CHAPTER 5

ONLINE WRITING LABS

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OWI should be supported by online writing centers, most often referred to as online writing labs or OWLs. Developing these support structures, however, can be a daunting endeavor for many institutions, as OWLs are plagued with issues related to the perception that it is a deficit model for tutoring, accessibility issues, appropriate tutor training, and technology. OWL administrators and tutors can use the OWI principles to overcome many of these obstacles in developing and delivering quality writing instruction through tutoring.

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Online writing centers, also called online writing labs or OWLs, extend the reach of traditional writing centers and, in some cases, are developed independently of their onsite counterparts. An OWL can be considered an outgrowth of an onsite writing center in that it offers similar writing support services but in an online forum, and many times, to a new type of audience (Hewett, 2002; Moberg, 2010). With the surge of online courses being offered across the nation, the need for online writing support also is growing.

According to the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) (2013), writing centers were established "in reaction to the 'literacy crisis' of the mid-1970s" (para. 11). While writing centers often were seen as supplemental support for writing courses, they were also mistakenly viewed as "drop off" centers where students could send or leave their papers for someone else to edit or "fix." Writing center staff have worked diligently to correct this perception by educating faculty and students about the writing center experience and creating a field of study through research and presentations that undergird writing center theo-

ries. As a result, many onsite writing centers now are recognized as valuable and integral components of writing programs and writing-across-the-curriculum efforts—serving students of all levels and in all types of courses where writing is assigned. While writing center directors and staff continue their struggle to educate faculty and students about the writing process and the collaborative role of the writing center in helping students become better writers, there is general acceptance about the usefulness of onsite writing centers; to date, thousands of onsite writing centers exist world-wide in postsecondary and secondary schools (IWCA, 2013). Interestingly, most likely because they are newer and use technology to reach students, OWLs are experiencing the same perception issues today that their onsite counterparts experienced not so many years ago.

OWLs vary in the services and resources they offer, but they generally provide students with online writing resources, such as PDF files or Web pages that relate to the writing process or grammar and mechanics. More technologically advanced OWLs tend to have interactive resources, allowing students the opportunity to apply new writing skills as they are learning how to use them. Some OWLs hire tutors to offer feedback on student writing through asynchronous means, such as email or Web-based software. Other OWLs have tutors or writing consultants who meet with students and offer synchronous, one-to-one consultations through text-based chat or voice-based conferencing software. The form of consultation and feedback is highly dependent on the technology available at the institution and in the OWL itself, as well as available technology among the student body. Whatever the makeup of the OWL, providing online writing support addresses issues of access and inclusivity for online students because, according to OWI Principle 13, "such reinforcing programs provide student access to the same support components that students in traditional, onsite courses receive" (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013, p. 26).

Like traditional writing centers, OWLs vary in their services and philosophy depending on the institution and the unique needs of its students (Breuch, 2005; Hewett, 2002). For instance, some small, private universities may use a Web page as their OWL, which only advertises the school's onsite writing center services because their entire student body resides on campus, there are no online courses offered, or students are expected to meet with tutors in person. Two-year community colleges, on the other hand, serve a student body that generally has more time constraints than students at private and traditional universities; thus, they are more likely to offer online resources and consultations (Neaderhiser & Wolfe, 2009). In addition, both onsite and online universities may outsource their tutoring to such privatized companies as Smarthinking, Inc. or NetTutor to meet the needs of the growing online student population ("Smarthinking," 2013; Thiel, 2010).

While Beth L. Hewett (2002) classified the functions of OWLs according to their relationship to the Current-Traditional, Neo-Classical, Neo-Platonic/Expressivist, and Social Constructivist schools of thought, Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch (2005) categorized OWLs according to writing philosophy. Her categories include: the "participant-observer model," which advances the idea that the goal of a writing center is to "produce better writers, not better writing" (p. 26); the "Storehouse Center," which is akin to a resource center; the "Garret Center," a place where students learn to find their individual voice and strengths; and, the "Burkean Parlor" that values collaboration in the writing process. The model that most writing centers and OWLs do not subscribe to is the fix-it shop, a place where students drop off or email their papers and allow tutors to revise, edit, and correct their writing for them. The fix-it shop model has been the source of many misperceptions garnered by students and faculty about what onsite writing centers do, and this misperception has been extended to OWLs. However, even for those OWLs that offer only asynchronous consultations, students are expected to be part of the writing process and responsible for their own revisions and corrections (Breuch, 2005; Dailey, 2004; Hewett, 2002; Neaderhiser & Wolfe, 2009; Wolfe & Griffin, 2013). In an OWL, just like in an onsite writing center, students should remain the agents of their own writing.

Whichever model is used, flexibility with teaching and learning at a distance helps to establish OWLs as the perfect support service for OWI—that is, if they actually are available. Results from the CCCC OWI Committee's national fully online and hybrid surveys indicated that fewer than half of the respondents in all categories reported the existence of an OWL or any asynchronous or synchronous tutoring available for online students at their institutions (CCCC OWI Committee, 2011a, 2011b). Offering OWCs without online writing support has serious implications for students because it creates inequity of available and accessible support services. Moreover, if an OWL is available, other issues may affect student learning and retention in online classes due to tutors and students being unfamiliar with how to use the technology, resources, and services of the OWL in ways that facilitate quality instruction and learning opportunities. Although OWLs have distinct differences among them, Eric Moberg (2010) identified several characteristics that successful OWLs have in common: ensuring access for all students, offering online consultations that focus on the writer and not the writing, providing tutor training, and using technologies that provide pedagogical value to the services of an OWL. These characteristics, however, do not always come about easily and many OWLs face serious challenges in these areas. While the issues associated with providing quality OWI through the services and resources of an OWL are complex, they are not insurmountable.

Technology has changed the way we read and write (Hewett, 2015a). OWLs

can be considered places where "technology and writing have the ability to converge in the form of tutoring and collaboration" (Neaderhiser & Wolfe, 2009, p. 49). In this chapter, we argue that OWLs are integral to OWI as sites of tutoring and collaboration, just as onsite writing centers have been found to be integral to onsite writing instruction. First, we describe some of the challenges associated with developing and maintaining online writing center services and resources—access, consultations, training, and technology—and then we provide recommendations for how to address those issues at both the institutional and individual tutor levels. Central to our discussion are OWI Principles 1, 13, and 14 in their regard of OWLs as places of access and inclusivity (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013). Using the OWI principles as guidelines reveals solutions that institutions and individual tutors can implement to ensure that students receive a quality education in a distance setting.

