gayle morris
sweetland | writing center
university of michigan

Newsletter

from the Director... Anne Ruggles Gere

New media writing, quantitative reasoning, writing in the sciences, and institutional research—these were some of my priorities as I became Director of the Sweetland Writing Center on July 1, 2008. Thanks to an enormously flexible and talented staff and faculty, we have begun to make progress on all of these…and more. Hiring Alan Hogg, a BA in English, BS in Chemical Engineering, and Ph.D. in Atmospheric and Space Sciences, enables us to broaden our course offerings and support for students in the sciences (see a longer introduction to Alan on page 2). SWC 200—a course in new media writing—has been approved and, as the article on page 3 explains, it will help students apply a rhetorical lens to the production and consumption of new media writing. George Cooper, a SWC faculty member, has taken leadership in coordinating with the College initiative on quantitative reasoning, and this, along with the Teagle/Spencer project with which Naomi Silver is engaged (see details on page 9), provides a foundation upon which we can build concepts and practices of critical and quantitative thinking.

The SWC Data Group, which includes staff members Colleen LaPere and Patrick Manning; graduate student research assistants Laura Aull and Tim Green; along with Alan Hogg and me, is investigating the writing experiences of undergraduates. Drawing together data from admissions, the annually-administered Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), and the University's Academic Reporting Toolkit (ART), along with information from surveys and interviews, we are developing an understanding of how undergraduates experience writing instruction on this campus so that we can create courses and support services that will help them become effective writers.

All of this has been possible because I found the Center in such fine shape when I began my term. The directors who preceded me as well as the faculty and staff who worked with them have made Sweetland a substantial, diverse, and vital Center for writing on this campus. It was a pleasure to celebrate 30 years of ECB/Sweetland on November 7, and as the conference overviews included on pages 4-7 indicate, we can look forward to many new developments.

1139 Angell Hall
734.764.0429
swcinfo@umich.edu
www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/

Writing Workshop (by appointment)
Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri.: 9am-5pm
Wednesday: 9am-12:30pm & 2:30-5pm
Call: 734.764.0429

Peer Tutoring Centers (walk-in)
Angell Hall Peer Tutoring Center
G219 Angell Hall
Sunday-Thursday: 7-11pm
Monday-Friday: 12-3pm

Undergraduate Library
1136 Undergraduate Library
Sunday-Wednesday: 7-10pm

Lloyd Hall Writing Center
First floor, Alice Lloyd Hall
Sunday-Wednesday: 7-11pm

Online Writing Lab (OWL)
http://sitemaker.umich.edu/
swcwritinghelp

Sweetland Welcomes New Faculty & Staff

DAVID BROWN

David Brown earned a BA in English and a MA in teaching from the University of Puget Sound. He recently completed his Ph.D. in English and Education at UM. Prior to coming to Michigan, David taught high school English for seven years in Seattle, Washington. His current research focuses on linguistics and educational issues related to linguistic diversity.

DELIA DECOURCY

Delia DeCourcy holds an MFA in fiction from UM and an MA in literature from Middlebury College. Before coming to Michigan, Delia taught secondary school in Raleigh, NC and Louisville, KY, and directed a program for at-risk youth called Summerbridge. She also published a book with NCTE called *Teaching Romeo and Juliet: A Differentiated Approach*.

ALAN HOGG

Alan Hogg joined Sweetland in September 2008, after earning his PhD in atmospheric science from the University of Michigan, where he also earned undergraduate degrees in English and Chemical Engineering. He has worked as a researcher in a variety of scientific disciplines, including archaeological conservation, neuroscience, and pharmaceutical chemistry. As a Graduate Student Instructor, he taught Ecological Issues, Extreme Weather, and three semesters of Environmental Writing and Great Lakes Literature.

He is also a freelance science writer for the *Ann Arbor Observer* and *Traverse Magazine*. He is currently co-editing *Up in Michigan: One Hundred Years of Environmental Change*, a book about the natural science of Northern Michigan.

Alan is most interested in teaching scientific writing. "As a scientist, I often get questions from non-scientists about how the world works," he says. "We depend on science for so many parts of our lives. We need to work harder to help scientists make that science understandable."

DANIELLE LAVAQUE-MANTY

Danielle LaVaque-Manty came to Sweetland in 2007 after completing an MFA in creative writing at Ohio State, where she first began teaching English composition. She brings teaching experience from the social sciences as well, having earned a doctorate in political science at the University of Michigan in 1999. Between degrees, she worked at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender on an NSF-funded project designed to improve the academic climate for women faculty in science and engineering.

Currently, she collaborates with Sweetland's Naomi Silver and CRLT's Matthew Kaplan and Deborah Meizlish on a three-year study, funded by the Teagle and Spencer foundations, that examines whether integrating metacognitive practices into writing pedagogy can improve students' understanding of disciplinary content in upper-level writing courses.

