphery of a particular paradigm, which must be presented to the audience members so that they grasp the significance of the research, it is difficult to achieve this task and discuss the scope, results and implications of the research during this limited time period. Presenters who try to cover all their material often encroach upon the question and answer period. As a result, only a few persons are able to ask questions. The poster session provides for much more dialogue and interactive discussion of the research.

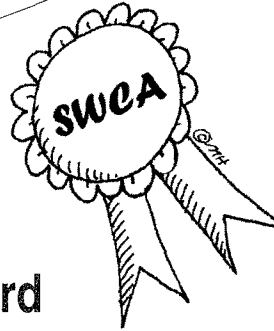
Poster sessions provide avenues for internationalizing professional conferences. With higher education moving rapidly towards globalization and internationalization, many major professional associations are making it a point to foster international exchange of ideas and research. Since some foreign researchers are ESL speakers, and since some of them write fluently in English but cannot speak at the same level, the poster session provides an excellent avenue for international presenters to present their research.

In short, while I do not wish to suggest that paper presentations are no longer the standard, I do wish to encourage prospective presenters at next year's conference to strongly consider poster presentations. So what are you waiting for? Posterize the activities, trends, and observations from your writing center at the SWCA conference in 2004. ✨

#### Works Cited

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# Awards Call for Nominations!



## SWCA 2004 Achievement Award

The Southeastern Writing Center Association Awards Committee is pleased to announce the 2004 SWCA Achievement Award. The SWCA Achievement Award is presented annually on a competitive basis to any writing center administrator at an educational institution in the Southeastern region for his or her outstanding service to the SWCA. Research and service contributions to the nominee's writing center and the writing center community will also be considered. The SWCA Awards Committee will review all submitted materials. The winner will be announced and presented with the award (a plaque and a check for \$250) during the 2004 SWCA Conference in Kennesaw, Georgia. The recipient will also be invited to present a speech on excellence in writing center administration at the 2005 SWCA Conference.

### Eligibility

Any writing center administrator currently working in an educational institution in a state or province located in the Southeastern Writing Center Association region (North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, or the American Virgin Islands) is eligible to receive the award.

### Process

To nominate an eligible candidate, please send a short letter of nomination to the address below. The nomination letter must outline the contributions the writing center administrator has made to the SWCA, the writing center community, and the writing center at his or her institution. The nomination letter should include the nominee's name, institutional affiliation, address, phone, and email (if applicable). The nominator is also responsible for informing the candidate that he or she has been nominated. Nomination letters are due Monday, 1 December 2003.

To be considered for the award, the nominee must submit a packet that includes

- a cover letter indicating acceptance of the nomination.
- at least three additional letters of support from faculty, colleagues at other institutions, tutors, and/or students.
- a curriculum vitae.

The nominee's submission packet may also include no more than fifty printed pages of

- conference materials and publications relevant to writing center practice and research.
- materials illustrating involvement in and contributions to the SWCA.
- writing center materials developed by the nominated candidate, including but not limited to instructional resources and advertising materials.
- websites and online resources created by the nominated candidate.

Nominees' submission packets should be received by Jennifer Kunka on 5 January 2004 at the address listed at right. ✨

## SWCA 2004 Peer Tutor Award

The Southeastern Writing Center Association Awards Committee is pleased to announce the 2004 SWCA Peer Tutor Award. The SWCA Peer Tutor Award is presented annually on a competitive basis to a peer tutor at an educational institution in the Southeastern region for his or her outstanding contributions to his or her writing center, SWCA, and the writing center community. The SWCA Awards Committee will review all submitted materials. The winner will be announced and presented with the award (a plaque and a check for \$100) during the 2004 SWCA Conference in Kennesaw, Georgia.

### Eligibility

Any peer tutor who is currently tutoring in a writing center at an educational institution in a state or province located in the Southeastern Writing Center Association region (North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, or the American Virgin Islands) is eligible to receive the award.

### Process

To nominate an eligible candidate, please send a short letter of nomination to the address below. The nomination letter must outline the contributions the peer tutor has made to the writing center at his or her institution. The nomination letter should include the nominee's name, institutional affiliation, address, phone, and email (if applicable). The letter may also address other relevant information, such as the tutor's involvement in the writing center field and with the SWCA. The nominator is also responsible for informing the candidate that he or she has been nominated. Letters of nomination are due Monday, 1 December 2003.