OWI'S CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR OWLS

Online students are like face-to-face students in that they, too, need feedback at multiple stages of their writing. Learning in a digital environment is different from learning in a face-to-face classroom, especially when it comes to writing instruction, because it is text-heavy (Griffin & Minter, 2013; Hewett, 2013, 2015a). Almost all communication is read and written including discussion boards, assignments, feedback, and grading. To best assist students in the online writing process, OWLs should have a pedagogically sound philosophy about teaching writing online, as indicated in OWI Principles 3 and 4. While some OWI-specific theories need to be developed, traditional composition theories, pedagogies, and strategies can be migrated from an onsite environment to an online environment, but they need to be modified or adapted to meet the unique challenges of online instruction and needs of online students (Breuch & Racine, 2000; Hewett, 2010, 2015b; Olsen, 2002; see also Chapters 1 & 4).

Before reviewing suggested strategies for developing OWLs and preparing tutors, it is helpful to have a full understanding of the challenges that OWL administrators and tutors face. These challenges include access and inclusivity, online consultations, training and professional development, and technology. Understanding the complexities of these issues helps administrators and tutors foresee potential problems, find solutions, and mitigate problems before they actually occur, before students are lost or not well served, or before money is spent.

Access and Inclusivity

Primary considerations to developing an OWL should be to ensure that the

services and resources of the OWL are accessible and inclusive of all students and offered in a modality that matches students' learning environments. Specifically, in OWI Principle 1, the CCCC OWI Committee recommended that all learners, regardless of their physical disabilities, learning challenges, language backgrounds (i.e., multilingual students), or socioeconomic status, should be supported in their educational endeavors. Along those same lines, access and inclusivity also pertain to the modality and medium in which support services and resources are offered. OWI Principle 13 explained that support for online students should be offered primarily online with onsite support as a secondary resource. Furthermore, in order to provide an equitable learning environment for all students, the CCCC Committee promoted a proactive approach in *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) to making all online resources and services accessible and inclusive. They encouraged institutions to address issues of inclusivity and accessibility at the forefront of any online educational endeavor, instead of as an afterthought as add-ons or retrofitted alternatives.

Accessibility and inclusivity address the different needs inherent to a widely diverse population, which include students, faculty, and staff with physical or learning disabilities, multilingual backgrounds, or socioeconomic challenges—the traditionally underserved. Currently, up to 45% of college and university students are underserved partly due to the lack of access to support services (Twigg, 2005). Underserved populations are "less likely to persist and graduate after enrolling in college" and are encouraged by faculty and advisors to choose a college that offers academic support services, including writing center access, that meet the needs of the student ("Maximizing," 2012, para. 1). In fact, Carol A. Twigg (2005) found that providing academic support helped create a learning community, a place where intellectual and social interactions integrate, thus increasing inclusivity, which "is critical to persistence, learning, and satisfaction" (p. 4).

The implications of OWI Principle 1 are that classrooms, curricula, and pedagogy should be flexible and employ alternatives for various learners. Taken further and with OWLs in mind, all resources—including websites and Web resources, services, and any technology being used—should be selected and developed with inclusivity and accessibility as primary guidelines. To this end, OWL administrators, tutors, and helpdesk personnel should be trained and comfortable serving all students—including multilingual and multicultural students—regardless of their disability, challenges, or background. OWL administrators should select technology that is financially available to all students—to enable them to have distance-based access—and that includes alternatives for sensory, size, and space preferences.

In *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013), the CCCC OWI Committee encouraged developing materials and technology that use universal design, which embodies equitable and flexible features for simple and intuitive use. Even with universal design as a foundation for developing OWL services and resources, it should be noted that there is no way to foresee and prepare for all situations; universal design simply "reduces, but does not eliminate, the need for accommodations for students with disabilities" (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008, pp. 24-25). Accommodations may need to be made with various students, as new situations arise, and whenever new technologies are employed.

The principle of providing inclusivity and accessibility grounds all of the OWI principles and should be considered at the onset of developing solutions instead of as an afterthought. Accessibility often is considered in terms of disability, and while that certainly is one aspect and one reason that OWLs should be thoughtful of access, disabilities are not the only issues that can prevent students from receiving an equitable education. One's socioeconomic status may limit the ability to use synchronous tutoring, for example, in that lack of cameras/microphones or Web conferencing technology (i.e., technology that might otherwise be available in a campus lab) in one's home or public library may impede certain kinds of access for geographically distributed students. Varying learning styles and levels are other issues to consider when designing OWI materials. For example, some students may learn better with the time flexibility allotted in asynchronous tutoring; to limit tutoring to only synchronous settings would do a great disservice to such students.

As OWI Principle 1 "supersedes and connects to every [OWI] principle" (p. 7), any solutions and recommendations for OWL administrators begin with access. Accessibility and inclusivity are issues that all learners face, whether in an online or an onsite course, because they address the different needs inherent to a widely diverse population. Issues associated with access and inclusivity are more numerous than can be covered here, but an overarching guideline is that "OWI teachers should determine their uses of modality and media based not only on their pedagogical goals but also on their students' likely strengths and access" (p. 9). Instead of throwing a wide net of resources to an unknown audience, OWL administrators can take specific actions to get to know the student body better.

Recommendations for Access and Inclusivity

Increasing inclusivity and access in online writing instruction begins by working with the institution's disability office. Appropriate planning includes asking the right questions. For instance, asking about the types of accommodations already afforded to onsite students can inform how they might be adapted

for online students. In addition, including IT support professionals in the conversation with staff from the disability office will help ensure that OWLs and the resources included in them are all ADA compliant and that the OWLs are accessible. These institutional partners can help determine which types of technologies can be used and which should be avoided, particularly when creating online learning communities.

A learning community—a place where the academic and social interests of students potentially can intersect—can increase inclusivity and assist in learning more about students' strengths and concerns. OWLs offer several opportunities to build learning communities online, which help to develop trust and rapport between students and tutors. Common software and familiar online platforms, such as the institution's LMS, can be used to create an open shell, where the discussion board invites focus groups with faculty and students to ask them about their online writing needs. This open forum allows students to get to know the tutors, become familiar with the online communication process, and know that their concerns are being heard. Scheduling weekly drop-in groups provides consistency to the conversations taking place in the discussion board. Additional forums include Wikis, blogs, and podcasts. An OWL Wiki can be open to everyone and serve as a place to hold and archive questions about writing, and with daily monitoring, the tutors can maintain an online presence in the community. Blogs written and monitored by the tutors about common writing issues will also increase their online presence. Podcasts with mini-lessons or OWL advertisements can place faces with names, which may encourage students who otherwise might be reluctant to seek the services. The key is to convey that the OWL and tutors are available and accessible in various online formats, and inclusive of all students, whether in fully online, hybrid, or fully onsite courses. Alternative technologies that assist students with disabilities also should be included when these learning communities/resources are established.

