

Consultant Handbook



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Writing Center • University of Pittsburgh

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Table of Contents

About the Writing Center	1
Your Responsibilities as a Consultant	4
Composition Tutorial	10
Using the Physical Space, Equipment, and Books	13
The Peer Tutoring Program	15

About the Writing Center

The Mission of the Writing Center

The Writing Center has a teaching mission: we obviously support the writing of the students who come to the Center for tutoring or to avail themselves of the other activities we sponsor. But we are also responsible for advancing the education of the peer tutors and grad students who work at the center.

Our Past

The Writing Center is part of the Composition Program in Pitt's English department.



We have a long history at Pitt. The Writing Workshop was launched in 1972 by Sylvia Newman. It occupied a small consulting space in the Early American room, on the Cathedral of Learning's third floor. The Early American room, then as now, was decorated with antiques, dark, and reportedly haunted.

After that, it was directed by Virginia Elliot, and it was housed in CL 362, a room that would later be known as the part-time faculty office and, later yet, the grad student computer lab for the English department.

Many of us fondly remember William L. Smith as the director during the '80s, when the Writing Workshop first occupied the central area of room 501 in the Cathedral of Learning. Bill Smith was also the director of testing (the responsibility for placement testing and end-of-term testing for courses that served underprepared writers and readers was at that time located in the English department). Bill had an important voice in the professional conversation about testing students' writing ability. He tested practices in basic writing, writing assessment, and sentence-combining. His publications include "Editing Strategies and Error Correction in Basic Writing" (1987), "Computers in the Basic Writing Classroom" (1990) and "Assessing the Adequacy of Holistic Scoring as A Writing Placement Technique" (1993). Bill is now the Director of Educational Communications at the University of Oregon.

According to Bill Smith, in the early 80's, Writing Workshop staff began using DEC computers to help students, especially those with editing problems (this project drew on Dave Bartholomae's work on error as well as the work of Pitt grad Glynda Hull). Dave got a grant to get us the DEC's, which were housed in 501K CL. The Writing Workshop also used computers to help students understand one of the passages in Dave Bartholomae and Tony Petrosky's book. You can read about this work in Jim Parlett's dissertation and Bill Smith's subsequent publications.

In 1988, Fred Reinhardt, who worked in banking and founded the Second Federal Savings & Loan (now Landmark Savings Association), gave the Writing Workshop an important endowment that still allows us to make purchases and undertake special projects.

The early '90s brought Margaret Marshall as director along with a new name—the Writing Center—and many changes to our daily practices: students began evaluating tutorials after each session, we changed to half-hour tutorials from one-hour sessions, and we started having staff meetings, for example. Margaret also taught our first group of peer tutors. When Margaret left Pitt for the University of Miami in the mid-90s, Geeta Kothari became the director. A few years later, Jean Grace was named Associate Director.

Geeta and Jean had been tutors in the Center as well as assistant directors for several years. Under their leadership, the peer tutoring program was reestablished, professional development became part of the conversation of the Center, and new outreach programs have expanded the University's awareness of our work. The Center moved to its new spacious home in Thaw Hall in August 2002.

When we moved to Thaw, we were also given Sandy Foster as a full-time receptionist. In the earlier days of the Center, consultants shared desk duty. When Margaret took over the Center, she arranged for work-study students to watch the desk, make appointments, and enter data. Both of those eras of recordkeeping and administration were deeply flawed. Sandy has been a huge help in keeping us working efficiently. Now it's hard to imagine how we ever functioned without her.

In 2005, Pitt alum Jane Allred started an endowment for the Writing Center that has allowed us to undertake special projects and upgrades.

The Writing Center Now

The University of Pittsburgh Writing Center is unique in the sense that it is largely staffed by faculty consultants, with representation from undergraduate and graduate student tutors as well. The presence of nontenure stream faculty who are actively involved in teaching composition, literature, and writing has made it possible for us to launch a number of successful initiatives.

Writers' Café is a program that offers support to undergraduate creative writers from across the University. The Café meets every other Friday afternoon. Two facilitators for each session are drawn from the Writing Center and from the pool of English department graduate students. Participants generally spend at least one hour on exercises, with an hour of workshopping available for students who want it.

The **Peer Tutoring** program teaches and supports undergrads who wish to tutor in the Writing Center. Students take a three-credit course, complete a three-credit internship, and then are paid hourly to tutor. Experienced faculty consultants are eligible to mentor peer interns.

