**Working with a Learning Commons Writing Fellow
in FYSEM and Writing-Intensive Courses**

Faculty Guidelines

Overview

Learning Commons Writing Fellows are strong writers who have been trained in peer tutoring pedagogy as part of the Learning Commons tutoring program. During the semester, they read drafts of <u>three rounds</u> of student essays: in each round, tutors read the essays and meet individually with each student in a 30-45 minute writing conference. Final drafts are then handed in (along with a copy of the earlier draft) to be read and graded by the professor. In addition to improving the quality of written work submitted – and hopefully the pleasure of reading this work – this process offers students the opportunity to experience a revision-based writing process, an essential step in their development as college-level writers.

How It Works

Here is a walk-through of a single essay:

1. Professors collect the first drafts of an essay in class (so that tutors don't have to deal with late papers and excuses, and so that you know who is handing papers in on time). Some professors ask for two copies; others pass their copies on to the tutor.

2. Around the time the first paper is due, your Writing Fellow will come to one of your classes to hand out a sign-up sheet for student writing conferences. This is also a good time for tutor and professor alike to say a little more about how the process works, why it's valuable, and how to get the most out of it.

3. In many cases, professors read these drafts and share their thoughts with the tutors. This is especially important with the first essay; thereafter, tutors can often work more independently. However you do it, it is important for tutors to know what you value in an essay.

4. Tutors read the essays and meet with each student for a writing conference. Tutors are not meant to be experts on the texts, so if there are serious questions or concerns about understanding the readings, they may refer these back to the professor.

5. After their conferences, students revise their papers and hand in a final draft, along with the earlier draft. Most professors factor in the first draft as part of the grade, as this ensures that the students take these drafts seriously. Tutors are unanimous in stating that the best conferences occur with strong drafts.

6. Professors and tutors meet to go over what improved, what didn't, and how to fine tune the process on the next essay.

Helpful Hint

Some faculty have found that referring to the first version of the paper as a "draft" encourages students to take it less seriously. Rather than "draft," they refer to the first deadline as the "essay due date." The version after meeting with a tutor becomes the "revision due date."

Faculty Guidelines

We require that faculty agree to do the following guidelines when working with a tutor:

- <u>Meet with your tutor</u> in the first week of the semester to provide and discuss your syllabus. A good opportunity for this will be our Faculty/Tutor Reception – details TBA.

- Give all paper assignments to students <u>in writing</u>.

- Collect drafts of essays <u>in class</u>, rather than have them handed in directly to the tutors, and have a clear policy concerning late papers. (These, too, should be handed in to the professor.)

- Have your tutor work on <u>three rounds of essays</u>. Any exceptions must be approved ahead of time.

- Make tutor conferences <u>mandatory for all students in the class</u>. It's tempting to let better students out of the requirement to meet with a tutor, and clearly such conferences will cover different ground than that of a struggling student. But exempting some students from meeting with tutors implies that the process is remedial, a view we are working hard to discredit. We believe that making use of a second reader is an essential part of the writing process for *all* writers. If the paper is extraordinary, the tutor will be the first to admit it, but the conversation that ensues will nevertheless be valuable.

- <u>Help us evaluate your tutor</u>, and our tutoring program more generally, by having students fill out an evaluation form later in the semester.

Designing Your Syllabus

If you will be working with a Writing Fellow, please be sure to leave enough time between the due date of the draft and the due date of the revised essay. In addition to any meetings scheduled with you, your tutor will need to read all of the essays and meet with each student during that time. A week is the absolute minimum, and 10-14 days is ideal.