To sustain inclusive online learning communities, it is important to maintain easy access to and an online presence in the OWL. Online and onsite contact information, as well as availability information, should be prominent on the OWL homepage. Student expectations should be highlighted, including anticipated response times for answers to questions or feedback on papers. Responding to students within a reasonable, advertised timeframe of 24-48 hours has been an industry standard for returning emails and phone calls, but with faster technology, students are looking for faster ways to communicate. Depending on budgetary constraints and institutional needs, administrators might consider reducing the response time in keeping with student needs and expectations.

As technology progresses, so do the online literacy levels and expectations of the students. While the OWL discussion boards, Wikis, blogs, and podcasts

offer multiple ways to transmit information, there should also be multiple ways for students to retrieve it. OWLs should enable student access through a variety of mobile devices, such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, and electronic notebooks (see Chapter 16). Finally, social media can provide access as well, including sending announcements, daily writing tips, OWL advertisements, or generalized writing advice. Be wary, however, that not all students subscribe to every form of online access, so redundant messages in alternate media can help reach a larger student body audience.

To develop more universally inclusive and accessible online writing support, OWI Principle 13 indicated that students who choose to take courses online should receive support services in the modality and medium in which their course meets with a secondary backup resource onsite (p. 26). This guideline suggests that students who meet asynchronously through the LMS should have asynchronous tutoring available, while students who meet synchronously should have synchronous tutoring available. When possible, having both modalities available is helpful to learners with varied preferences and access needs. Because having multiple venues to access writing support is essential to increasing retention in online learners, it is important not to assume that because tutors may be used to and/or prefer synchronous communication that it is either best for or preferred by students. When such assistance can occur using the same technologies as the OWC, the LMS may be called upon for double duty, thus saving the institution from purchasing or developing a separate OWL platform. When students can access and participate in various university intellectual and social circles, they become part of a new community, a learning community that promotes persistence. Thus, inclusivity and accessibility are foundational to the other OWI principles discussed in this chapter.

Online Consultations

Online consultations also are referred to as online tutoring or online conferences. According to Stephen Neaderhiser and Joanna Wolfe (2009), such "one-to-one interactions between a consultant and a writer ... can take place synchronously, in real time ... or they can take place asynchronously through technologies such as email" (p. 54). Online conferencing, however, is often viewed as being inferior to face-to-face conferences (Carlson & Apperson-Williams, 2003; Hewett, 2010, 2015b; Wolfe & Griffin, 2012). The online distance between tutor and student often is considered impersonal where the "tutoring table is replaced with a computer screen: cold, sterile, and, to many, uninviting" (Carlson & Apperson-Williams, 2003, p. 233). Even tutors who like their online tutoring work may express this concern (Ehmann Powers, 2010).

In addition, there is a common assumption among some scholars that online consultations lack the quality of instruction that comes from face-to-face tutoring, which often stems from a perceived lack of conversation (Wolfe & Griffin, 2012) and a perception that conversation is always superior to problem-centered instruction, a precept with which Hewett (2010, 2015b) disagreed given the text-heavy focus of online tutoring and OWI overall. Likewise, Wolfe and Griffin (2012) reported that there are innovative OWI methods that are just as effective as face-to-face consultations, and that in some instances were preferred by students over in-person tutoring sessions. In fact, while a majority of tutors surveyed preferred face-to-face consultations because they could work better from body language and facial cues, an overwhelming majority of students preferred the online environment. Students reported liking the convenience and time-saving aspects of online conferencing, as well as being able to make immediate changes to their papers during the tutoring sessions. Students especially liked sharing a screen and the audio aspect of some online conferencing.

Despite student preferences found in Wolfe and Griffin's (2012) research, Neaderhiser and Wolfe (2009) reported that from their survey, only about 10% of all online conferencing took place synchronously. This low percentage may be attributed to several possibilities including funding, unfamiliarity with more advanced types of software and how they can be used effectively for OWI, or, as mentioned previously, access needs of the student body. As Connie Mick and Geoffrey Middlebrook indicate in Chapter 3, asynchronous technologies are more commonly used in OWCs, which may be an issue of cost; similarly, they are more common for OWLs at this point in their development. Consequently, email is used about 90% of the time for online conferencing (Wolfe & Griffin, 2012), and online consultations can also take place on discussion boards.

Asynchronous and synchronous conferences offer different challenges with engaging students; however, there are ways to overcome those challenges that can be satisfying for students (Wolfe & Griffin, 2012). Whether using asynchronous or synchronous technology for online consultations, it is important to consider pedagogy. Traditional face-to-face classroom pedagogy often does not directly transfer to online environments (hence, the "yin" and "yang" of OWI Principles 3 and 4, per Chapter 1), and effective OWI requires online-focused training for tutors and students.

Asynchronous Tutoring

Asynchronous tutoring is a complex process that requires training to do it well. Hewett (2010) explained that "the roles of teacher and tutor naturally intersect" (p. 8), but one difference between the two is that tutors "listen, read, and provide formative feedback uninvolved with grading" (p. 8). The most common

types of asynchronous tutoring include email and discussion boards. As Hewett (2010, 2015b) indicated, some critics argue that asynchronous consultations do not promote conversation between tutors and students because it is delayed communication and any interactions that may occur over email, for instance, are short-lived. Even though there is potential for students to email additional questions to a previous tutor, the dynamic often is criticized as being a question/answer session instead of a dialogue. Additionally, technology most often associated with asynchronous tutoring, such as email and discussion boards, often is seen as limiting conversation because there is no shared space for students and tutors to view papers together and discuss multiple questions that usually arise in face-to-face consultations (Neaderhiser & Wolfe, 2009). An additional challenge of asynchronous tutoring involves the funding to build or source it to begin with. Some institutions outsource feedback services to for-profit educational companies. Such services may be financially difficult for institutions to maintain, and there is concern (often expressed anecdotally on listservs) that the feedback received from personnel outside of an institution may counter what instructors expect at the students' institutions.

