

Sweetland

GAYLE MORRIS SWEETLAND WRITING CENTER

1139 Angell Hall
764-0429
SWCinfo@
umich.edu
<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc>

Special Edition
January 2000
Volume 3 Number 2

Director's Perspective

Ejner J. Jensen

Writing Workshop by appointment Winter 2000

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 Hall
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/
swc/help/
owl.html](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/help/owl.html)

Since assuming the directorship of the Sweetland Writing Center last May, I have enjoyed re-acquainting myself with the work of the Center and with the faculty and staff who make it a place of so much positive energy and dedication. At an early meeting, I repeated what seemed to be a truism to those who devote their attention to the teaching of writing, especially the sort of labor-intensive teaching that goes on in the Sweetland Writing Center. What I said was that the lecturers who do that work are so busy instructing others about writing that they have no time to write themselves. I was disabused of that notion on the spot by a colleague who pointed to the range of projects she and other members of the Center's faculty had under way. I was happy to be so corrected; and in subsequent meetings, I was pleased to be able to announce a number of forthcoming publications and acceptances. In future newsletters I hope to be able to discuss these works in some detail.

Another dimension of my renewed engagement with the Writing Center has developed through what I have come to think of as the traditions of the Sweetland Writing Center. These are not time-honored in the way we think of most traditions (hallowed or merely hoary), but they serve the function of traditions in bringing a community together and underlining some of the central values that give that community and the institution that supports it some important element of their identity. Two of the three are the Sweetland Fellows' Dinner and, associated with it, a lecture or symposium on some issue related to rhetoric and composition. Another is the Faculty Development Series, a program

of lectures and discussions designed to promote awareness of issues related to writing pedagogy. All three traditions are important for the work of the Center, the first two especially so for the members of the Fellows' Seminar and the third particularly for the teaching staff, whose instructional responsibilities lead them to confront difficult issues, both in the standard classroom setting and in the Writing Workshop.

This past year's Fellows' Dinner, held at Zanzibar, was a lively informal gathering that brought together current and former Sweetland Fellows, senior lecturers from the Writing Center, and the speakers from the symposium that preceded the dinner. John Sweetland attended as well, along with his fiancée, Susan Grimes. His remarks toward the end of the evening were one of its highlights. It's gratifying to witness his deep and solidly informed interest in the Center's work and to understand the extent of his commitment to powerful writing.

The Sweetland Writing Center has started a new email group called *sweetwrite*. Our purpose in setting up this "listserve" is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas about writing wherever it occurs—in the classroom, in conferences with students, in Writing Workshop, in mentoring situations, or in the Sweetland Seminar. To join, email Jennifer Metsker (jmetsker@umich.edu) or go to Directory Services and follow instructions for subscribing to a group at [http://
directory.umich.edu/](http://directory.umich.edu/).

Before the dinner, the Sweetland Writing Center sponsored a panel of three speakers on the topic “Writing of Women.” Open to the public—and there was a sizable audience—the panel featured Anne Gere, Professor of English and Director of the joint Ph.D. program in English and Education; Suzanne Raitt, Associate Professor of English and Women’s Studies; and our new colleague, Alisse Theodore, Assistant Professor of English. Dr. Johnson famously said of *Paradise Lost* that “no one ever wished it longer.” The only complaint I heard about our panelists’ presentation was that it wasn’t long enough. Each of the speakers talked briefly about her own work involving the writing of women: Anne on women’s writing groups, Suzanne on the fiction of May Sinclair and the realm of secrets, and Alisse on women’s petitions against Indian removal in mid-nineteenth-century America. Together, they raised a remarkable number of fascinating issues—personal, social, political—about the ways in which women have managed the enterprise of presenting themselves and their causes in writing. At the same time, each of them engaged the audience in a distinct way, reminding us on another level that generalizations about the writing of women are at best risky and at worst wholly misguided. This was a wonderful hour in every way, and it provided abundant material for discussion at the dinner that followed.

The third tradition that I want to describe, the Faculty Development Series, is directed at Sweetland Writing Center teaching staff, though it often attracts other faculty colleagues as well. Over the past fall term, the Writing Center sponsored four of these sessions, two of them led by Sweetland faculty. In November, Helen Fox presented a selection from her forthcoming book, *When Race Breaks Out*, using that excerpt as a springboard for a discussion of ways to approach racially charged issues in the writing classroom. Later in the term, Phoebe Jackson gave an account of her use of groups in the writing classroom, focusing on the practical benefits that can be gained from this form of writing pedagogy. In October, Stuart Segal, from the office of Services for Students with Disabilities, introduced faculty members to a wide range of issues affecting our responsibilities toward students with special needs. Also in October, John Swales, Director of the English Language Institute, and Christine Feak, a Lecturer in the Institute, described many of the issues involved in teaching writing to ESL students. Since many of the students in our Practicum and a very large percentage of those who use the Writing Workshop are ESL students, this was an especially helpful session. Each offering in the series was so valuable, in fact, that we hope to repeat them with variations over the next while. We also hope to find ways of introducing these materials to larger audiences. If your unit would like to participate in these sessions or others like them, please let me know.

Workshop on Collaboration - February 2

This faculty development workshop will feature a panel of instructors from various departments who have set up peer groups in their classrooms and Web-based or email groups. They will share strategies for meeting goals, including:

- to improve class discussion,
- to share responsibility for responses to reading with different students from each class,
- to produce helpful peer comments,
- to edit and proofread final drafts,
- to enable students who “get it” to share their knowledge or expertise with their peers.

This practical session filled with tips and guidelines will be held in 3154 Angell Hall from 1:00 to 2:00.

Finally, I would like to introduce the Fellows of the Sweetland Seminar for the Fall Term, 2000. In past years, selection of Fellows was the responsibility of the Director in cooperation with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of LS&A and the Associate Dean for Humanities and the Arts of the Rackham Graduate School. This year, the Sweetland Writing Center Executive Committee was also involved in the selection process. I look forward to working with the members of this group in the Seminar that begins in September, 2000. Senior Fellows and Junior Fellows for the coming year are:

SENIOR FELLOWS

Martha Vicinus	English Language and Literature
John Swales	Linguistics
Curtis Huntington	Mathematics
Edie Goldenberg	Political Science

JUNIOR FELLOWS

Krista Homicz	English and Education
Bill Hogan	English Language and Literature
Evanthia Diakoumakou	Linguistics
Erika Milam	Museum of Zoology
John Kang	Political Science
Marek Steedman	Political Science
Melanie Boyd	Women’s Studies and English Language and Literature

While it’s tempting to close with some sort of millennial greeting or even (perish the thought) a millennial exhortation, I think this is one time when it might be wise to borrow an example (and its accompanying cliché) from our athletic colleagues and take the millennium one year at a time. Best wishes for the year 2000. May it be one you’ll want to write about in the years to come.