The **Writing Center Study Group** (WCSG) offers consultants an opportunity to get in touch with professional literature on the theory and practice of writing centers. We meet several times during the academic year and read a book over the summer.

The **Outreach Program** offers specialized workshops, orientations, and other opportunities to students and faculty across the University.

Because of staffing crossovers and resource-sharing, the Writing Center is affiliated with programs in **Public and Professional Writing** and **Writing in Engineering**. You can expect to hear about these programs and work with students participating in these programs at the Writing Center.

Understanding Your Responsibilities as a Consultant

Please see www.pitt.edu/~writecen for meeting announcements and resources for consultants.

What To Do As Part of Your Day-to-Day Consulting.

Consultants in the Writing Center work with students for ten hours a week. Most of this work consists of one-on-one consultations with student writers; it usually includes several hours of work with Composition Tutorial (CT) students. On occasion, you may need to prepare for appointments (read a long paper, for example). Log this time in the appointment book as preparation; it is part of your ten-hour commitment. When Sandy is out and no work-study student is available to handle the front desk, consultants share that responsibility.

In addition to working with students, consultants attend staff meetings, evaluate CT portfolios during exam week, consult with SC and other faculty, and engage in professional development activities. Both new and experienced consultants participate in orientation sessions in the week prior to fall term. Sometimes consultants are asked to undertake special projects or perform administrative duties as part of their work.



Limits of Help. Although your job is, of course, to help students with their writing, there are reasonable limits as to the kind and amount of help you can provide. You are not expected, for instance, to be familiar with the specific requirements of individual instructors, courses, or departments. Such information, if pertinent, is normally provided by the student.

You are not expected to—nor should you—act as a proofreader. If a student seems to want this sort of help, you can recommend that he or she pay an editor. Each term, names and phone numbers of those willing to edit for pay are collected, and this list is kept at the front desk. In addition, we have a handout available at the front desk that explains why we cannot edit work for students.

Please refrain from any evaluation of a student's work in terms of a grade, even a pass/fail grade. Though some students might like you to, you should also refrain from making judgments about the appropriateness of assignments and/or teachers' remarks on papers. If you come across a situation that troubles you (e.g., a highly problematic assignment), you can always refer it to the director of the Writing Center.

Our files are confidential. You can sign your name on a student's paper as evidence that he or she has been to the Center, but we do not make written reports to teachers other than teachers of CT students. Encourage teachers who want to know about their students' work at the Center to make appointments with individual consultants.

Hours of Operation. We work with students by appointment as well as on a drop-in basis. These are the hours of the Writing Center:

Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Friday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Meetings. Staff meetings will be held on **Wednesdays** from **12 - 1**. While we don't have a staff meeting every week, those that we do have are mandatory for all consultants (including peer interns and tutors).

Locking up. Consultants working in the evening Monday through Thursday are responsible for locking up the Center. Turn off the lights and make sure that the Writing Center's door is tightly closed.

Summer hours. During Summer Term, the Writing Center operates on a reduced schedule and with a significantly smaller number of consultants. We don't have staff meetings during the summer. We may, instead, ask consultants to help us with special projects.

Satellite sites. During Fall and Spring Terms, the Writing Center also staffs satellite sites at Hillman Library and a residence hall (Tower A, 12th Floor Lounge). A few consultants will be assigned hours at these locations, and they will meet with students on a drop-in basis only. Beth Newborg will coordinate the satellites and check in on them regularly to make sure they are running efficiently. The hours and staffing for these sites are listed in the appointment book. Please observe the 30-minute limit on tutorials at satellite sites (though, of course, you won't always start on the half-hour). If you are working in a satellite site, we may ask you to help us get paperwork back to the main Center. Let Sandy Foster know when your site is running low on paperwork or other supplies.

Satellite sites typically open during week 2 of the term. If you are scheduled to work at Hillman, keep your hours at M-2 Thaw Hall during week 1. We will ask you to help with CT orientation, placement, or other activities.

While part of the pleasure of working at the satellite sites is that they are less formal, please keep things professional, particularly when students or peer tutors are present.

Also, keep your hours there (that is, stay the entire time you are scheduled to work), keep yourself available to students (where they can easily see you and know that you are a tutor), do not make yourself look so busy working on a computer or grading papers that students and your colleagues hesitate to "interrupt" you, and don't meet with your own students during your time at the satellites. In other words, do your fair share to meet the needs of students who stop by the site.