"One of the most exciting things about learning to teach rhetoric and composition," she says, "has been acquiring better tools to address the kinds of writing problems my political science students so often struggled with."
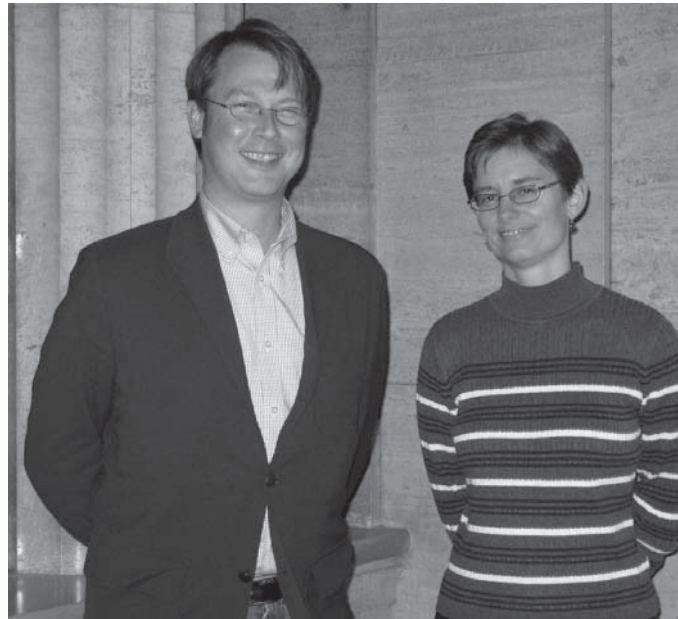
Sweetland's new Lecturer IIIs: Alan Hogg and Danielle LaVaque-Manty.

PATRICK MANNING

Patrick Manning joined the Sweetland Writing Center in August 2008 as the First-Year and Upper Level Writing Requirement Program Coordinator. He has begun to revamp the administrative process for the upper-level writing requirement, making much of the process paperless and more efficient. In addition, he has been involved with data collection concerning the study of Directed Self-Placement, SWC 100, and the first-year writing program.

In addition to working at Sweetland, Patrick is a second-year Master's student in the English Language and Literature program at Eastern Michigan University. In 2006, he earned his bachelor's degree in English Writing, Religious Studies and Anthropology from the University of Pittsburgh. While at Pitt, he worked in the Writing Center as a Peer Tutor.

JENNIFER METSKER

Jennifer Metsker received her BA in Fine Art from the University of Oregon and a graduate degree in Painting and Drawing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. After working five years for Sweetland as the Peer Tutor Coordinator, she returned to school and received her MFA in poetry from UM in 2006. She has won Hopwood awards in the genres of poetry and essay, as well as the Academy of American Poets Prize and the Bain-Swiggett poetry prize.

MICHAEL SHILLING

Michael Shilling received his MFA in fiction from the University of Michigan in 2007, and taught as a Lecturer in the English Department before joining the Sweetland ranks. His debut novel, *Rock Bottom*, will be published by Back Bay Books/Little, Brown and Company in January, and his stories have appeared in *The Sun*, *Fugue*, and *Other Voices*.

D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

D'Anne Witkowski has an MFA in poetry from the University of Michigan and did her undergraduate work at the University of Detroit Mercy. While at U of M, she received Hopwood awards for her poetry and essay writing. She lives in Ferndale with her wife Stacy, dog Henri, and Jasper the cat.

SWC 200: New Media Writing

Why pay attention to new media in writing? This course asserts that in our media-saturated culture print text is only one form of "writing," and today's students need to become informed and critical consumers and producers of visual, aural and kinetic texts. Approved by the LSA Executive Committee in September, SWC 200 is a flexible (1-4) credit course designed to help students incorporate a variety of media—PowerPoint, websites, electronic portfolios, visual texts, blogs, podcasts, and video—into their writing in rhetorically effective ways. This is not a course about technology. Rather it views new media through the analytical lens of rhetoric so that students can become more effective readers and writers in the new media environment.

The first offering of SWC 200, a one-credit minicourse taught by Charlotte Boulay that began in week seven of the fall term, is titled "The Rhetoric of Blogging," and it asks students to explore and evaluate existing blogs in terms of tone, style, methods and strategies at the same time that they create their own blogs. It poses these questions:

• How can a blog effectively communicate with its readers, and who are those readers?

• How can blogs combine images and text in ways that enhance the "reading" experience?

• What are the assets and drawbacks to writing in public? How does the community of readers a blog attracts affect what and how one writes as well as how one manages this community?

• Why and how are blogs changing the digital landscape?

Online Writing Lab, Version 2.0

In Fall 2008, students used 100% of the available OWL hours. Why is the OWL so popular this year? The new OWL platform may be one reason. Over the summer, Sweetland administrators partnered with Lynne Crandall from UM Instructional Support Services to create a new, highly-customized OWL website using UM Sitemaker. Together they fashioned a new web form that collects additional information from students and allows for better archiving for more efficient data-collection and retrieval. UM Sitemaker also enables students to keep an online portfolio of all the papers they submit, which can help them map their writing progress.

The way tutors conduct their reviews has also changed. OWL tutors used to insert their comments into the body of a paper using **asterisks** or other symbols to differentiate the students' writing from their comments. Today, OWL tutors use Adobe Acrobat Pro to construct their feedback, which allows them to highlight and underline text and add notes without compromising the integrity of the student's writing. This method is less intrusive, easier for students to follow, and because it is no longer email-based, allows for increased privacy for both students and tutors.

Due to the increased demand, Sweetland hopes to keep the OWL open during the upcoming spring/summer terms. A group of students from the Fall 2008 SWC 301: Directed Peer Tutoring course researched and tested synchronous tutoring platforms, and Sweetland hopes to pilot a synchronous OWL sometime in 2009.

Visit the new and improved Online Writing Lab at **http://sitemaker.umich.edu/swcwritinghelp**.

