

Sweetland

GAYLE MORRIS SWEETLAND WRITING CENTER

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A Message from Sweetland's New Director Ejner J. Jensen

Writing Workshop by appointment Fall 1999

Monday
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Tuesday
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Wednesday
9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
and 2:30-5 p.m.
Thursday
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Friday
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Evening Hours

Alice Lloyd Library
Mondays 8-11 p.m.
Mary Markley Library
Tuesdays 8-11 p.m.

Peer Tutors

Sunday-Thursday
7 p.m. - 11 p.m.
444C Mason Hall

Online Writing and Learning (OWL)

owl@umich.edu
OR
[http://
www.lsa.umich.edu/
ecb/help/
owl.html](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/ecb/help/owl.html)

One of the great summer pleasures of my childhood was the double-dip ice cream cone. Its status as a special treat derived chiefly not from its quantity—twice the usual delight of cold and smooth and sweet—but from its nearly inexhaustible capacity for permitting two experiences at once. The tart astringency of lemon sherbet mingled with the dark power of chocolate, chunks of persistent strawberry over the creaminess of vanilla—take your pick. I think that love of a double treat explains in part why I am so pleased to be assuming the Directorship of the Gayle Morris Sweetland Writing Center. It allows me to join the comfortable experience of homecoming with the challenge of a new adventure.

My first experience at the helm of the Sweetland Writing Center came in 1997, when I served as Interim Director while Terri Tinkle enjoyed a much-deserved leave. Major transitions were taking place then; as the English Composition Board moved toward becoming the Sweetland Writing Center, the unit began to reshape itself and rethink the range and focus of its major purposes and functions. Now, as Terri's successor, I find that the Sweetland Writing Center has developed in impressive ways. Some of the initiatives begun a few years ago, such as the Sweetland Writing Seminar, have established themselves as distinctive in the

Writing Center's operation, new projects have come into being, and still others are in various stages of preparation. In addition, a variety of personnel changes have re-defined the Sweetland Writing Center, bringing new faces and a diverse set of skills but also prompting us constantly to reassess our mission and our needs as we seek to replace lost talents.

I thought that I would take this opportunity to describe some of the Writing Center's major activities over this last while, report on some structural and personnel changes, and touch briefly on possible new initiatives. Before doing that, however, I want to state publicly what I have said many times to my colleague Terri Tinkle in private conversation. Terri has done a superb job in her short time as director, working to make the Sweetland Writing Center more central to the life of the College and bringing to secondary schools across our state and to writing teachers around the country a new awareness of its efforts. From my perspective, she's a wonderful act to follow.

Sweetland Seminar

A distinguishing feature of the Sweetland Writing Center since its inception, the Sweetland Seminar has brought together participants from across the College to meet with leading composition specialists and work through some of the central issues bearing on

the place of writing in the curriculum. These Sweetland Fellows—faculty members and GSIs—have come from fifteen different units in the College. In the term after their Fellowship semester, they return to their home units, where one of their teaching assignments is a writing course.

Our hope is that in every case they will bring to their own teaching a new sense of the varieties of writing instruction and enhanced awareness of the power of writing as a means of learning. In addition, we hope that they will communicate to their colleagues something of their interest in a commitment to writing as a central activity in the classroom. Much of this hoped-for proselytizing takes place informally, in conversations about shaping courses and creating powerful assignments, and we have no way of recording its frequency or effectiveness. Some of it is more visible because more formal, and here we have more than anecdotal evidence to go on. Sweetland Fellows have brought the word about writing back home in a variety of ways: with a handbook on writing in Anthropology, in new assignments in an introductory Psychology course, and in a late-afternoon symposium on writing in the sciences that drew a large and interested crowd, one that stayed well past the session’s scheduled closing time. The Sweetland Seminar continues this year with faculty and GSIs drawn from ten different units and departments, including Biology, Economics, and Mathematics.