Opportunities to interact with online students in meaningful ways, however, are highly dependent on how tutors use the OWL technology and, of course, on how tutors are trained. For example, when providing asynchronous commentary, tutors should envision what happens after the student's paper has been returned. Is there opportunity for follow-up and interaction with the tutor? If so, how does a tutor continue a dialogue about a student's paper and engage the student to think through and write his or her own revisions? George Cooper, Kara Bui, and Linda Riker (2003) reported that such a relationship can take place, that "there are online strategies for establishing a relationship between the tutor and writer, for empowering writers to share in their own revision, and for dealing with specifics of grammar and mechanics—all done by relying on collaborative techniques and leading to a facilitated knowledge between tutor and client" (p. 257). Additionally, students benefit from training—either in class or through OWL-developed and provided videos—in how to read the tutorial so that they can make the best use of the advice they receive (Hewett, 2015b, 2010).

It may seem that providing written comments on student writing is fairly straightforward, but once again, the type of commentary should align with the philosophy of the OWL and the institution. Those philosophies can range from a holistic view, where writing from invention to proofreading is seen as an integrated, generative, circular process, to a more categorized approach, where writing is divided into content, style, format, and grammar and mechanics. If an OWL subscribes to a holistic philosophy of writing, then a tutor's strategies

and comments should reflect that philosophy. Even when a student asks for help with only grammar and mechanics, there are ways to provide that assistance without correcting his or her paper. One of those ways is the 4-step intervention process developed by Hewett (2011, 2015b; see also Effective Practice 3.4), a problem-centered lesson approach that teaches students *what* the problem is, *why* it is a problem, *how* to address it or avoid it, and then asks them to *do* something about it. Such a process involves modeling different writing possibilities for the student using the student's writing, which should not be confused with doing for them. It is a teaching process that can be enacted for any level of problem from higher-to-lower order concerns.

Recommendations for Asynchronous Tutoring

All writers have their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as unique backgrounds, and it is important that tutors understand there is no one tried and true approach to writing. That said, there are some strategies for providing comments that are more helpful than others. Before commenting on a student paper, tutors should be familiar with various levels of writing competence and the challenges that go along with those levels, such as how novice writers often voice frustration with issues of control or being able to make the words on a page reflect their thinking. Novice writers also often mention that they are unsure about how to organize their thoughts enough to write them coherently. All of these factors can influence a tutoring session and tutors have to know when, where, and how to comment in ways that will help students better understand the process of writing versus getting an assignment *right* using any particular definition of that word. As with OWI overall, where the best online writing teacher is an experienced writing teacher, the best online tutors will understand writing regardless of setting.

Text-based asynchronous conferencing is both common and useful, but it also places stress on students' reading abilities (and, according to Hewett, 2015a, on teachers' and tutors' *writing* abilities). One way to help students is to contextualize the feedback within the student's writing and in connection to the assignment (when available) because the online setting often lacks the tutor's body language that a student might use to make sense of the response. Another way is to build redundancy into the feedback (a strategy outlined in Chapter 4) to enable the student to triangulate the communication's meaning and assess its value to the writing overall. These strategies have the additional benefits of addressing access concerns, such as those inherent to writers with neural processing disorders as well as those with weaker reading skills relative to instructional text.

To further help students with varied learning styles, asynchronous conferencing does not have to be entirely text-based. Successful OWLs use a variety

of technologies, such as audio and audio/video feedback (for which students need speakers, an issue of access). Wolfe and Griffin (2012) reported on research that suggested "audio feedback was more effective than text-based feedback in conveying nuance and was associated with increased student involvement, content retention, and student satisfaction" (p. 63). They also stated that "audio feedback was associated with the perception that the instructor cared about the student" (p. 63). Although more research is needed on both text-based and audio feedback in asynchronous settings, it is not difficult for tutors to provide such feedback with adequate training on what kinds of feedback might be most helpful. Free software allows tutors to screen capture and narrate comments that students can see and hear when they receive their returned essays. Audio and audio/video comments also can be combined with written comments for a more comprehensive review that provides students with written next steps or other summary material. With some practice, audio and audio/video commentary does not take any more time than written comments alone. As a caution, however, unless the commentary is limited by time, it is easy to provide the student with an unfocused or overly lengthy response that may confuse their efforts to revise (Vincelette, 2013; Vincelette & Bostic, 2013).

Other ways to make asynchronous online conferences effective and satisfying include knowing how to use various technologies to draw out information from students and engage them in the writing process. First, it is important for tutors and students to establish goals or learning expectations (Hewett, 2010, 2015b; Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2010). Expectation and goal setting can be accomplished in several ways, such as having a student explain the assignment and concerns in an email or online form before submitting a paper to an online tutor. Furthermore, expectation and goal setting provides students with a moment of reflection about their writing in relation to the assignment, and it sets a common goal between student and tutor (Hewett, 2010, 2015b).

To create an asynchronous virtual relationship between tutor and student, tutors can provide personalized comments of the global and local kind (Cooper, Bui, & Riker, 2003; Crump, 2003; Hewett, 2010, 2011, 2015b; Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2010). Global comments, sometimes provided as opening comments, can appeal to students and may create a personal tone that prepares them for what follows, especially when a student's name is used and the tutor uses comments that are informal and friendly (Cooper, Bui, & Riker, 2003; Hewett, 2010, 2015b). Opening commentary can be used to get acquainted with the student and to introduce the student to what will follow by offering general observations of the paper that invite the student to continue reading and actively think through revisions.