SWC 200 - WINTER 2009

3-CREDIT FULL-TERM COURSES

Writing for New Media:
The Interplay of Text and Image
Instructor: Delia DeCourcy

Documentary Michigan:
Writing Arguments in New Media Genres
Instructor: Jen Michaels

1-CREDIT MINI-COURSES
Each mini-course is offered once in the semester's first seven weeks, and once in the second seven weeks.

Watch This:
Argumentation and the Video Essay
Instructor: Jennifer Metsker

Visual science:
Writing and Presenting PowerPoint and posters
Instructor: Alan Hogg

Argumentation:
Using Web Sites to Make Your Case
Instructor: Michael Shilling

Viral Video Rhetoric:
Propaganda and Persuasion in a Digital Democracy
Instructor: D'Anne Witkowski

A full-day conference on November 7, 2008, **(Re)viewing Sweetland** celebrated what the **Gayle Morris Sweetland Writing Center** is today and what it can become. We were especially pleased that a number of people who helped shape the **English Composition Board/Sweetland Writing Center** could be with us for this anniversary. Their contributions are visible in the Center as it exists today, and we are grateful for them. We also appreciate the vision and generosity of **John Sweetland**, whose gifts support much of the Center's work, and the commitment of **Virginia Nicklas**, whose bequest insures that the Center will continue to thrive in the future.

As the overviews from the conference program show, the Center works in many ways to fulfill its mandate to help improve the writing of students at the University of Michigan. From first year students who seek the supportive environment of **SWC 100** to prepare themselves for college writing, to students who seek help from the **Writing Workshop** or the **Peer Tutoring Center**, to those who participate in the **Dissertation Writing Institute**, the Center reaches across the entire student body. It also touches the lives of many faculty through outreach programs, the **Upper-Level Writing Requirement**, and the **Faculty Seminar**.

During the years between **1978** and present, the **English Composition Board**/**Sweetland Writing Center** has undertaken a number of initiatives, and we are currently embarking on others. In September of this year, the LSA Executive Committee approved **SWC 200: New Media Writing**, and this course will be followed by other programs designed to help students incorporate multiple media into their writing with the greatest rhetorical effectiveness. By the time the Center moves into its new quarters in **North Quad** in **2010**, we expect to fit comfortably in that high tech environment. As several Conference sessions indicated, the Center is also carrying out research to inform local decisions and to contribute to national conversations on writing instruction.

I am here as a person who fantasizes about teaching upper-level writing courses […] I'm here today because upper-level writing teaching changed my life, and so I am a tremendous believer in it for myself, for the instructor, for the students, for everyone else.

—Terry McDonald
Dean, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Director Anne Gere, Ray McDaniel, Virginia Nicklas, Dean Terry McDonald, and George Hoffmann toast to Sweetland's 30 years.

ing Sweetland

WHO ARE FIRST-YEAR WRITERS? Research & Experiences

Sweetland's research initiative was featured in a panel focused on first-year writers at UM. Alissa Lurie, Senior Admissions Counselor for Undergraduate Admissions, described the writing required by the application process, explaining that writing serves as a means for students to differentiate themselves. Malinda Matney, Senior Research Associate in Student Affairs, highlighted what we learn from CIRP, a survey of students as they begin their undergraduate careers, noting the importance they give to the virtual world and the passion with which they write in their co-curricular lives. Louise Freymann, Associate Director of LSA Academic Advising, observed that many students see writing in terms of a requirement rather than something of value to them personally, but for those who do understand writing's value, it can be powerful. Louise described an undergraduate who became a Peer Tutor at Sweetland and later explained how this experience led him to medical school: "From teaching students to write, in paying close attention to the writing process, he learned that medicine is about considering *human stories*; this student learned a new way of seeing; he saw patients in a different way." This point was affirmed by Esrold Nurse, Assistant Dean of Student Academic Affairs, as he emphasized how writing fosters student engagement in learning. Tim Green and Laura Aull, graduate students in the Joint Ph.D. in English and Education and research assistants at Sweetland, explained how data

Kelly Allen, Helen Fox, Susan Rosegrant, and Lizzie Hutton enjoy the FYW panel.

gathered from Admissions, CIRP, LSA Advising, and UM's Academic Research Tool-kit (ART) make it possible for us to learn more about students' experiences as writers before they arrive and during their years as undergraduates. Notably, students experience more difficulty with the Upper Level Writing Requirement than they do with the First-Year Writing Requirement.

FIRST-YEAR WRITING—Shall We Count the Ways?

The first-year writing courses should equip students to write across the University, not just in English, but in all academic areas.

—Anne Curzan
Director, English Department Writing Program

The session on first-year writing included representatives of several programs that offer courses to satisfy the first-year writing requirement. Anne Curzan, Director of the English Department Writing Program, asserted that "the first year writing course should equip students to write across the university, not just in English, but in all academic areas," providing students with a set of transferable skills. She emphasized the importance of students knowing how to unpack expectations of an assignment, and understanding the drafting process and what counts as evidence. Comparative Literature faculty member Christi Merrill emphasized translation as a way to help students realize how the delivery of information changes with different audiences. Carol Tell described how in the Lloyd Hall Scholars program writers "step into the role of artists," presenting writing not so much as a set of skills but as a performance. Art History graduate student Kirsten Olds explained that a first-year writing course focused in art history involves "careful looking and reading." Netta Berlin, faculty member in Classical Studies, said that writing in the Classical Civilization survey course focuses largely on primary sources, but asks students to wear a number of disciplinary hats (e.g. historian, literary scholar) to develop writing in a range of contexts.