Safety Issues. While we haven't had significant problems with security, we try to make sure that you will always be on duty with another consultant or a work-study student. The phone number for campus police is posted on the front desk; don't hesitate to use it if you feel unsafe. If an interaction with a student unsettles you for any reason, speak to the director of the Writing Center immediately.

Setting Up Your Schedule. When you are assigned to work in the Writing Center, you will be asked to fill out a form indicating twenty hours per week when you are available to work at the Center. From these, you will be assigned a ten-hour schedule that combines one-on-one consultant work and regular appointments with CT students.

When your hours are established, your name will appear in the appointment book, and students will be

scheduled to work with you or will drop in to obtain help based on availability.

You are responsible for telling Sandy about any changes that need to be made to the appointment book if, for example, a CT student drops out or finishes the class early or if your availability to students changes for any other reason.

If you must leave the Writing Center for a few minutes, let the person at the front desk know where you are.

We expect you to keep your hours, to show up on time, and to finish appointments on time. A lot of people are inconvenienced if you don't.

Desk duty. If Sandy is out and there is no work-study student available, you may be needed to help with the front desk. Desk duty is assigned to consultants in half hour blocks and is distributed as evenly as possible.

Record Keeping. Students fill out an information sheet each time they visit the Writing Center. The sheet will tell you what the student is working on and what kind of help he or she would like to receive. If the student has been to the Writing Center before and you would like to know what has been worked on in the past, you can consult the student's file. Ask a work-study student or Sandy to pull the file for you.

Be sure to leave time at the end of the tutorial (usually five minutes) for both you and the student to complete the necessary forms.

The student can fill out the response form either at the table or at the front desk.

Consultants fill out the reverse side of the information sheet. Enter your consultant code (assigned the first term that you work in the Center and listed in the front of the appointment book), the amount of time in conference, and check off what you worked on. You can also offer your comments on what was accomplished in the conference and any recommendations you have for future work.

Place the form in the box at Sandy's desk.

Sandy keeps the data from your forms and can give you a summary for a whole term (percentages and comments) if you want the summary for your teaching portfolio. Please give her several days' notice.

Contact information. Every term, we will ask you to fill out a 3x5" card with your contact information. If your contact information changes in any way over the term, please get your card from Sandy and update it. If you are an undergraduate, make sure we have your permanent address as well as your local address.

Conferring with instructors. While instructors outside the Center do not have access to our student files, they may wish to confer with individual consultants about the progress of particular students. In fact, we encourage teachers of CT students to confer with us. Consultants can invite teachers to meet in the Writing Center, or they can offer to meet in the teacher's office. In either case, the meeting time should be entered into the appointment book.

Telephone Tutorials. Occasionally, people within or outside the University community will call the

Writing Center in order to clarify some grammatical convention or to ask whether a particular sentence is correct. We will consult with a writer by phone if a tutor is free, but we like to keep such tutorials short so as not to tie up the phone.

Official communication with teachers and others. Please carefully proofread everything you send out as part of your Writing Center work, whether it is an e-mail message, a hand-written note, or a more formal document. A couple times a year, we hear from teachers who have received correspondence from consultants with sentence-level errors in it. It is an annoying fact of life that people judge teachers in an English department more harshly for allowing such errors to persist in their writing and that English departments hold Writing Center faculty to an even higher standard. Please do what you can to ensure that we don't get calls from faculty who say, for example, "I'm concerned about the comma splices in my CT students' writing, and I just found two comma splices in a mid-term report from a CT consultant."

Students' privacy. Be careful with students' private information. If you want to throw away a document that includes a student's personal information, shred the document. If you leave a note in a teacher's mailbox in which you discuss a student's work or grade, use a campus envelope or at least fold the document so that the information isn't visible to everyone who looks in the mailbox.

Handling complaints. If a student or a faculty member complains to the director or associate director about a consultant, our first step is generally to ask that person to talk with the consultant directly to try to resolve whatever misunderstandings or problems have come up. When this happens, please deal with these issues in a way that is professional and not defensive. Realize how difficult it is for a student to raise a concern with a consultant.

Absence and making up time. Consultants may miss up to 5 hours of consulting time a term without making that time up. If a religious holiday falls on a day when a consultant would normally work, that time may also be missed without having to make it up. All other time must be made up, as close as possible to the time when it was missed. Make sure that your CT students get the time they are entitled to. Sandy can help you determine how much time you have missed and made up.