For localized comments, dialogue, one of the main criticisms of asynchro-

nous conferencing, can be promoted through carefully structured instructional comments. Cooper, Bui, & Riker (2003) suggested using questions to facilitate a Socratic approach to "engage the learner, not to manipulate him" (p. 259) in the online conference:

> Ideally, the tutor asks questions before giving directions and engages the client's own knowledge to solve a problem... . Writing [is] a dialogic process within the mind of the writer, especially to initiate, recognize, and cultivate the dialogic process used by experienced writers. Online tutors can also use questions to engage writers in this exercise. Because the tutor is not waiting for an answer, the writer is free to act as she wishes. The door to genuine contemplation is open and the writer remains in control. (p. 259)

In other words, the dialogue that may result from an asynchronous conference made possible through a tutor's written comments is "intended to create dialogue within the writer's mind" (p. 260). One common suggestion is that instructional comments should be structured by using praise or a compliment followed by a genuine question that considers a weak spot in the paper (Cooper, Bui, & Riker, 2003). Hewett (2010) recommended that tutors "offer clear, honest, critical responses to the writing. This strategy includes phrasing, such as: '*I'm awed by your strength in this situation*'" (p. 123), followed by critical feedback like "'*I'm confused by this entire paragraph. What did you want readers to understand?*'" (pp. 123-124). She also recommended using straightforward, linguistically direct language that has semantic integrity in terms of not asking rhetorical or closed ended questions or using linguistically indirect (conditional and suggestive) statements that students were unlikely to use in revising their writing. Hewett (2010, 2011, 2015b) considered so-called "genuine" questions to be *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, *who*, and *how* because actually addressing them requires thoughtful answers that might lead to revisions when posed with some instruction.

When students ask for feedback on only grammar and mechanics, tutors may have a tendency to want to edit and correct student papers, but choosing patterns of errors is much more effective than marking every mistake in a student draft (Cooper, Bui, & Riker, 2003; Hewett, 2010, 2015b; Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2010). One reason for its effectiveness is that students can become overwhelmed with new information during conference. There is little value in pointing out 15 errors that a student cannot fully address; "students can only absorb so much feedback during one sitting" (Hewett, 2015b, 2010, p. 91), whether that is a synchronous or asynchronous event. Hewett also explained that "the student is

being taught *through* the piece of writing" (2010, p. 91); therefore, when tutors point out patterns, they should also provide an explanation of the error using the student's own writing and how to fix it (Hewett, 2010, 2011, 2015b) similar to what would happen in a face-to-face interaction (Cooper, Bui, & Riker, 2003). This practice allows for use of the 4-step intervention process (Hewett, 2010, 2011, 2015b), for example, and hopefully leads to greater student engagement. With this strategy—useful for global, content-level issues as well—students are alerted of a persistent problem throughout their paper, and they are tasked with identifying similar errors and revising them on their own. Depending on their own time frames and on the OWL's policies, students typically can return to the OWL for additional help, but if they are under constraints, the response provides them with a starting point for analyzing their own writing and learning how to improve it.

By using a variety of tools and strategies, asynchronous conferences can be personalized and they can be an effective means of helping students improve their writing. Distance does not always equate to a cold, sterile communication despite educators' expressed fears. OWL technology affords many opportunities to create meaningful and helpful relationships in educational settings.

Synchronous Tutoring

In their research study on synchronous conferencing, Wolfe and Griffin (2012) found that "87% of student writers who participated in an online session either preferred the online environment or had no environment preference" (p. 81). The most common reasons cited for preferring online conferences were convenience and real-time editing—meaning students liked not having to be in a specific geographic place at a certain time—and being able to make changes to their papers during the session. Student criticisms of online tutoring in this same study were mostly about problems with technology, such as audio difficulties, but others noted that they had a hard time communicating their ideas in an electronic medium (Wolfe & Griffin, 2012). To add to that, Hewett (2006) noted that students who do not perform well when writing in instructional settings also may experience challenges with online conferences because they have to respond in real time and many times the writing they produce is immediately visible. Despite these challenges, synchronous online conferencing software is advancing in ways that will only increase how tutors and students can interact.

Some programs allow students and tutors to share a common virtual space where a student's paper can be viewed by both parties, a whiteboard that both student and tutor have access to, as well as audio and voice components to the platform. The conference, therefore, does not have to be entirely text-based when synchronous. Providing that they are accessible to students, these pro-

grams enable students to experience tutoring in a group situation where a tutor can work with one student, but other students who are waiting "in line" can see and potentially benefit from this instruction because they can hear the conversation taking place and all participants in the virtual conference "room" can see the whiteboard or student paper.[1] Conferences also can occur in a separate virtual room where the student and tutor have a one-on-one interaction away from other students' view and hearing. While these platforms are designed to replicate face-to-face interactions as closely as possible, Hewett (2006) cautioned that some instructors may "oversimplify the pedagogical transfer between traditional and synchronous writing instruction" (p. 6). She also emphasized that OWI "requires highly developed verbal teaching skills and vocabulary about writing along with strategies for encouraging students to commit to writing out their thinking as part of the conference" (p. 6). In other words, the OWL tutor not only needs to understand writing theoretically and pedagogically but also should have the vocabulary at hand for explaining the writing concerns at the student's level and in ways that encourage students to enact writing development or change while in the tutorial itself.

Recommendations for Synchronous Tutoring

One of the best things about the wide array of technologies today is just that—there is usually more than one way to do something. For instance, synchronous conferencing can take place using a variety of LMS or conferencing technologies, but also through IM or other chat programs. Chat-based technologies resemble the Burkean Parlor ideal, which is supposed to foster a more interactive conversation that is persistent; such technologies enable students to save and archive chats for later review. Other synchronous technologies available for online consultations include the telephone, audio and screen capture programs, and real-time screen sharing software. For students who do not do well in text-based synchronous environments, tutors can meet with students through free video programs, again, keeping access in mind regarding cameras and/or microphones (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013; Hewett, 2010, 2015a, 2015b).

As with any type of conference, setting goals for a tutoring session gives student and tutor direction and helps both use their time efficiently. Thus, tutors need to learn how to "assist their students in setting their own agendas for conferences and in making informed choices about how to apply the instruction" (Hewett, 2010, p. 50). Asynchronous online conferencing and text-based synchronous conferencing offer unique opportunities for students to use writing to talk about their writing, but they may not quite know how to do that. A good way to begin that conversation is to have students talk about the assignment and their process in completing the assignment followed by questions from the tutor

about what the student liked best and least about his or her writing (Hewett, 2010). Again, this work requires practice, and as suggested in OWI Principle 14, tutors should practice this kind of scenario and dialogue using various types of technology from both the student and tutor perspectives (see also Hewett & Ehmann, 2004).

Tutor Selection, Training, and Professional Development

OWI is still a fairly new endeavor and requires new skills. While it may be partly true that anyone who teaches in a classroom can teach online, there are some qualifiers. According to OWI Principle 7 (pp. 17-19):

- Teachers should be carefully selected and then trained in OWI before they teach an online course.
- Experienced writing teachers—*who want to teach in a digital environment*—should be the first considered for teaching online.