FREE HELP WITH YOUR WRITING? Writing Workshop & Peer Tutoring

Panelists Ashley Braun, Colleen Lawson-Thornton, Mika LaVaque-Manty, Carrie Luke, Ray McDaniel, TaShara Bailey, Christine Modey, and moderator Lizzie Hutton.

This panel explored the various ways that Sweetland's Writing Workshop and Peer Tutoring services benefit a university of our size, diversity, and stature. The seven panelists represented a cross-section of those at Michigan who recommend, use, and provide this one-on-one writing help, from Mika LaVaque-Manty, Associate Professor of Political Science, to Ashley Braun and Colleen Lawson-Thorton, two seniors in LS&A, to Sweetland's own Carrie Luke, who not only served as a peer tutor as an undergraduate at the University, but now heads up the program full-time as Sweetland's Peer Tutoring Coordinator. Despite their differing positions within the university, the panelists sounded a common theme: TaShara Bailey, a doctoral student with the Center for the Study of Higher and Post-Secondary Education, attested to the cross-disciplinary advantage Sweetland instructors have in providing help for writers whose work asks them to straddle and negotiate between vastly different genres and academic approaches. Professor LaVaque-Manty expanded on this idea with his proposal that one of Sweetland's greatest virtues lies in its instructors' "helpful distance" from course material, enabling Sweetland sessions, whether with a nervous freshman or a seasoned grad student, to operate independent of the stresses of a typical University classroom. Ray McDaniel, a long-time faculty member of Sweetland, echoed this point as he described his instructional work with a doctoral student in mathematics, illustrating how the student can "school" the instructor in Sweetland's one-on-one writing workshop. Finally, Sweetland instructor Christine Modey closed with an observation drawn from her research on instructional practices in writing workshop: "Writing workshop sessions matter," she said, "because [their] success [...] depends on students' abilities to take up, however tentatively, their own purposes as writers of academic texts." Such instruction and tutoring can then become, "at its best…an encounter between two writers and a piece of writing, an academic speech event rich with intellectual promise, a glimpse of Pure Writing."

WHITHER WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES?
The Upper-Level Writing Requirement

"Whither Writing in the Disciplines?" explored the current strengths of UM's Upper Level Writing Requirement (ULWR), and imagined new initiatives and new futures for it. George Hoffmann (Romance Languages and Literatures) and Laura Olsen (Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology) reflected on ULWR courses they have taught, past and present. Olsen, teaching her first ULWR course, noted how much "fun" she is having, and how much she herself is learning from reading her students' writing. Hoffmann confirmed this student-teacher give-and-take by focusing on the role instructor feedback on student writing plays in "developing students' sense of their long-term relationship to their writing." "The upper-level writing requirement," he remarked, "is of course an opportunity to reengage students with that sense of themselves as a writer." Jim Adams (Economics), addressing the shortage in some departments of available GSIs to teach in ULWR courses, proposed "thinking about the Sweetland opportunities for GSIing as being a gate of entry for interdisciplinarity," where GSIs from related fields might teach together in the same ULWR course. The session closed with a call from Terry McDonald (Dean, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts) for departments to reengage in conversations around the ULWR, as a part of UM's current reaccreditation effort. "The upper-level writing requirement belongs to the department," he affirmed, and he hoped these conversations would lead departments to determine for themselves what the ULWR means for the concentration, when in their course of study students should be taking it, and in which department, preferably in students' concentration.

Writing Workshop sessions matter, […] because [their] success […] depends on students' abilities to take up, however tentatively, their own purposes as writers of academic texts.

—Christine Modey
Lecturer, Sweetland Writing Center

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? Former Directors Reflect

Four former directors closed out the day with reflections on what they had learned from their experiences at Sweetland. Jay Robinson claimed that he had learned the value of early retirement and then went on to trace the history of the creation of the English Composition Board and its transformation into the Sweetland Writing Center. Bill Condon, now Professor of English at Washington State University, explained that his years at Sweetland taught him the value of assessment in improving a program and changing faculty teaching practices. He also noted that first-year students aren't so much unskilled at writing as they are negotiating writing in a new culture. Ironically, however, sophomores appear to do relatively little writing, as compared with first-years or upper division students. Martha Vicinus asserted that the experience of observing Sweetland faculty at work helped her to become a better teacher, and focusing on the teaching of writing taught her to think in new ways about everyday ethical issues. Ejner Jensen described himself as "shedding bias" about composition studies as a field and coming to recognize its intellectual richness and theoretical sophistication as a result of directing Sweetland. Observing the difference between the entrepreneurial spirit common in the academy and the deep commitment of Sweetland faculty and staff to the shared mission of improving the writing of UM students, he asserted, "Working with the staff and faculty of the SWC, I learned about the energy and ingenuity that can spring out of a shared academic enterprise."

Ejner Jensen, Martha Vicinus, Bill Condon, Anne Gere, and Jay Robinson.

Working with the staff and faculty of the SWC, I learned about the energy and ingenuity that can spring out of a shared academic enterprise.

