Summary of Program Review

Global Strategies for All Centers:
Ms. Pennel’s suggestions about “faculty referral program for tutors” and “formalized referral process for student referrals” are both strategies we use to implement before the Peer Tutorial (ETU100) was taken off the books, thereby eliminating both peer tutors and a full-time faculty liaison between the Language & Literature Department, Tutoring Center, and Writing/Resource Center. These ideas could readily be put in place again as well as more “program interaction.”

Writing/Resource Center
In general I agree with Ms. Pennel’s suggestions, many of which are the same ones I suggested in my initial report. However, three major issues are not adequately addressed—location, room configuration, and coverage. (Refer to #3 in blue text and recommendations below.)

Major Strengths:
Both the reviewer and Writing/Resource Center Coordinator agree: The W/RC has no major strengths. Unlike the Tutoring Center and the Math Lab, there is no full-time coordinator, or staff for that matter, due to lack of funding, elimination of the English peer tutorial (ETU100) and of a full-time faculty liaison from the Language and Literature Department with the W/RC and Tutoring Center.

Perhaps its one strength could be that a consistent familiar face has been there to greet and help students over the years.

Major Issues:
1. Clearly Defined Mission and Objectives:
Without question a clearly defined mission statement and list of objectives need to be explicitly stated. Even with the published information and orientations for English Composition I and Foundations in Writing students, many faculty, staff, and students remain unclear about its intended purpose.

2. Name Change:
I disagree that the name of the Writing/Resource Center needs to be changed, unless it is simply renamed the Writing Center. Originally, it was called the Writing Lab but other learning support staff and myself decided to call it the W/RC to distinguish it from the Open Computer Lab and make it sound more affiliated with the Tutoring Center—because it was at that time.

3. Space Concerns ~ LP:
Formally housed in the North/South Connector near faculty offices, the center became an overflow room for the Open Computer Lab and was often used as classroom space. The W/RC moved to the new Lorusso Applied Technology Building in the fall of 2006 and is
currently located beside the Tutoring Center. Concerns that students would not travel across campus to the new space seem to be unfounded as the Tutoring Center is enjoying increased usage. And documentation, before and after the move, does not appear to show a decrease in student usage for the W/RC. Increased marketing to faculty, staff and students would help to increase awareness of the new location. Unlike the Tutoring Center, there are very few flyers posted around campus that advertise the Center's hours and location.

One of the reasons why there appears to be no difference in student usage since its move to the Lorusso Building is because it is now open during “peak” student hours. In the spring of 2006, the W/RC opened at 11:00 a.m. Monday through Friday because classes were scheduled in the space. For the past academic year, it has opened at 10:00 a.m. on MWF and 9:00 a.m. on T & R.

Additionally, all students sign-in at the relocated W/RC because I am situated directly across from them as they enter and ask them to do so. In S108 many students did not sign-in because they were not required to do so across the hall in the Open Computer Lab.

**Expanded Hours ~ LP:**
The W/RC is currently staffed by a part-time coordinator. The center is open approximately twenty hours per week and is dependent on the coordinator’s schedule. To continue to provide consistent hours, the college should work to minimize changes in the W/RC schedule by limiting classes scheduled in the Center to evening hours. If the schedule is not consistent, students find other resources that will meet their needs. To increase hours the college might consider relocating several writing tutors from the Tutoring Center to the W/RC. This would provide much needed coverage to keep the Center open more hours and would also free up space in the Tutoring Center for tutoring in other subjects. This would also lead to more collaboration between the Tutoring Center and W/RC.

This semester the W/RC is open twenty-seven hours per week—not twenty as stated in the reviewer's report. Currently, the hours from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays are not covered though the W/RC is open. As the reviewer recommends, perhaps a professional tutor from the TC could cover these hours. I’m not sure why that hasn’t been done since its move to the Lorusso Building in September 2006.

The W/RC would not be dependant on my schedule if my classes were not scheduled in the room and we used professional tutors to cover the hours when I’m scheduled elsewhere.

The reviewer also points out that no classes should be scheduled in the W/RC during daytime hours, thereby providing more hours for peak student usage.
5. Computerized Tracking:
Computerized tracking sounds good to me—though I’m not sure how the program used in the Tutoring Center for student appointments could be used in the W/RC or ML since there are no scheduled appointments in either place. Perhaps a computerized tracking program for students to log onto could be used or maybe IT could set one up within our current system.

6. Peer Tutor Program:
Without question, the Peer Tutorial (ETU100) needs to be reinstated. Peer tutors are the heart and soul of any writing center. Everyone benefits—academically and financially.

7. Increased Faculty Interaction:
Definitely—faculty interaction must be increased, including faculty from all disciplines—not just the English department. Upon reflection, it seems as if the W/RC has not been “plugged-in” for quite some time even though the cords and outlets are available.

Recommendations—
In addition to items 1 – 7 listed under Major Issues, I’d also like to recommend the following ideas as stated in my original program review. (Note: text in blue has been added.)

8. Location—
One of its primary challenges is its present physical location on campus. Buried on the ground level in the new Lorusso Applied Technology Building beside the Tutoring Center, limited student traffic makes it a less likely spot for students to drop in or seek out. Historically, the W/RC has always been close to the Tutoring Center and the Open Computer Lab (OCL) both of which have always been open for longer hours, including nights and weekends, and neither of which have been used as a classroom. Because of their proximity, the W/RC and OCL have been in an unspoken competition with one another. Many students and staff viewed the W/RC as just another room with computers for students to use when the OCL is full. Moving the TC and OCL to its new location might have been a good idea, but leaving the W/RC in its former place might have increased the W/RC’s usage for its intended purpose, provided student computer access in the North and South classroom area, while remaining close to English faculty—just as the Math Lab is in physical proximity to math faculty.

It should be kept in mind that the W/RC is a “drop-in” place for students to visit and work on written assignments. No one-on-one appointments are scheduled. Relocating back to the North/South classroom area makes it easier and more likely for students to stop by because of high student traffic. It also puts it in closer proximity to faculty offices of professors most likely to assign research papers/written assignments—not just English faculty—as well as other learning support programs/services such as the O’Neill Center, Advantage program, Coach Mentors, and Dr. Sommers—while allowing access for LD students who need to use a computer during a test.
It must be designated as a permanent space—like the Math Lab, Open Computer Lab, and the Tutoring Center. No classes should be scheduled in it during the day. Tech G-02 is currently used as a classroom from 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. (MWF) and occasionally from 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; however, this is a major improvement over the previous three years.

9. Room Configuration~
The W/RC moved prior to the fall 2006 semester. No preliminary input into its design or size was considered. The current space includes six round tables permanently attached to the floor with four computers on each (no dividers separate the work stations), a computer work station in the corner of the room for instructors to use while teaching, and a small desk with a computer across from the entrance, so the writing specialist on duty can greet students as they enter and sign-in. All computers share similar software with other computers on campus where students have access. Two narrow tables with chairs face the windows for students to spread out their books and materials. Primarily configured and perceived as a “computer classroom,” the open space contains too many computers. More tables/desks, bookcases, carrels for privacy, and a bank of designated online tutorials need to be added for it to function as a welcoming place where students come to write.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Jacques
Writing/Resource Center Coordinator