Sweetland Seminar Participants

Senior Fellows

Alejandro Uribe	Mathematics
Jim Adams	Economics
Kathryn Tosney	Biology
Patricia Yaeger	Women’s Studies/English
Renee Anspack	Sociology
Stefan Senders	English/Anthropology

Junior Fellows

Bridget Anderson	Linguistics
Colleen O’Brien	Women’s Studies
Ellen Moodie	Anthropology
Julia Carlson-Federhofer	English
Shawn Christian	English
Shawn Kimmel	American Culture

High School Outreach

From the early days of the ECB, outreach to Michigan secondary schools was an important aspect of its mission. The Sweetland Writing Center is committed to continuing this activity through a variety of means. We continue to support small-scale efforts by individual faculty working with designated high schools. For some time now Barbra Morris and George Cooper have worked with teachers and students at Mackenzie High School to develop the writing curriculum there. And, with the help of a grant from the Ponting Foundation for 1999-2000, they will aid Mackenzie teachers in introducing an oral history and writing project. This past April the Sweetland Writing Center introduced a larger-scale effort, bringing representatives from thirteen high schools to Ann Arbor to meet with University of Michigan faculty in a one-day institute on “Writing Across the Millennium.” Reports from participants suggest that this opportunity to discuss the place of writing across the disciplines brought a new awareness of shared purposes and shared problems. Plans are already under way for a second conference next spring. These meetings provide much-needed occasions for dialogue among those teachers who prepare the students we encounter in our classrooms and between those teachers and ourselves as we try to focus our instruction most effectively on our students’ needs and capacities.

New Sweetland Executive Committee

Over the last few years, as the Sweetland Writing Center came into being and began defining its missions and programs, decision-making was largely a matter of consultation among those with chief responsibility for the Center’s operation: the Director, the Dean of LSA or her representative (Lincoln Faller, then Bob Owen), and the Chair of the Department of English Language and Literature (Martha Vicinus, then Tobin Siebers). Last year, Terri Tinkle proposed the creation of a Sweetland Writing Center Executive Committee, and Interim Dean Pat Gurin endorsed that request. The committee is now in place and will begin meeting early in the Fall Term. Its members, many of whom have previously been involved in the work of the Sweetland Writing Center, are listed below. The creation of this group is an

important step, I believe, in bringing the work of the Sweetland Writing Center into a closer relation with the College and in making that work more generally visible. The Executive Committee will be responsible for overseeing the programs of the Sweetland Writing Center, setting policies, selecting Fellows to participate in the annual seminar, and providing guidance and advice to the Director. I look forward to working with these distinguished faculty and graduate student colleagues.

<i>George Cooper</i>	<i>Sweetland</i>
<i>Lincoln Faller</i>	<i>English</i>
<i>Elise Frasier</i>	<i>English</i>
<i>Phyllis Frus</i>	<i>Sweetland</i>
<i>James Hilton</i>	<i>Psychology</i>
<i>Benita Jackson</i>	<i>Psychology</i>
<i>Ejner Jensen</i>	<i>Sweetland</i>
<i>Robert Megginson</i>	<i>Mathematics</i>
<i>Elizabeth Sears</i>	<i>History of Art</i>
<i>Marilyn Shatz</i>	<i>Linguistics</i>
<i>Ralph Story</i>	<i>CSP</i>
<i>Jens Zorn</i>	<i>Physics</i>

Visiting the John S. Knight Writing Program

Over the past two summers, the John S. Knight Writing Program at Cornell University has hosted a meeting of Writing Center Directors and others charged with the administration of writing programs at selected universities. In June, Sweetland's Associate Director, Phyllis Frus and I attended this three-day conference, joining faculty colleagues from, among other institutions, Duke, Florida A&M, Princeton, the State University of New York at Oswego, Temple, and the University of New Hampshire. We participated in some lengthy and intense discussions, learned about practices in Cornell's writing in the disciplines program, and profited from exchanges with our peers. My favorite moment in the meetings came when a Cornell undergraduate spoke about what he took away from his freshman seminar: "I learned the names," he said, "for things I had been doing in writing all my life—subordination, coordination." It seems to me that "learning the names" is a key matter, not just in writing but in every critical endeavor we undertake.

Sad To See Them Go . . .

The creation of the Sweetland Writing Center was a

major structural change, one that will have a significant effect on policy matters; but it will have less impact on the day-to-day operations in our Angell Hall offices. There, it is ongoing personnel changes that are likely to make a difference. This summer, we have lost three colleagues who, among them, represent most of the major elements of our work. Barbara Monroe, who joined the ECB as a lecturer in 1993, has accepted a tenure-track position at Washington State University. She has been a leading figure in the Sweetland Writing Center and in the College in the application of computer technology to instruction; her combination of skills is rare, valuable, and not easily replaceable. Kay Keelor has had an important role in the Peer Tutoring Program and as assistant to the Associate Director. She is moving to Boston to take a position in the education program of her denomination's Mother Church. Kay has been with the Sweetland Writing Center since 1996. Finally, Betsy Vera, who as receptionist is our first point of contact with students, especially those using the services of the Writing Workshop, is leaving after two years to return to graduate school. We are busily at work, at several stages of the search process, trying to find replacements for these talented colleagues. Meanwhile, we wish them well in their new endeavors.