—Ejner Jensen
Director, 1999-2002

HOW'S THAT DISSERTATION COMING? Graduate Writing Support

Edie Goldenberg, Ivan Mayerhofer, Danielle LaVaque-Manty, and Bill Condon talk after the graduate writing panel.

Participants on this panel explained how Sweetland's services are vital to many graduate students. Sweetland lecturers Matthew Kelley and Louis Cicciarelli noted that an important component of teaching courses such as the Dissertation Writing Institute and SWC 630: Advanced Writing for Graduate Students is helping graduate students imagine an audience that extends beyond their dissertation committee. According to Kelley, "The best tool we have for helping graduate students in workshop, in GSI training, in Advanced Academic Writing, is the expertise we have in reading a range of texts across a range of disciplines and in responding to student texts through an awareness of non-discipline-specific transferable skills." Edie Goldenberg, Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Political Science, noted that both graduate students and faculty are eager to find more ways to improve graduate student writing, while Janet Weiss, Dean of Rackham School of Graduate Studies, indicated interest in building on the success of the Dissertation Writing Institute with further Sweetland-Rackham collaborations. Ivan Mayerhofer, a graduate student in philosophy who participated in the Dissertation Writing Institute in 2008 and who is now on the academic job market, suggested that working with Sweetland can have a positive impact on both time-to-degree and student morale. "These programs are not just for those that are behind," Mayerhofer said. "They are for all of us that are writing and learning to write as academics for the first time."

As an academic unit, the Sweetland Writing Center is committed to developing a strong research component. Many faculty members are already participating in a variety of ongoing grant-funded or university-driven research projects, such as documentation of best practices for writing workshops or exploring possible integration of quantitative reasoning into writing courses. To further support the importance of research, the Sweetland staff will include two in-house Graduate Student Research Assistants, working with Director Anne Gere to develop new research initiatives. This year, we welcome Laura Aull and Tim Green, both Ph.D. students in UM's Joint Program in English and Education (JPEE), who will work at Sweetland for the 2008-2009 academic year.

The goal of these research initiatives is to help the faculty and staff of Sweetland to critically examine the work done in all aspects of the Writing Center, and to make sound, data-driven decisions in such areas as course restructuring, course offerings, and student placement practices. Below is some information on research projects already underway.

Graduate Student Research Assistants Tim Green and Laura Aull.

What skills do first-year writers bring?

- 55% have taken 1 to 4 H.S. AP Courses
- 33% have taken 5-9 AP Courses

        (*2007 CIRP Survey*)

Incoming students self-report as "experienced" with:

- "writing and drafting essays" – 88%
- "writing essays longer than 4 pages" – 85%
- "library research and citation of sources" – 80%

        (*2008 DSP Evaluations*)

New media writing at UM:

- Most LSA Instructors report that students need digital skills, especially for Web-assisted research.

- Over 65% of LSA instructors use assignments that involve new media technology.

In a recent survey of students taking the new SWC New Media Writing course:

- Only 20% said they were comfortable with creating effective arguments online.

- 70% took the course because of a personal interest in new media/technology or a desire to gain skills in information or related fields beyond their academic course work.

First-Year Writers Project & Directed Self-Placement Evaulation

The Sweetland research initiative team is currently leading a multifaceted project to examine and improve the effectiveness of Sweetland's Practicum course (SWC 100) and the Directed Self Placement (DSP) system. Ultimately, the initiative aims to pull together data from across the University in order to determine a first year writing placement system that will best serve student needs.

Part 1 of this initiative began with extensive research on the state of directed self-placement programs at other colleges and universities. Part 2 of the project involves identifying struggling writers in upper-level classes, tracking back to their performance in first-year writing courses, and working with UM's Institute for Social Research (ISR) to create surveys and identify interviewees among the target population. The overall goal is to combine both quantitative data (grades) and qualitative data (surveys/interviews) from these students, to get a better picture of the factors that influenced their first-year writing decisions and experiences, and of the results they encountered. Finally, part 3 of the project will connect data from UM admissions, the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), and the Academic Reporting Tools database (ART) – in order to gain a better understanding of trends that contribute to challenges and successes for students as incoming and ongoing writers at UM.

Writing Instruction for a New Age

New media writing incorporates digital resources from web research to social networking to multimedia software. In support of Sweetland's new SWC 200 course on "New Media Writing," a survey of UM LS&A instructors was administered to examine teacher attitudes and hopes for the new course, and to find out what kind of digital writing work is already being done across the College. The data is already being used by Sweetland faculty members as they design and plan to teach sections of SWC 200. Also, entrance and exit surveys of students in the classes have been created to help SWC 200 teachers refine their syllabi and assignments according to student needs.

The Impact of Meta-Cognitive Strategies within Writing in the Disciplines

Supported by a three-year grant from the Teagle and Spencer foundations (one of 13 awarded nationally for a project on the Systematic Improvement of Learning in Research Universities), a research team from the Sweetland Writing Center and the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) will use an experimental model to investigate strategies for improving student learning of two core skills, critical thinking and writing. This experiment will take place in courses that fulfill the Upper Level Writing Requirement (ULWR) in LSA. The team includes Matt Kaplan and Deborah Meizlish from CRLT, Naomi Silver and Danielle LaVaque-Manty from Sweetland, and two UROP students, Molly Anderson and Alexandria Sanborn. In addition to its work on campus, the team will participate in periodic gatherings of all grantees to share strategies and results and, when appropriate, pursue collaborations.

