Local Practice, Global Vision -
*But What Mission?*

**Gerd Bräuer** (Freiburg, Germany)
Main aspects of my presentation

1. The large and the small scale in writing center development: *What is my/your/THE problem?*
2. Translating US American concepts for European use: *Is there something blocking the road, honey?*
3. Strategies for institutional development: *Any suggestions how to cope with the pain?*
1. The large and the small scale in writing center development

- What is my problem?
- What is your problem?
- Is there a problem?

I really thought we talked about the same thing …
My conceptual framework for Freiburg

initiate writing/reading
facilitate writing/reading
coach writing/reading
produce texts
present texts
educate writers/readers
network among writers/readers
train writers/readers

Writing Center
Peer Tutoring

... Is there something blocking the road, honey?

- Fall 2001: Welcoming the writing center
- 2nd semester: Realizing the “foreignness” and doubting the appropriateness of the writing center
- 3rd semester: Struggling with the “foreignness” of the concept
- 4th semester: Recognizing the potentials of the writing center partially (through media attention, outside funds)
- 5th semester: Beginning to use the potentials of the writing center (solving the “unsolvable” problems)
- since 2004: Integrating the concept of the writing center (portfolio) into the current institutional structure while this structure is beginning to change
Areas of activities at the Freiburg Writing Center

- Elementary School Reading/Writing Centers
- Middle School Reading/Writing Centers
- High School Reading/Writing Centers
- Writing tutor certificate
- Discipline-specific tutorials
- College writing curriculum
- Faculty training workshop
- Writing-intensive courses

Research in institutional development suggests:

- Get many people involved in putting the project plan into practice.
- Let them experience a few new ideas within the old structures. *Let them express frustration.*
- Let them decide what structures to change.
- Facilitate the changes.
- Train people to run the newly adjusted structures.
3. Strategies for institutional development: Any suggestions how to cope with the pain?

First developmental tendency
- The writing center, originally seen as part of the first language department, changes into an independent institution (see University of Education, Zürich, Switzerland)
The institutional place of the Zürich Writing Center

Slide shown with permission by Monique Honegger, U. of Education, Zürich
Strategies for institutional development:

Any suggestions how to cope with the pain?

Second developmental tendency

- The image of a *fixin’ shop* (Stephen North) is hoped to be changed by offering workshops that train specialized aspects or genres of writing.
Additional challenges for the development of writing centers in German higher education:

- No emphasis on the quality of teaching - no need to reconsider the role of writing in learning and instruction
- Writing is still mostly used as a tool for documenting and presenting knowledge rather than as a mode of critical thinking and learning
Strategies for institutional development:

Any suggestions how to cope with the pain?

Top-down participation:

- Initiated by an educational consultant, the writing center, and key players of the institution:
  - Interview faculty about: the role of writing
  - Identify members for a task-force group
  - Organize faculty training (Brown Bag Lunch Series)
  - Aim for writing-intensive courses in the disciplines
  - Publicity for outstanding efforts and results
  - Writing center newsletter (reflecting on writing center activities)
  - Self-learning materials for further individual development
  - Individual coaching for faculty when changing teaching practice
Strategies for institutional development:

Any suggestions how to cope with the pain?

Bottom-up participation:

Initiated by the writing center and peer tutors in the disciplines:

- Interview peer tutors about the specific role of writing in their disciplines
- Tutors develop ways to help their peers to become better writers
- Tutors prepare strategies to collaborate with the professor
- Tutor and professor change the way they tutor/teach in their discipline
- Publicity for outstanding efforts and results
- Self-learning materials for further development of tutors
- Individual coaching for team of tutor and professor when changing tutoring/teaching practice
Strategies for institutional development:

Any suggestions how to cope with the pain?

Outside participation:

* Initiated by the writing center and members of a profession outside the university:

- Organize workshops on writing in the professions
- Link the workshops to the official teaching
- Initiate special peer tutoring for writing in the profession
- *Discourse mobility* (Jonathan Monroe) as a principle and goal for writing instruction in higher education
- Publicity for outstanding efforts and results
- Self-learning materials for further development of individual (professional) writers
- Individual coaching for team of tutor and professor when wanting to focus more on writing in the profession
4. Mission statement missing. Ideas wanted!

Speed bumps are important on the way to car-free neighborhoods or other concepts for a more livable environment…

Please tell me about your institution’s mission statement during lunch breaks, at the beach, strolling the village market, cruising on the Aegean Sea …
Interested in collaboration?

More information about my work with grade schools and institutions of higher education, please visit

www.schreiblesezentrum.de

Thank you very much for your attention!