Meeting NIU Needs. Earlier this semester, the University Writing Center opened at a new location—Stevenson Towers South, lower level. Students are finding the dormitory site convenient, while Student Housing and Dining administrators feel enthusiastic about this most recent effort to expand its commitment to the living-learning connection.

In the academic year 2001-02, 1,948 clients generated 5,602 visits. A Writing Center staff of 32 trained consultants helped the students in 467 different courses, taught by more than 500 faculty. 466 of the students were freshman, 331 sophomores, 478 juniors, 451 seniors, and 201 grads. 10 faculty members also sought consultations, and 11 people from the surrounding community visited. 75% of the student clientele came from cross-disciplinary courses, while 25% came from First-Year Composition.

At midterm, student visits reached 2,000, and the continued increase in use shows why the new facility is such a boost.

Assessing Impact. Since 2000, teams of senior Writing Center staff experienced in calibration have read over 4,883 drafts written by repeat visitors. They have discovered that students who visit the Writing Center at least three times a semester, producing multiple drafts of at least two written projects, demonstrate measurable improvement in their drafting skills. Research is under way to gauge the impact of regular Writing Center visits upon the final papers that regular visitors turn in to professors—and preliminary evidence suggests the improvement is often substantial.

Equipping the Facility. The new Writing Center has plenty of space for consulting with clientele. The tutoring area is also hardwired for technological expansion. The complex boasts a conference room for small-group projects, a tech room to support online development, a staff office, a social area, bathrooms, and a state-of-the-art smart classroom designed specifically for writing instruction, where courses will begin convening next spring (see the floor plan, below).

The smart classroom is also equipped to train GAs and faculty seeking to learn more about teaching writing with technology. It has a smart podium with an overhead (elmo), two projectors, a smart board, and hook-up for cable TV as well as video. The workstations in the classroom are linked, so that faculty can bring up websites and other images on students’ monitors. Faculty can use the linking system to cluster students’ work stations for instruction.
Internet Sources to Help Your Students and You

NIU professors can find many useful sources listed on the Writing Center website at [http://www.niu.engl.edu/writing_center/](http://www.niu.engl.edu/writing_center/). They can tell students to click the link for “Online Sources” and ask students to hunt for various items that will help them improve their writing. Professors will find electronic sources that can also enable them work effectively with students who speak English as a second language. Below are a few items that many national writing centers, including NIU’s, widely recommend for providing supplemental writing instruction and assistance to students and professors alike:

- **Purdue University OWL** (online writing lab)— One of the best, most accessible sites. Self-help for students, handouts for teachers, advice on different kinds of writing tasks, excellent links, ESL and WAC sources

- **ESL Language Practice Site, California State-Northridge**— The home of Dave's ESL Cafe. Provides online chat, entertaining activities, tips for ESL writers, many other links

- **Ann Raimes' ESL Tip Sheets**— An excellent source for understanding the features of ESL students’ different native languages and seeing what kinds of errors the students will need to anticipate (sponsored by Houghton Mifflin)

- **Internet TESL Journal**— Fine articles for professors and teachers-in-training, interactive grammar quizzes for students, and much more. Updated regularly

- **Writer's Handbook, University of Wisconsin-Madison**— A great compendium of information on usage and a fine resource for documentation styles (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)

- **Paradigm Online Writing Assistant**— Well-maintained resource for students that describes the writing process and provides ample advice

- **Hacker Online**— Courtesy of Bedford/St. Martin's, this source guides writers in the humanities, social sciences, history, and the natural sciences

- **Bedford/St. Martin's Online!**— Students will find this a first-rate documentation and Internet source for a huge collection of different disciplines; compiled by Harnack & Kleppinger

- **Communication @ Work**— Courtesy of Mary Ellen Guffey, business students in particular will appreciate this site for the assistance it gives in APA documentation for electronic sources

- **Writing in the Arts & Sciences at Marquette University**— An exceptional collection of web pages describing the conventions and giving models of writing in different disciplines, written by professors in those disciplines

- **Traci's Lists of Ten**— A collection of many teaching tips for the humanities, e.g., assignment design, reading comprehension exercises, ideas on how to respond to writing.

Writing Center Services that Faculty Can Request

A great deal of the Writing Center’s work takes place all over the NIU campus, because professors may contact the staff and request several different outreach activities. When students have the opportunity to meet and hear the staff explain how visits to the Writing Center can help them, they feel more comfortable about making their first visit. Writing Center staff can also help professors understand the range and nature of services available. Writing Center staff often get requests to:

- Visit classes to acquaint students and professors with information about making consultations most effective
- Design in-class workshops to help students with specific assignments
- Collect syllabi and assignments from professors and place them on file at the Writing Center, so as to help students understand assignment instructions, formatting concerns, and course requirements better

- Offer students guidance with different documentation styles
- Give tips about writing with technology
- Discuss writing for resumes, cover letters, scholarship and internship applications
- Advise students how to avoid plagiarism
- Inform faculty in departmental meetings how they can work with the Writing Center to help students improve

Call 753-6636, if you’re interested.