To be considered for the award, the nominee must submit a packet that includes

- a cover letter indicating acceptance of the nomination;
- a letter of support from the nominated candidate's writing center director, if the candidate was initially nominated by someone other than his or her director;
- at least two letters of support from students, tutors, faculty, or administrators. Letters may also be included from colleagues from other institutions;
- a curriculum vitae.

The nominee's submission packet may also include

- writing center materials developed by the nominated candidate, including but not limited to instructional resources and advertising materials (a maximum of 15 pages of printed material);
- websites and online resources created by the nominated candidate;
- conference materials and publications relevant to writing center practice and research (a maximum of 15 pages of printed material);

Nominations and nominees' submission packets should be received by 5 January 2004, at the following address.

Jennifer Liethen Kunka, SWCA Awards Committee  
Department of English  
Francis Marion University  
P. O. Box 100547  
Florence, SC 29501-0547  
jkunka@fmarion.edu ✨

INTRODUCING: Continued from page 3

trends with the invention of the computer. "What interested me was that I found more people in science and engineering and stuff like that who would try it [freewriting] out more than say in humanities and in English. And the reason was these folks had started writing on a computer, which was brand new. And they sort of realized that writing was just pixels, ya' know."

Later he said, "Computers have had a big effect on making people revise. On a computer the writing is just pixels; it's not real." He believes that the words "are sort of half in your head and half out of your head...it's all a little less permanent." The temporary quality of words on a computer screen encourages writers to write more. Earlier in the conversation he had noted, "you see this in e-mail...there's a whole lot of writing that goes on outside of school that shows that people write when they don't have to."

Elbow left me with one last thought on freewriting, and I will leave you with the same thought here. He cited a vaudeville joke that e.e. cummings used:

Q: "Would you hit a woman with a baby?"

A: "Well, if that's all I had."

e.e. cummings used this "whatever it takes" mentality to describe his approach to life, but Elbow used it to describe his approach to writing. Whatever it takes to get your hands moving, to get the words on the page, to tap the brilliance hiding in your brain.

After talking to him, I look forward to seeing and hearing Peter Elbow speak formally in Atlanta about his theories on writing because he has sparked my own thinking about my writing and my tutoring habits. ✨

#### Elbow's Works

*Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process* (May 1981)

*Embracing Contraries: Essays on Learning and Teaching* (October 1987)

*What is English?* (November 1990)

*Everyone Can Write* (February 2000)

*A Community of Writers* (with Pat Belanoff), including a peer-response pamphlet, *Sharing and Responding* (January 1989).

## Join SWCA Now to Present in Atlanta

The executive board has gradually revised the rules for SWCA membership in the hope that the new plan will be easier for everyone and will allow greater flexibility in membership arrangements. The plan will be further refined in the coming months.

The membership period is July 1 through June 30. If your membership dues are received by December 31, you will be considered a member of SWCA for the current academic or fiscal year. If your dues are received after December 31, you will be paying ahead for the next academic or fiscal year. The address label on your copy of *Southern Discourse* will reflect the end date of your membership: for example, 04 means that your membership ends on 30 June 2004.

As of 1 July 2003, SWCA membership dues are \$25 for an individual (now called faculty) membership and \$40 for an institutional membership. A new category, student membership has been added at a cost of \$10. Faculty and student members may vote in SWCA elections and present at the annual conference; they also receive one copy of *Southern Discourse* (three issues) for the membership year. Institutional members receive one vote for the contact person or a designated representative. Everyone—students, faculty, other employees—from the institution may present at the conference, and the institution receives three copies of *Southern Discourse* (three issues) for the membership year. All categories of members are eligible for discounts at conferences when available.

Inquiries regarding membership may be directed to Christina Bourgeois, SWCA secretary, at [christina.bourgeois@ece.gatech.edu](mailto:christina.bourgeois@ece.gatech.edu). ✨

### SWCA Membership Application 2003-2004

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Center or Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address for copies of *Southern Discourse*: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Writing Center Web URL: \_\_\_\_\_

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

The membership period extends from **1 July 2003** to **30 June 2004**

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

Adopted by the SWCA Executive Board 31 May 2003.