Welcome

As we think about filling the posts of colleagues who have taken positions elsewhere, we do so with the clear knowledge that new programs and new directions may well dictate redefinition rather than simple replacements. Our most recent hire, Stefan Senders, illustrates this point vividly. Stefan has worked as a research psychologist, performed in the United States and abroad (Ghana, Hungary) as a musician, trained as an ethnomusicologist, and taught ESL in Germany. A recent Ph.D. in social anthropology from Cornell, he doesn't present the expected profile of a new hire in a writing center; but with his experience as an ESL instructor, his familiarity with the Freshman Writing Seminars at Cornell, and his graduate training in composition, he seems an ideal person to work with us in the Advanced Writing in the Disciplines Program. As we look for other new colleagues, it's clear that we must address needs in basic writing, computer instruction, ESL, and composition theory. We hope to fill some of these needs soon.

Projects in the Works . . .

Meanwhile, we continue to evaluate our practices and cope with the demands created by the changes we make. Dennis McEnerney is leading a review of writing in the disciplines, supported in large measure by a Gilbert Whitaker Fund for the Improvement of Teaching grant from CRLT. His study should enable us to make needed improvements to a program that has often seemed shapeless and unwieldy. I will be inviting LS&A faculty from many of the departments to participate in a focus group led by CRLT this October. We are interested in the perceptions of faculty—both those who have taught recently in the Advanced Writing in the Disciplines Program (AWDP) and those who have not—about how the program is working and how it might be improved. If you do not receive an invitation and would like to give your feedback, please let me know. I see this review as an important undertaking and one that is certain to bring significant improvements to AWDP.

The results of our move from portfolio assessment to student self-assessment for placement in first-year composition are still unclear, though they have taught us new and expanded meanings of the word “flexibility.” As we approach September, it looks as though we will have enough sections of the Writing Practicum to meet our needs, though September is the season for hurricanes and academic surprises. Concurrently with this change in assessment practices, we are undertaking a review of the Practicum itself to see how effective it is in preparing students for success in English 125 and other courses that meet the first-year requirement. While Practicum is a course taken by only a small percentage of our incoming students, that group includes many whose success in the University depends on its effectiveness.

It should be apparent, even from this sketchy account, that the Sweetland Writing Center has a daunting range of responsibilities. But I believe that the next years will afford room for creating still other ventures and accepting new opportunities. The Sweetland Writing Center needs to sustain and enlarge its outreach activities, bringing our secondary school colleagues into the process at an earlier stage and encouraging them to take a larger role in defining our shared agenda. We need to expand the influence

of the Sweetland Seminar, at first by the simple expedient of bringing more LSA colleagues into contact with our visiting composition scholars. We need to make certain that the resources of the Sweetland Writing Center are available to the entire College, including staff, so that everyone involved in the College’s work registers the importance of writing as a means of increasing one’s knowledge and mastery of a field. We need to think seriously about the many research opportunities available in and through the Sweetland Writing Center and find ways of using them. These are just a few of the directions that seem necessary or possible; others will surely arise over the next while. My hope is that the Sweetland Writing Center will be alert to such opportunities and inventive in addressing them.

In my opening paragraph I spoke about the dual pleasures involved in accepting the role of Director of the Sweetland Writing Center—the welcoming comfort of a return and the edgy uncertainty of a new adventure. In both of these pleasures, I’m grateful for the presence of John Sweetland, whose generosity has enabled them and whose continuing deep interest in the work of the Sweetland Writing Center provides just the right mix of warm support and challenging incentives to change.

Faculty Development Workshops

October 6 - Stuart Segal, *Services for Students with Disabilities*

A discussion about working with students with different learning styles.

November 3 - Helen Fox, *Gayle Morris Sweetland Writing Center*

“Talking about Race and Racism in College Classrooms”

A discussion about handling certain complex, sensitive situations involving race—all of which have actually occurred in college classrooms.

**Workshops will be held in the Sweetland Conference Room
1122 Angell Hall
1:30 - 2:30 p.m.**

All faculty are welcome to attend!