This principle applies to OWL tutors as much as OWI teachers. Tutors who are familiar with tutoring onsite may not understand the nuances of tutoring online; furthermore, if they do not want to tutor online, their dissatisfaction may rub off onto the students with whom they interact. Online instruction does not fit every instructor's personality, and it is important that instructors understand the differences between classroom instruction and OWI and then decide where they would be better suited. Some educators may be comfortable and effective doing both online and face-to-face instruction, which should be encouraged, and these same principles apply to OWL tutors as well.

OWI Principle 14 emphasized the necessity for OWL tutor training and professional development that matches the environment in which tutors instruct writing (p. 28). As Chapter 1 discussed and Beth L. Hewett and Christa Ehmann (2004) argued, immersion into the environment in which one will teach or tutor is crucial to being prepared to assist students with and through that setting. Hence, tutor training—and this includes WPAs or OWL administrators who supervise or evaluate online tutors—needs to be scheduled and practiced in the technological modality and medium that enables tutors to experience what their students will experience and to practice helping their peers in that environment as well.

Tutor Selection

Tutor selection is an important consideration. Neaderhiser and Wolfe (2009) reported that some schools use graduate students or tutors with only one year of experience to conduct online consultations, while other schools carefully selected qualified and experienced faculty and staff who were familiar with online

tutoring. And other schools may use relatively inexperienced undergraduate peer tutors for OWL tutoring. This split in tutor selection policies suggests that some OWI administrators see online tutoring as a regular duty that any writing center tutor can do and others see it as an area of expertise. Novice or untrained tutors cause problems for both OWLs and onsite writing centers (Hewett, 2015a, 2010; Moberg, 2010). However, as Moberg (2010) stated, "one key to the success of an online tutoring program is not the distance between tutor and student, but the training each receives" (p. 3).

According to OWI Principle 14, administrators should select online tutors based on their (1) tutoring potential and/or experience with writing; (2) strengths in expressing writing instruction *in writing*; and (3) comfort level with online technologies, which can be developed further in training (p. 28; Hewett, 2010, 2015b; Hewett & Ehmann, 2004). Furthermore, to assess their tutors well, OWL administrators should receive the same training. Effective practices for OWI Principle 14 indicated that:

- OWL supervisors should have "equal or superior" training and experiences in writing instruction *and* OWI than the tutors.
- OWI assessment should "occur in the setting and modalities that the teacher uses in the online writing course" (p. 19).
- OWI assessment should not be any more or less rigorous than traditional classroom assessment.

Each of these assessment recommendations is important to consider because instruction in an online environment has unique characteristics that are not part of the traditional classroom experience or at least do not match in any exact manner. A well-trained and experienced OWL supervisor will understand the complexities of online instruction, such as the challenges of engaging students at a distance in a primarily text-based venue and of providing effective feedback that encourages dialogue in this environment. Such administrators will be able to better assess the quality of instruction taking place in synchronous and asynchronous settings due to their experiences in the settings as both "student" and "tutor."

Training Tutors

According to OWI Principle 14, before tutors assist students in online conferences, they should have training appropriate to online tutoring (p. 28). The nature of the online conference, whether asynchronous or synchronous, presents challenges to tutors trained solely to do onsite, face-to-face writing center tutoring. According to Leslie Olsen (2002), "tutors accustomed to speaking directly with students when providing feedback must diagnose written work, establish conference priorities, and provide feedback—without the student" (p. 2). Lee-

Ann Kastman Breuch and Sam J. Racine (2000) contended that tutors typically had to accomplish this feat without much training directly related to OWI or negotiating online spaces. Training online tutors using online technology and strategies developed or adapted for OWI is essential because "training used in f2f centers does not translate easily to online writing centers" (Breuch & Racine, 2000, p. 246; see also Hewett, 2010, 2015b; Hewett & Ehmann, 2004).

OWL training should focus on three specific areas. Tutors must learn to (1) teach writing, (2) teach writing in an online environment, and (3) teach writing in a primarily text-based environment (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013, p. 17). Because OWI is fairly new and unexplored in many ways, and because technology constantly evolves and changes the way we read and write, OWI training for the course or a tutorial is not a one-time event, and it should be treated as ongoing professional development for tutors. For this reason, tutors should be trained to tolerate error with technology, as well as with student writing. Additionally, this training should be formal training developed by experts in OWI, and it is recommended that experienced online instructors mentor novice OWL tutors, as well.

As Hewett (2006) stated, there is still much to research on the subject of effective OWI (see Chapter 17); however, Wolfe and Griffin (2012), Hewett (2010, 2015b), and Hewett and Ehmann (2004) made strong cases for the need to train tutors with the technology they will be using. More importantly, tutors need to be trained to teach *about* writing in online environments because simply asking questions of students is insufficient (Hewett, 2006). Hewett and Ehmann (2004) outlined five common educational principles that are fundamental to training online writing tutors as well as OWI teachers: investigation, individualization, immersion, association, and reflection. Thus, as addressed through OWI Principles 7 and 14, there are several layers of necessary tutor training: technology, teaching, teaching writing, and teaching in an online environment (p. 17, 28). The point remains that tutoring online requires specialized skills, some of which were addressed by Hewett (2006) and Hewett and Ehmann (2004):

- Online tutors need to be able to recognize, name, and teach writing problems using appropriate writing-focused vocabulary written and spoken at levels students can comprehend.
- Online tutors need to understand the affordances and constraints of different technologies in learning environments, such as how and when to use a chat box, a whiteboard or shared space, and audio functions to encourage student participation.
- Students have varying levels of competence with technology, and a great deal of interaction between tutor and student can be spent on explaining the technology or instruction itself. It appears that both types of conversation are inevitable, and instructors need to be trained to incorporate

this functional dialogue into conversations about student writing and idea development. Likewise, tutors would benefit from knowing how to use various functions within a program for different types of dialogue, such as audio for instructional purposes and the chat box for more functional directions, such as how to use the whiteboard or other program features during a session.

- Time and space constraints can affect the quality of an online conference; thus, it would be advantageous for tutors to practice how to teach writing through writing within the typical online conference time set by the OWL administrator. For instance, tutors should know how to teach effective thesis development using a variety of media, such as audio, the whiteboard, and chat, and ensure students are part of that process and participate in the session.