The experiment on critical thinking involves introducing "meta-cognitive" or reflective techniques into course assignments and activities. It will test two such strategies, asking students to provide reflective commentary on first drafts of their writing assignments (inserting three to five comments on what they find difficult, interesting, or confusing) or using in-class discussions to find out what students think an assignment is "about" (the disciplinary and other thinking skills it involves) before they start their first drafts. Sections of the course will use one, both, or neither of these strategies. The hypothesis is that these reflective strategies will lead to richer discussions of student misconceptions (either in class or in one-on-one feedback on assignments) and to final drafts that demonstrate greater proficiency in disciplinary thinking. The research team will measure the impact of these interventions by examining finished assignments and analyzing whether student responses to the question "What does it mean to think like a member of this discipline?" become more aligned with faculty responses. Professor Jim Adams (Economics) has graciously agreed to run this experiment in Econ 432: Government Regulation of Industry.

The second experiment will test the effects of different strategies for responding to student writing on student understanding, motivation, interest, and improvement. GSIs in three sections will use varied strategies for commenting on student essay drafts. One will use "focused" responses that identify two or three significant patterns or problems in each essay and comment only on those in the margins and in the endnote. A second will use "negotiation," responding primarily with questions in the margins and an end comment telling the story of the reader's experience of reading. The third will not alter his or her commenting practice, employing a typical "reactive" style of marking and responding to what catches the eye. GSIs in sections one and two will receive training on the specific approach they are to use.

This experiment hopes to determine whether the targeted strategies are more effective than the typical "reactive" approach in teaching discipline-based writing. To do so, the research team will compare first and final drafts of each essay to gauge student improvement in using course concepts and disciplinary conventions. It will survey students to gather their impressions of the effectiveness of the feedback, and it will evaluate faculty and GSI satisfaction with the strategies. Professor Margaret Evans (Psychology) has generously agreed to run this experiment in Psych 351: Advanced Laboratory in Developmental Psychology.

CRLT is excited to be collaborating with Sweetland on this national initiative on undergraduate education. The team looks forward to sharing the discoveries it will make with the campus and other research communities.

Naomi Silver, Matt Kaplan, Deborah Meizlish, and Danielle LaVaque-Manty.

UPDATE: Assessment of Tutoring Best Practices in SWC

In Fall 2007, with support from the Gilbert Whitaker Fund, a team of four researchers from Sweetland and the English Language Institute, undertook a study of Writing Workshop, Sweetland's one-to-one instructional service. They collected a great deal of data, including recordings of writing workshop sessions, and drafts and final versions of student papers. In April 2008, the team traveled to New Orleans to present some of their preliminary findings at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. This fall, analysis of the data continues. Assisted by UROP student Brittney Miller, Sweetland faculty member Christine Modey is identifying and coding the changes students made in their drafts after their writing workshop sessions: for example, rearranging paragraphs, or rewriting sentences, or reconsidering word choices. Once the changes have been coded, they will be evaluated—do they tend to "improve" the essay?—and then examined in relation to the transcript of the writing workshop session, to see how the conversation between the student and the instructor in the writing center affected students' revisions. In addition, researcher Judy Dyer of the English Language Institute is examining the transcripts of writing workshop sessions with students who speak English as a second language, particularly the forms of advice-giving used by writing workshop instructors in sessions with ESL and Generation 1.5 students. Both of these projects will further the aims of the study: to understand the best practices in Sweetland's Writing Workshop.

Paul Barron & *Carrie Luke*

Isithunzi Writing Workshop

Led by Professor Julie Ellison, along with her co-directors Kim Berman of Artist Proof Studio, and Pam Nichols of the Wits Writing Centre, the Isithunzi Project was designed as a model for "advancing partnerships between arts organizations and university writing centers," which are "democratic" and "co-equal" and which "focus on intercultural work in diverse and divided cities, such as Johannesburg and Detroit…[a]nd build writing communities that give equal weight to creativity and professional development."

The writing workshop took place over five days, each day structured around reading, in-class writing exercises, in-class writing, critical discussion of writers' work, and finally, presentation of the work. The writers were in the middle of an intensive three-year course at Artist Proof Studio (APS), training to become printmakers. Since there are still many barriers to higher education for young black people, APS is particularly valuable in providing rigorous training and a real way to earn a living. An artist's ability to make a living is increased if she can articulate her work's conceptual underpinnings, its cultural relevance, and the role of the artist's life in shaping its direction. This is why the five-day workshop focused on writing artist statements.

We realized quickly, however, that writing in this context goes beyond professional development. One artist, for example, in presenting an important work in his development, described the tire smoke depicted in the print as significant, because, as part of a family of street children in Kenya, he smeared his face with tire smoke to remain anonymous in the eyes of the authorities. Artist Proof Director Kim Berman believes that, though many of the APS students have known a variety of trauma, it's crucial that each of her students adopts a leadership role and that they identify themselves not simply as traumatized but as individuals who can use their talents to shape their futures.

Mark Creekmore and Julie Ellison listen to Elton Thabo Motseki read from his artist statement.

WRITING CENTERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

This past July, we left behind Michigan's heat and humidity for the cooler South African winter. Our tasks were to visit as many writing centers in Johannesburg and Cape Town as we could arrange, and to work with young black printmakers on their writing in the Isithunzi Writing Workshop. Our goals were to explore how cultural context and community engagement programs affect the work of a writing center, and consider how this work could inform what we do here at Sweetland.