The Writers' Café and outreach events are acceptable ways to make up time you have already missed.

If you know that you are going to miss some of your hours at the Writing Center in advance (for a conference, for example), try to trade hours with another consultant; if this isn't possible, you can ask someone who has worked here in the last year to cover your hours. If neither option is possible, make sure you cancel all your appointments, cross your hours out of the book, and indicate in the book the days you will be absent. Please let the director or associate director know, in writing, as soon as possible.

In case of illness or family emergency, leave a message on the director's voice mail (412-624-5663) and call the Writing Center desk (412-624-6556) and let us know that you won't be coming in. If you are able to call your CT students, let the person at the desk know.

If you have not missed any time and you facilitate a Writers' Café or outreach event, you may take yourself out of the book to compensate for the time. Tell the director and receptionist what you are doing, and do it ahead of time so that we don't have to cancel all your appointments.

Professional Development and Service. We do not expect that the consultants who work at the WC—faculty, grad students, or peer tutors—will be experts in issues of usage, conventions, process, and so on when they arrive. We do, however, expect that they will become experts while they work here—that they will use their time to learn more, so that they can answer questions, identify problems and strengths in the texts they see, and so on. Professional development is part of the job. You might identify a couple of issues to work on for yourself each term. You may wish to begin with the things that you feel uneasy about (how exactly a person identifies passive voice, for example). If you don't know how to answer a question, it's better to look it up with a student than make up an answer you're not sure about.

Service is important to the Writing Center. In our evaluations of consultants and peer tutors, we will privilege those who contribute to the Center by advancing our knowledge, contributing to the national conversation about writing centers, supporting the work of others, or developing or advancing our programs, practices, reputation, or connections with students or other areas of the University.

It would be helpful if, at the end of the year, you wrote up a brief self-evaluation for the directors in which you describe your contributions to the Writing Center, the professional goals you've achieved, and your future plans for your work in the Writing Center. If you feel your contribution has been unrecognized or dismissed, the self-evaluation is a chance to rectify this and will also help you clarify your work in the Writing Center for future job applications and your teaching portfolio.

Writing Center Journal. The Writing Center journal is a place for all consultants to reflect on their work, raise concerns, and respond to each other in writing. Consultants can contribute to the journal (which Sandy keeps) during their regular Writing Center hours by blocking out one half hour per week in the schedule. Consultants who are already blocking out time for administrative work cannot take extra time to contribute to the journal.

Resources for Writing Center consultants. We have put together a website and a library to support your professional development. Please visit our staff site and explore what it offers: www.pitt.edu/~writecen. In the bookcase near Jean's office, we keep many resources for consultants (including ESL materials and style handbooks). You are welcome to use these materials, but please make sure that you return them so that others can use them as well. Books with red stickers must remain in the Writing Center. Those with green stickers may be checked out for two weeks: put the date and your name on the card in the pocket at the back of the book, then put the card in the card box.

There are two main periodicals in the field: the *Writing Lab Newsletter* and *The Writing Center Journal*. We have issues of both in our library.

The Writing Center Study Group meets in Fall and Spring terms. We read and discuss professional literature on writing centers and composition. Many of us also use the forum to define and work on conference and professional papers. Peer interns come as part of their training. Anyone is welcome to join the group. Ask the associate director for details.

Outside Tutoring and Editing Jobs. The Writing Center provides a list of editors and tutors to anyone who requests it. If you have a student who needs services the Center doesn't offer (i.e., editing a dissertation) you can give the student this list. If a student you're working with in the Writing Center asks that you do additional editing or tutoring work for pay, refer that student to the list. In order to avoid any misunderstandings or a conflict of interest, it is probably best if you refer that student to

someone else (either on the list or in the Writing Center) rather than working with him or her yourself.

The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors has a good section at the end on working with people outside the Writing Center. Pay particular attention to the points about billing and meeting space.

Common Sense in the Writing Center. Please try to use common sense when working in the Writing Center. Some people have allergies to perfume and aftershave; avoid wearing these if at all possible. It's important to remember we are a collaborative operation; if you're late, you make things difficult not only for your students but the people working at the same as you. If you consistently disappear for a cigarette break during down time, this means you are unavailable for drop in appointments.