Additional training considerations for tutors include learning how to address multiple issues within the same conversation. For instance, Hewett's (2006) empirical research study on using whiteboard technology for text-based, synchronous OWI indicated that "these whiteboard interactions were highly writing task-oriented ... and focused particularly on developing student writing and/or ideas" (p. 5). The interactions that took place demonstrated that students and tutors were having conversations about the writing under review and the writing process. About half of the conversations, however, also included dialogue "toward interpersonal connections, facilitating the tutorial process, and communicating about using the whiteboard" (Hewett, 2006, p. 5); thus, this study has implications for learning more about how to handle meta-conversations during a tutoring session as well as for understanding that a great deal of synchronous tutoring time may be focused interpersonally rather than on the writing itself.

Students come to online conferences with various levels of competency with technology; thus, tutors have to be prepared to address some technology concerns during a tutoring session. They also have to find ways to help students understand the type of instruction they are receiving especially when various types of technology are used, such as the combination of audio, text, and whiteboard in some conferencing programs. Hewett (2006) recommended that tutor training should include helping tutors find value and balance in these various types of necessary dialogue during tutoring sessions. While it may appear overwhelming to find balance between writing instruction and fielding questions about technology, there are training strategies where tutors can learn effective and efficient ways to do that. Role-playing that reflects scenarios that tutors will typically encounter is an effective training strategy (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013; Hewett & Ehmann, 2004). This is an important aspect of training because as Hewett (2006) explained, particularly "in a synchronous setting, online

instructors must be able to think quickly about students' expressed needs and to flexibly adjust both their vocabulary and strategies while teaching students accurately" (pp. 6-7). Similar issues need to be addressed in asynchronous tutor training (Hewett, 2004-2005, 2011, 2015b).

Tutors need to practice how to ask students to write or talk about their writing using various forms of technology, and they must be able to discern what students want or need through their responses. Because some conferencing programs may include audio components, there is opportunity for this dialogue to take place orally; however, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, those who create the OWL should not assume that all students will have a microphone or speakers, so tutors need to be prepared to initiate the purpose of the conference using only writing in the text chat. This, too, requires practice because tutors have to learn how to engage the student immediately with appropriate, correct, and inviting language with which students are familiar and comfortable (Hewett, 2010, 2015b). According to Hewett (2010, 2015b), tutors also need practice with how to instruct students on their writing using only writing, which should use language that is straightforward and easy to understand on the student's end—language with semantic integrity. Ways to accomplish this include using common guidelines for online writing, such as chunking text into shorter paragraphs; using formatting tools when possible, such as bullets, numbering, and highlighting or word processing revision marks (strikethroughs to substitute words) on a whiteboard; and using graphics when appropriate and possible (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013; Hewett, 2011, 2015b).

Equally important is the idea that tutors need training in using pedagogically sound practices that teach writing according to the institution's philosophy. One way to accomplish this is to allow veteran online instructors who have a solid understanding of composition theory to mentor novice OWL tutors. Additionally, tutors need to understand the affordances and constraints of various technologies and how to use them in pedagogically sound ways. For instance, Hewett (2006) outlined the distinctions between a text-chat box and a whiteboard. Both are text-based tools; however, each one has unique instructional benefits that should be explained and understood by tutors. For instance, a whiteboard affords the opportunity for tutors and students to both view a paper and make immediate changes, whereas comments in a textbox may be more explanatory about a specific writing issue.

A challenge regarding OWL training and professional development is that many training programs focus primarily on the features of the institution's LMS or on functional training on the various programs used for tutoring, such as how to use track changes and comments features in the word processing program, how to use IM-chat, or how to use the whiteboard and shared Web spaces. Fa-

miliarity and comfort with technology is important; indeed, Wolfe and Griffin (2012) found functional literacy to be a key component in student satisfaction with online tutoring. However, technology should not be the singular focal point of OWL preparation, as one can extrapolate from OWI Principle 2 (p. 11). Tutors and OWI teachers should have a working knowledge of, and think critically about, various learning theories and how they apply to their work in the OWL, which necessitates some rhetorical understanding of the technology. The tools of technology allow tutors to connect with students at a distance and it is crucial to the job, but the writing instruction itself should be considered of greater importance and should be stressed differently from technology in OWL training.

Preparing Faculty and Students

Once an OWL is established, faculty need training on the support services available to students because they are the ones on the front line who can persuade students to seek support. In *The State of the Art of OWI* (CCCC OWI Committee, 2011c), some faculty reported not knowing whether their institution had a writing center or OWL. Other respondents reported knowing there was an OWL, but they did not know how tutoring took place, who the tutors were, or how they were selected. This vacuum of awareness can happen when the writing center is a separate entity from an English or composition department, but it also can be a consequence of not providing appropriate training. Subsequently, when faculty are unaware of the resources at their own institutions, students often are left without support; some faculty even may refer students to OWLs outside of their own institution in the belief that their own institution is not capable or set up to help their students.

Formal training programs in OWI should not be restricted to faculty only; students need adequate preparation to thrive in online environments, as well. Student preparation is linked to accessibility, and one way to ensure that all students succeed in an online learning environment is to provide training for them, most often accomplished through orientation. Students have perceptions about OWI, such as unfamiliarity with the time requirements, how to use the technology, and the necessary interactions that need to take place. These common misconceptions about online courses justify student training, even for an OWL. When using an OWL, students have to be made aware of the various resources and services, but, more importantly, they need to know how to use them effectively.

Findings from the CCCC OWI Committee surveys (2011a, 2011b) indicated that even when online tutoring was available, "as many as 30% (fully online) and 47% (hybrid) reported that students did not receive any instruction

for using those tutoring services" (CCCC OWI Committee, 2011c, p. 9). Furthermore, when faculty were asked how students were prepared for using online tutoring services, some disturbing comments included:

- "Linked in courses"
- "I don't know"
- "No online tutoring is offered"
- "Again, not sure"
- "Again, it's a case-by-case basis: a bit more than nothing, but not much since we do not have the resources for this." (CCCC OWI Committee, 2011a & 2011b, Q29).

This lack of faculty knowledge about the institution's OWL—if it indeed existed—mirrors a lack of student preparation for using the OWL, and it suggests an assumption that online students are familiar and comfortable with technology or with using technology in educational settings, which may not be the case at all (CCCC OWI Committee, 2011c). Student orientation should cover more than the features of the LMS in use or the conferencing software of the OWL because students may not know how to use technology to learn to write. In other words, students may not know that asynchronous discussion, for example, affords them the opportunity to think through their responses and refine their writing before posting it to the board. Likewise, students should be given direction on how to use OWL handouts, such as how to study a particular sentence-level issue and then follow up with practice in a live tutoring session. When going into synchronous tutoring sessions, students should be prepared for the typical time online conferences take, how they are facilitated, what kinds of technology are used, how to use that technology, and what to do after they have completed an online conference (Hewett, 2010, 2015b).