Carrie Luke and UJ WC Coordinator Zack Simpson in the Pilanesberg Game Park.

The idea of a writing center is fairly new in South Africa. They began to spring up between 1990 and 1994, around the same time that Apartheid was ending. Simultaneously some universities, such as the University of Johannesburg, were forced to merge with other universities or technikons in an effort to make them more racially integrated. These mergers of academic approaches caused tensions that are still felt today in how universities, and subsequently writing centers, are run and what each writing center does or is allowed to do.

Indeed, each writing center's place within its respective institution shapes its mission and purpose, as well as its approach to writing consultations. For example, the University of Cape Town (UCT) Writing Center is administered by the Center for Higher Education Development (much like UM's CRLT), and so the unit is particularly interested in research. The writing center at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) falls under the control of the vice-rector's office (much the same as a provost), meaning it has to compete with other units for funding, and consequently can only provide basic services. The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) Writing Centre, by contrast, resides under the Office of Transformation, giving it a role in empowering black students who historically lacked academic opportunities under Apartheid. Though Wits University charges the writing center with empowering black students, the credit for making Wits Writing Centre a hub of activity for young black scholars goes to the particular vision and energy of its director Pamela Nichols, who interprets this responsibility to mean focusing on community engagement and social change. Wits hosts book openings, and coordinates the Jozi Spoken Word Festival and "Schools Week," an intensive workshop for school teachers. On Friday afternoons, they open the writing centre to anyone from the community to get help on their writing.

South Africans are constantly negotiating norms related to race, language, and social hierarchy, and these tensions become particularly apparent in the writing center where language takes center stage. We were often struck by how many languages South Africans speak and how quickly they can switch between them. Using African languages in the academy is a political choice, where English and Afrikaans have been the languages of (predominantly white) academia. We observed writing consultants encouraging students to explore questions of national selfhood through both the form and content of their writing. We overheard one Wits writing consultant ask his students: "What does it mean to be a black South African today?" In this way, the grassroots work of creating positive social change and national healing is occurring in the writing centers, where young black South Africans are trying to construct their own post-Apartheid identities.

Our work in South Africa prompts several questions: What is the role of the writing center in community engagement and social change? To what extent are such roles shaped by our organizational structure, as well as our stated and implicit missions? Is what we've learned from our South African colleagues transferable? We look forward to an ongoing discussion.
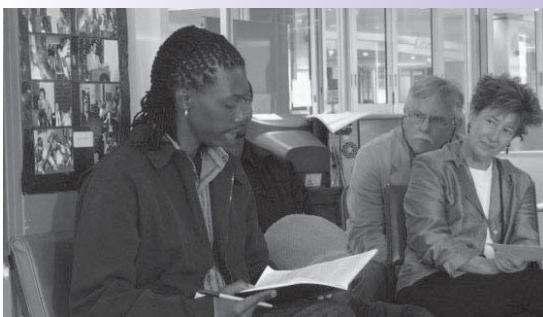
FACULTY & STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

Paul Barron received a grant from the South African Initiatives Office to travel to South Africa to help facilitate the Isithunzi Writing Workshop.

David Brown's book, *In Other Words: Lessons on Grammar, Code-Switching, and Academic Writing*, will be released by Heinemann in February 2009.

Louis Cicciarelli received the English Department's 2008 Ben Prize for outstanding teaching of writing.

George Cooper's chapter "Writing Ain't What It Used To Be: An Exercise in College Multiliteracy" was accepted for publication in *Multiliteracy Centers: Writing Center Work, New Media, and Multimodal Rhetoric*, edited by David Sheridan and James Inman. The book is slated to be published by Hampton Press as part of the New Dimensions in Computers and Composition series, edited by Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe.

Helen Fox's chapter "Teaching Nonviolence" was published in the eBook, *War: Interdisciplinary Investigations*. The book is Volume 49 of the Probing the Boundaries series War, Virtual War and Human Security, edited by Julia Boll.

Alan Hogg had an article, "Our swimmer's itch hero," and a short essay, "Commoners," appear in *Traverse Magazine* in August.

Lizzie Hutton received a CRLT Lecturer's Development Grant last summer, and had poems appear in *Harvard Review*, *Antioch Review*, *Cimarron Review*, and *Hayden's Ferry Review*.

Matt Kelley received the LSA Excellence in Education award in April. In July, his paper "'Not to heaven, but to Georgia': Narratives of Containment in Steinbeck and Capa's *A Russian Journal*" was accepted by the *Steinbeck Review*. This paper will be presented at the 20th Century Literature Conference at the University of Louisville in February 2009.

Danielle LaVaque-Manty's short story "The Safety of Milk" was published in the Spring 2008 issue of *Glimmer Train*, and an academic paper she co-authored with Abigail J. Stewart appeared in *Gendered Innovations in Science and Engineering*, edited by Londa Schiebinger.

Carrie Luke's manuscript *Phantom Eat Phantom: Poems* received a Hopwood Award for Undergraduate Poetry and a Virginia Voss Award for excellence in writing by a senior Honors woman. Her work appeared or is forthcoming in the *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Poetry in Performance*, and the *Bear River Review*. She also received a full scholarship to participate in the Bear River Writers' Conference in May.

