



The Writing Centre



... in the Learning Commons



Writing Centre Services

- Individual tutoring by appointment
- Small group workshops
- Drop-in hours
- Grammar Hotline
- Textual and online resources
- Custom work for faculties



Overview: Writing Centre

- **Space:** suite of rooms, enough for 4 - 5 simultaneous private appointments
- **Equipment:** computers, data display unit, tables and chairs, reference texts, telephone, fax
- **Volume:** c. 2000 individual appointments per year, 26 workshops, 2 credit courses, modules for 3 other courses, 3 – 5 professional writing workshops

But why move?

Is it the latest fad?

Is it change for the sake of change?

***Is it a power grab by HIL, seeking to
crush our individuality and
autonomy?***

Physical Space

- *Every location has inherent advantages and disadvantages*
- *Some can be anticipated*
- *Some cannot*



Services in Campus Spaces: *A Brief History*

1978-2000: *Here (Wu Centre)*

2001-2004: *Keirstead Hall*

2005-2006: *Early Experiments*

2007-2008: *The Learning Commons*

1978-2000: Wu Centre

Advantages:

- Easy parking
- Ample space/resources for workshops

(Nothing else particular to this space is an advantage to our service)

1978-2000: Wu Centre

Disadvantages:

- Distant from libraries, classes, . . . and students
- Separation from life of the campus (not an *academic* building)

2001-2004: Keirstead Hall

Advantages:

- Central location: close to students attending classes
- Academic building
- Close to *Harriet Irving Library*

2001-2004: Keirstead Hall

Disadvantages:

- **Lectures/research** (building in which students do *not* normally meet for study)
- **Accessibility limited** (open late only by special arrangement with security)
- **Weak security** (largely unoccupied after office hours)
- **Physical barriers** (*top floor* of a building with *limited capacity elevator*)

2005-2006: Experiments

2-3 sessions per week in Engineering Library

Results:

- First “fast recursion” effects
- Instant “word-of-mouth”

2007-2008: Learning Commons

- **Space:** Small office
- **Equipment:** Computer, telephone
- **Volume:** during evening drop-in sessions (2 per week), 153 individual sessions (c. 7.2% of total)



Learning Commons Advantages

- **Accessibility:**
 - Longest hours on campus, barring some parts of Head Hall
 - Entrance ramp and elevators
- **Security** (for staff and clients): well-lit, large number of staff members, regularly patrolled

Learning Commons Advantages

- **Immediate recursion:** *students can meet a tutor, test suggestions, and return for further feedback.*
- **Instant word of mouth:** *additional appointments generated by students conferring with peers after session*
- **Transfer to other services:** *students can be efficiently directed to other services (e.g., research help desk)*

Learning Commons Advantages

Drop-in Hours Usage Levels

More of the drop-in hours offered at the Learning Commons were used than of those offered at the Writing Centre



Learning Commons Disadvantages

- **Administration:** Most activities take place beyond office hours, leaving the service vulnerable
- Part of broader “24/7 University” challenge
- Requires careful cooperation

Learning Commons Disadvantages

- **Equipment:** Our own textual resources are not always available
- Most are online, but others must be duplicated, transported, and stored
- “Tutor’s Toolbox” may compensate for this

Conclusions

- ***Advantages* overwhelmingly outweigh *disadvantages***
- **Initial trial very successful**
- **Booking system (Novell GroupWise) now available to staff campus wide through wireless network**
- **Ready for Phase II**

Phase II

- **Phase I, 2007-2008: twice weekly drop-in hours**
- **Phase II, 2008-2010**
 - Move ALL drop-in hours to LC
 - Start booked appointment service in LC
 - Move small group sessions and workshops to LC/HIL

Post Phase II

- Existing Keirstead Writing Centre may focus on administrative and research and development work
- May remain home for electronic tutoring, Grammar Hotline

New Service Distribution

Learning Commons (2008-2010):

- ***Individual tutoring by appointment***
- ***Small group workshops***
- ***Drop-in hours***

Writing Centre

- ***Grammar Hotline***
- ***Textual and online resources***
- ***Electronic tutoring***
- ***Custom work for faculties***

The End . . .

- *We have only begun to consider the long-term effects of different services actually working together with students*
- *New effects will continue to emerge*