During tutoring sessions, some students may not know how to ask for help or what to ask for, which is another reason that tutor training is so important. It takes skill to get students to talk about their writing and to articulate where they need help. Furthermore, once a tutoring session is over or a paper has been returned with comments, some students do not know what to do with the feedback. It is important, therefore, that tutors help students make sense of what they received in the various media used during the session. Lynn Anderson-Inman (1997) stated that OWLs that appear to work well are those that attempt to help students understand how to use the technology to improve their writing skills. In other words, tutors and instructors need to teach students "how to read and interpret any textual feedback or advice, and how to make decisions about the uses of that feedback in their writing" (p. 26). This kind of student preparation will help students understand that an OWL is not a drop-off center; rather

it is a place where they can get help with their writing, which they own from beginning to end.

Student training and the ownership of writing that it should support also may help to assuage criticism that OWLs emphasize "drill and practice," where grammar is stressed over other aspects of writing (Dailey, 2004). Drill-and-practice certainly can become a focus for an OWL when only one or two less interactive technologies are used, such as providing handouts as only PDFs or hyperlinked pages. And if these handouts or Web pages cover only grammatical issues, then such a reputation probably has been earned. However, Claire Charlton (2006) said that more effective OWLs "go beyond grammar to offer brainstorming and editing self-help" (para. 5), and Muriel Harris and Michael Pemberton (1995) argued for a combination of asynchronous and synchronous technologies to be used for tutoring. These preferences return us to the definition of an OWL and the services it may offer.

While some institutions do offer student orientation, the CCCC OWI Committee noted problems with orientation that affect student preparation for OWI (CCCC OWI Committee, 2011c). For instance, almost half of all orientations offered were in a face-to-face environment instead of online. Providing face-to-face orientation for online learning is counter to the benefits students would receive from being immersed in the very environment in which they are expected to learn. This immersion would offer students a better sense of whether they are suited for online learning, or at least alert them to the type of experiences they can expect, a point explained in detail in OWI Principle 10. Such immersion, however, needs to occur at the institutional level so that students are familiar with the policies and procedures of a distance-based program at their school, as well as to teach them how to use the institutional LMS and deal with challenges or problems they may encounter with it. Students need LMS orientation because each course is set up somewhat differently, and they have to know where to find assignments and course materials, how to submit assignments, and how to access other portals used in instructor-specific preferences (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013). OWL administrators also should be aware of any institutional and classroom orientations so that their own orientation can complement and expand on what students already have been provided. Once students know what to expect and how to use the resources and services of the OWL, they may be more likely to use the OWL.

Technology

Online courses suggest an open learning environment where students can access the classroom 24/7; therefore, IT support systems should be in place to al-

low students to complete their work at any time as well. This issue, as addressed in OWI Principle 13 (p. 26), is one of access and inclusivity per OWI Principle 1 (p. 7), but it also is one of "enabling students to use the digital educational environment more fully" per OWI Principle 10 (p. 26). Since students are working in an online environment, support should be provided in that same manner. Such support includes an OWL for reading and writing instruction, online libraries, technical support, and even "distance-based student counseling" (p. 25). Results from the two OWI national surveys, however, indicated that fewer than half of the respondents in all institution-type categories reported the existence of an OWL or any asynchronous or synchronous tutoring available for online students at their institutions (CCCC OWI Committee, 2011a & 2011b).

When online tutoring was available, it was mostly asynchronous tutoring, which Wolfe and Griffin (2012) found in their study as well. In *The State of the Art of OWI* (CCCC OWI Committee, 2011c) it also was noted that "quite a few respondents in both settings indicated either no access to online writing center assistance or a need for students to come in to a traditional brick-and-mortar writing center *if* one was available" (p. 9). Once again, access was at the forefront of this disturbing statistic. Many students who take online courses are physically unable to come to campus for a wide variety of reasons. If institutions offer online courses, then distance students should get the support they need using distance technology as indicated in OWI Principle 13 (p. 26).

The versatility of various technologies is an added benefit when developing OWL resources. It can be helpful to use both the asynchronous and synchronous modalities along with a variety of accessible media, as discussed in this chapter. For instance, when creating materials about a particular writing issue, such as how to write a thesis statement, many instructors will create a handout usually in the form of a word-processed document or an accessible PDF. But there are other ways to reach students who have particular disabilities or learning styles. For instance, podcasts, screen-capture programs with audio, and videos are useful complements to text-based handouts, and they address students who have different learning preferences or strengths. Transcripts for audio-based tutorials (including pre-developed tutorial materials designed for a broader student audience) are a must, and such alternatives as Braille and large print should be offered as reasonable accommodations (p. 7).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of an OWL is essential to academic success for online writing students, and any institution that offers online courses should provide such support for students. In short, online students should have adequate support for

the unique issues they must deal with when writing and learning in an online environment (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013). Expecting online students—particularly those in fully online OWCs, but also those in hybrid OWCs—to use onsite resources is detrimental to their learning since they are not given the opportunity to take full advantage of the very technology that they are expected to use for their learning. This problem also is a crucial issue of accessibility since many online students are physically, logistically, or geographically unable to access onsite resources. If an institution does not provide online support by way of an OWL, online students who write for any course and at any level simply are not being served in an equitable fashion. To this end, we recommend the following:

- Issues associated with inclusivity and accessibility should be at the forefront of the design of any OWL.
- Faculty and tutors who conduct online conferences should be selected carefully to ensure they are comfortable working in an online setting and teaching writing through writing.
- All writing center administrators and tutors should attend formal training on how to teach writing in online writing environments and how to address different learning styles in online settings. Furthermore, they should also be trained to work with students with disabilities, varies learning styles, and multilingual learners.
- Writing center administrators and tutors should be trained to conduct synchronous and asynchronous tutoring conferences for a variety of learners.
- Students should be trained to use an OWL properly and in ways that best fit their learning styles.
- Writing center administrators and tutors should be trained to properly and skillfully use the hardware and software programs they will use during tutoring sessions. They should also be familiar enough with the technology to help students through basic maneuvers when first getting an online consultation started.

NOTES

1. Writing center directors should consult their campus administrators to see how these practices comply with local interpretations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

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