Patrick Manning's paper "Usurping the Sign: *Eva Luna* and Mimicking the Simulacra of Power" was accepted to the 18th Annual British Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies Conference. Patrick will present this research at the conference, hosted by Southern Georgia University in Savannah, GA, in February 2009.

Christine Modey received two grants in 2008: a CRLT Lecturer's Development Grant last spring to support travel to the 4Cs to give a panel presentation, and an Improving Student Learning Grant to work on designing instructional modules for SWC 100: Writing Practicum.

Alex Ralph received a CRLT Lecturer's Development Grant that funded a week at the Emma Goldman Papers Project at the University of California, Berkeley.

Michael Shilling's debut novel, *Rock Bottom*, will be published by Little, Brown and Company in January 2009.

Naomi Silver presented a paper on student writing habits in the digital age for the National Endowment for the Arts Future of the Book panel at the Ann Arbor Book Festival in May. Along with Sweetland colleague Danielle LaVaque-Manty, and CRLT colleagues Matt Kaplan and Deborah Meizlish, she received a three-year, $90,000 grant from the Teagle and Spencer Foundations to study meta-cognitive strategies in upper-level writing courses. In July, she attended the weeklong International Writing Center Association summer institute in Madison, WI.

Carol Tell presented on a panel on student engagement at the Committee on Institutional Cooperation conference in October. She also gave a talk on writing application essays for a workshop with Ypsilanti Public High School students in July.

2008 SWEETLAND FELLOWS

Senior Fellows: Sara Ahbel-Rappe, Classical Studies; **Robyn Burnham**, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology; **Julie Ellison**, American Culture; **Alan Hogg**, Sweetland Writing Center; **Yannick Viers**, Romance Languages & Literatures.

Junior Fellows: James Beitler, English & Education; **Anne Berg**, History; **J. Henrike Florusbosch**, Anthropology; **Marco Garrido**, Sociology; **Jason Herlands**, Asian Languages & Cultures; **Helen Ho**, Communication Studies; **Anne Kreps**, Near Eastern Studies; **Joel Selway**, Political Science.

Faculty and graduate students interested in integrating writing instruction into their teaching may apply to participate in the **Sweetland Fellows Seminar**. The 2009 Seminar will meet weekly during the fall semester and provide opportunities for sustained and lively conversation with colleagues who share a commitment to writing instruction. Visiting scholars add to the conversation. Topics addressed typically include setting assignments, responding to writing, writing in the disciplines, and new media writing. All Fellows receive stipends for their participation. For further information and application guidelines, contact **Laura Schuyler** at schuyler@umich.edu.

STATE OF THE PEER TUTORING UNION

For me, [peer tutoring] has definitely been a humbling experience, as I see how small a fraction of the human experience I can appreciate alone, and how much it broadens my perspectives and knowledge to learn about what, why, and how other people think.

—Ian Hsu
LSA, 2009

2008 saw record participation in the Peer Tutor Program: in Winter 2008 alone, 96 students tutored for credit or pay. These record numbers translate into record usage, as Peer Tutors conducted more face-to-face sessions than ever before: over 3,000 at four tutoring locations, and over 350 sessions online. Sweetland is also able to offer daytime hours Monday-Friday and staff more tutors per hour, and in Fall 2007, Sweetland was able to open a new location in the Undergraduate Library. The UGL Peer Tutoring Center is located across from the reference desk where research consultants work, the idea being that students can get help with both researching and writing their papers in the same place. Tutors staff this center 24 hours per week in the evenings.

Program enrollment shows no sign of waning. For Winter 2009, Program Coordinator Carrie Luke received 54 applications for 42 open seats. This was in spite of a more rigorous application process that included an essay.

Also during Fall 2008, the Peer Tutor Committee coordinated two professional development sessions for paid tutors: "Tutoring Personal Statements, Cover Letters, and Application Essays" with presenters Mariella Mecozzi and Kevin Johnson of the Career Center, and "Working

Junior Alexander Davidson and senior Paul Vaglica in the Peer Tutoring Center.

with Creative Writers" with SWC Faculty panelists Louis Cicciarelli, Lizzie Hutton, and Ray McDaniel. The audio of these presentations was recorded and will be turned into podcasts and made available to tutors-in-training and others who were unable to attend the sessions. In Winter 2009, the committee hopes to offer three additional professional development sessions on topics ranging from tutoring science writing to working with students with disabilities.

Recent SWC 301 students have also done some exciting work. Students in George Cooper's Fall 2007 SWC 301 class, which had 40 tutors enrolled, wrote and acted in ten skits that were recorded and turned into a DVD, *Peer Tutors in the Mirror*. These skits explored tutoring issues such as gender relations in the tutoring center and directive versus non-directive tutoring strategies. The DVD will be used in training future students in SWC 300 and 301. Naomi Silver's Fall 2008 SWC 301 class was the largest yet, at 45 students. The class met in a computer classroom in the Undergraduate Science Building, and the students, working in different project groups, created podcasts of interviews to archive Sweetland's history, tested synchronous online tutoring systems, and planned a peer tutor party and mini-symposium to coincide with Sweetland's 30th Anniversary celebration (see pages 4-7). The work of the synchronous OWL group will hopefully inform Sweetland's ability to pilot a synchronous OWL in 2009.

As enrollment numbers continue to rise, Sweetland hopes to set up a Peer Tutoring Center on North Campus in 2009 and in North Quad, when it opens in 2010.

Senior Nick Casto works with a fellow undergradate student.