Remember that we work in a shared space. This means, for example, that it is a good idea not to talk in loud voices, especially about students. Take a minute to clean up the coffee area (it would be nice if someone emptied the basket of the coffee machine once in a while!). And the candy dish on Sandy's desk is not funded by Writing Center or department money; consultants contribute candy on a voluntary basis. If you eat from the dish, it would be a good idea to contribute to it once in a while.

Finally, we expect consultants to be respectful to Sandy and the work-study students. Do not ask Sandy to manipulate your schedule so that you don't have to work with students. Do not tell her off for giving you too many appointments. You're expected to tutor students during the time you're at the Writing Center; down time is a gift, not a right.

Composition Tutorial

In August 2003, the course formerly known as General Writing Intensive was re-named Composition Tutorial (CT).

Because CT is a credit-bearing course, peer tutors do not work with CT students.

CT is a one-credit course that students are placed into on the basis of either their summer placement essay or their in-class placement essay assigned by their Seminar in Composition (SC) teacher. CT is taken concurrently with Seminar in Composition and the assignments that students write for SC provide the material for your work with the students in CT.



Students are placed into CT because they need extra support in sentence- and paragraph-level issues in their writing. Sometimes those issues may have to do with coherence and development, while other times they may have to do with understanding and using conventions in appropriate ways. CT and SC are meant to be complementary learning experiences for the student. Consultants don't usually spend a lot of time discussing with CT students the texts that they are reading for SC, but you may find that a student sometimes needs to have that kind of conversation with you in order to develop an argument. Similarly, we do not expect that CT is the only place where students get help with the sentence- and paragraph-level aspects of their writing: these issues should also be taken up in the Seminar in Composition classroom.

In addition to your on-going work with your CT students, you have ethical and administrative responsibilities to keep in mind.

Meet with Your Students Every Week. Your CT students are paying for the one credit they get from CT, and you should no more cancel a lot of their sessions than you would cancel a lot of classes. If you have to miss a session because of illness or some other legitimate reason, it is important that you make up the missed time with your students. Do not ask your students if they want to make it up; just make it up.

Follow up with Students Who Don't Attend CT. When students don't show up for CT, call and/or e-mail them immediately to remind them that they must keep or cancel appointments and that they must pass CT in order to pass SC. If you don't hear back from students, ask Sandy Foster to check to make sure they are still registered for CT and SC. If the students are registered, then contact the SC teachers and report that the students are missing sessions. If the students still miss sessions after this, ask Jean if the students' names should be removed from the book and call the CAS Hotline to report that the students are in danger of failing CT and thus SC as well.

Maintain Contact with SC Teacher. There are three scheduled communications you must complete with the SC teacher for each of your CT students. The associate director provides forms for these communications, and you return them to her so that she can deliver them to the appropriate faculty:

1. After the student's first appointment with you, fill out a report form introducing yourself to the SC teacher and saying whether or not the student kept that appointment.
2. At mid-term, fill out report forms that tell students how they are doing in CT. Give one to each student, and give copies of the filled-out forms to the associate director to give to the CT students' SC teachers.
3. At the end of term, after our end-of-term meeting (which is **always** on the Monday after undergraduate day classes end), fill out the report telling SC teachers whether or not their students passed CT.

All CT forms are available in the CT area of the rack of mailboxes.

In addition to this scheduled communication, you should also talk to or correspond with SC teachers if you or they have questions about students' work, if a student stops coming to CT, or if a student is failing CT for whatever reasons. You can find an SC teacher's e-mail address via the "directory" link on the WC Staff site.

If an SC teacher does not give you a mid-term report or answer your e-mail or calls, tell the associate director.

Fill out Grade Forms on Time. Because most CT students are in their first year, we have to fill out grade forms twice: at mid-term and at the end of the term.

The mid-term grade allows the University to intervene in a timely way if students are failing core courses. These grades are not optional: the grade sheets have to be turned in by a certain date and time, just as we turn in final grade forms. The associate director will ask you to fill out a form indicating whether your students are passing and if not, why. It is very important that you fill out this form accurately (don't forget a student) and that you turn it in to the associate director on time.

Determine whether a student passes CT. CT students must satisfy three criteria to pass CT: they must attend CT, they must submit a portfolio of three complete papers, and they must produce correct prose in that portfolio.

Rarely, a student may satisfy these criteria, but fail Seminar in Composition. If you think this may be the case for one of your students, you must confer with the SC teacher to verify that the student is actually doing the work.

Record Keeping for CT. In the past, a few consultants have unexpectedly been absent for a length of time because of serious illness. In some cases, their students got lost in the confusion around the consultant's absence because the consultant hadn't kept records of the CT sessions. So please keep weekly records of your work with students in CT. You'll find this record keeping helps you reflect on the work in useful ways, even if the records are never needed in an emergency (and we hope they won't be). You have a folder for storing records in the lateral file in the reception area.

You will find your notes useful at mid-term, when both CT consultants and SC teachers write mid-term progress reports for their CT students.

Early evaluation. A CT student who has learned to produce reasonably correct prose may be eligible for early evaluation at midterm: he or she will pass CT and will no longer need to work with you. The Seminar in Composition teacher must initiate the process for early release. If you think a student would be a good candidate for early release, talk to the SC teacher, **NOT** the student.

End-of-term meeting. On the Monday after undergraduate day classes end, faculty and graduate student consultants always meet as a staff to evaluate CT portfolios. Consultants report the results of the evaluation to SC instructors at that time. Please make sure that you block out this time on your calendar. The Writing Center is not open for tutorials during finals week.

Using the Physical Space, Equipment, and Books

Facilities

What to do if you're locked out.

Sandy usually gets to the Writing Center at about 8:30, but there may be times when she is ill or can't get in because of snow. If you are among the first consultants to work that day, you will need to go to B-4 Thaw Hall and ask for our key (the English Dept. main office also has a key). Unlock the door, prop it open, **and then make sure that you return the key to B-4 Thaw Hall.**



Kitchen, water, coffee, etc. We have a refrigerator where you can store your lunch if you need to. We also have access to a very nice kitchen in B-4 Thaw Hall: you'll find a refrigerator, a stove, a microwave, and a cupboard (marked Writing Center) where we can store stuff. The door is often locked. Ask Sandy Foster for the combination. Please be considerate of others who use the kitchen and clean up after yourself. It's kind of our colleagues to share with us; we don't want them to regret their generosity.

We have a coffee maker and coffee in the Writing Center. Feel free to make coffee, but put a quarter in the coffee can (on Sandy's desk) for each cup you drink so that we can buy more coffee. The English department doesn't provide coffee or water for us, and we are not allowed to use our endowment for these items. So we charge \$15 a term for use of the water (give Sandy your cash or checks—payable to the University of Pittsburgh). The machine provides both chilled and hot water. Cups are available in the supply closet—we encourage you to bring in a mug or travel cup for your use.

The candy basket is filled through the generosity of anyone who cares to contribute. Please give donations to Sandy, and she'll put candy out.

Copier and printers. The copier and printers must be used gently since we depend on them and will have a hard time replacing them if they die. We understand that sometimes you may wish to prepare for class while you have downtime at the Center, but please refrain from printing out tons of material that is not directly related to your work at the Center or in your Pitt classroom.

Library. We have a library of books on writing center and composition theory and practice. Please feel free to read when you have downtime. Some books may also be checked out by consultants. We also have a number of resources that may be useful when you are consulting. You can see a list of our books at www.pitt.edu/~writecen/books.html.

Computers. The computers are meant to be used by consultants who are working with students, by students who are coming to the Center for help, and, if computers are available, by consultants who have downtime and want to check e-mail or do other work. Please don't monopolize computer time if

students need to use the computers. And please make sure that students don't use the computers as if they are in a computer lab—we were given funding for the computers for tutorials, preparation for tutorials, and some post-tutorial work.

When you are using our computers, don't open attachments unless you are sure that the attachment is safe. Don't install software. And please don't leave important files on hard drives and expect to find them later: we regularly clean off all the documents.

Mailbox. You have a mailbox on the wall across from the staff lateral file. Please check it regularly.

E-mail. We generally communicate via e-mail, so please check your e-mail once a day during the week and tell us if your e-mail address changes.

Public website. Tell your students about the writing resources we have online: www.english.pitt.edu/writingcenter. If you find other sites of interest to students, tell the associate director.

Peer Tutoring Program

Our peer tutoring program began its present incarnation in 2000 (Margaret Marshall taught one group of peer tutors when she was here; after she left, the class was not offered again immediately). The program is an important part of our educational mission as a university-based Writing Center. The peer tutoring program offers us the opportunity to work closely over the long term with undergrads who are deeply interested in writing and teaching. The mentoring, support, and teaching that we do with the peer tutors—as with grad student consultants—is part of the work of the Writing



Center. Some consultants may elect to work closely with the peer tutors (observing and being observed, being interviewed, working on conference papers). Every consultant in the Writing Center is responsible for supporting the peer tutors' work by treating the peer tutors with collegiality.

Our peer tutors have contributed in significant ways to the culture and effectiveness of the Writing Center. They have a unique perspective on the work we do here and their experience tends to be intense and short (they graduate, after all). Please do what you can to ensure that each peer tutor has a rewarding experience in the Writing Center and is invited to grow intellectually as a result of the time they offer us.

Becoming a peer tutor. Students who want to become peer tutors are required to take Tutoring for Peer Writers, EngCmp 1210. Here is the short description of the course: "This course prepares students to be effective tutors for peer writers by introducing them to issues and scholarship in teaching, writing, and working as a tutor. The course is appropriate for students from any discipline who are interested in careers in teaching or who recognize the importance and difficulty of responding well to drafts written by others. The course is a prerequisite for those students who wish to intern or work as peer tutors in the Writing Center."

After students take EngCmp 1210, students may apply to become peer interns. Interns get 3 credits, and they tutor five hours a week, attend weekly meetings, read further scholarship on writing center theory, and either substantially revise their research paper from the course or draft a new research paper. After the internship, peer tutors may apply to work in the Writing Center for eleven hours a week (10 hours of tutoring, 1 hour meeting) at an hourly rate that exceeds minimum wage.

Guidelines for mentoring a peer tutor. In the fall term, the students in the peer tutoring class will visit the Center to be tutored as they work on their own papers. We will also ask specific experienced tutors to allow the students in the peer tutoring class to interview them, observe them, and ask questions of them. This is an important part of their learning process, and we hope that some of you will become mentors to the students. At the end of the fall term, some of the students will feel prepared to start co-tutoring or working with a student in your presence with your support.

Each spring term, we invite some experienced faculty tutors to mentor the new group of peer interns. We generally match peer interns and mentors who are working at the same times so that it is easy for

you to conference with each other. Peer interns will be more independent in their tutoring, but they will still need your help to create a rich learning environment that supports the intellectual work they are doing as new tutors. They will also be working on research papers that they will present to the staff, and they will make appointments for tutorials with you to get help with these papers. Please take these sessions very seriously. Students may give you the draft to read ahead of time, in which case you may mark time in the book to read and respond to the drafts. Feel free to block out a slot on the two schedules when you want to confer with the intern you are working with. The intern should feel free to do the same when he or she wants to confer.

If you are a mentor, it will be your responsibility to:

- meet with the peer intern regularly to develop and work on a research paper due at the end of term.
- observe tutorials.
- allow the intern to sit in on tutorials with you, especially at the beginning of the semester, when we are not very busy.

Guidelines for peer interns. As a peer intern, you will work 5 hours a week and attend staff meetings. Here are your responsibilities:

- unless specifically exempted from a particular meeting, attend staff meetings.
- come to the WCSG.
- engage with your mentor.
- work on a research project.
- keep your journal.
- make up time you miss.

You are also expected to contribute twice a week to the Writing Center journal. You can use down time in the Writing Center to do this.

Guidelines for peer tutors. When you are a peer tutor, we expect you to continue participating in the life and culture of the Writing Center and to engage in professional development as a consultant. You must attend weekly staff meetings and continue contributing to the Writing Center journal twice a week. If for some unavoidable reason you can't come to staff meetings, you must talk to the director or associate director to make a plan to make up the time through a project, interviews, or some other activity.

All peer tutors are expected to write an exit essay during their final semester. This essay can be informal in tone but must be 3-4 pages, double-spaced, and thoroughly proofread. The exit essay is chance for you to reflect on your work in the Writing Center and offer us suggestions for how we might improve and develop the peer-tutoring program and the Writing Center in general. If you wish, you can draw on your contributions to the Writing Center journal to help you write your essay.

Consultants generally work 10 hours a week plus the weekly staff meeting. As a peer tutor, you may choose to work a lesser number of hours. You will update your hour log in the undergrad work tracker notebook every time you come to the Center and every time you leave. Sandy will fax your timesheets to the English department at the appropriate times so that you can be paid for your time.

If you need to miss time in the Writing Center, and you know in advance, please talk to Sandy and have her take your name out the book and reassign your students. You can either make up the hours by adding your name to the book at other times or you can forfeit the time (and pay). You will not get paid for hours you do not work, and you must make up your missed hours within two weeks.