

# Draftings In

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Volume 3  
Number 2 *Draftings In Tutoring the Learning  
Disabled Student in a University Writing Center*

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Article 2

1988

## Prefatory Note

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### Recommended Citation

Huot, Brian (1988) "Prefatory Note," *Draftings In*: Vol. 3 : No. 2 , Article 2.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/draftings/vol3/iss2/2>

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# Prefatory Note

There is a story behind all texts and all volumes of texts, and traditionally the prefatory statement of a *Draftings In* volume has told that story. This statement will do the same for Tutoring the Learning Disabled Student in a University Writing Center. However, there are some significant differences between the story of this volume and the story of other volumes in the *Draftings In* series. The most important difference is that the essays written for this volume were not part of a class. The authors of this volume did not draft their essays in response to a writing assignment. Rather, the writers whose works appear in this volume composed their texts as tutors in the Center of Academic Achievement at the University of Northern Iowa.

As part of our jobs in providing writing tutoring for all members of the UNI community, the tutoring staff regularly meets to discuss issues and share tutoring experiences. All staff members assume the responsibility of leading discussions and suggesting topics of importance. It was at one of these meetings, during an informal discussion about the requirements of some of the students who seek our service, that the ideas which appear in these essays were born. Our earliest discussions revolved around our ignorance of learning disabilities and how some of our students had real needs which we were not meeting. We didn't rush out and say, "Let's put together a *Draftings In* volume." However, when we received a call for papers for the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, we decided to explore the problems of tutoring the learning disabled and to apply our experience in proposing a panel. By the time the panel was accepted, we started to think in terms of the present volume. Barbara Lounsberry, editor of the *Draftings In* series, was contacted, and she encouraged the student tutors to develop their presentations into the essays which comprise this volume. My point is that this volume arose from the professional need of the authors as writing tutors, and that they acted professionally in taking their concerns to a national conference and then by publishing their work.\*

I think this volume should be seen in four ways. First, it is the compilation of hours of labor-intensive work undertaken by peer tutors who receive minimum wage for helping to improve the writing of students who seek help with their writing. Secondly, this volume testifies that the concept of a University stretches beyond the taking and completing of classes or even degrees. Programs like those at the Center for Academic Achievement are not peripheral to the legitimate structure of the university but are as important and vital as the activities which take place in the classroom. This volume also exemplifies the power of language and the people who use

language to establish a community of thinkers, readers and writers to accomplish real goals in an academic world. Finally, this volume is a reminder that students are interested in more than just grades or entertainment, and if given the chance, the encouragement and the guidance, there is little that the motivated college student cannot attain. It goes without saying that I am proud of the student writers in this volume, but more importantly I am proud of the contribution their work makes to the realm of tutoring writing for the learning disabled student.

This volume applies a three-tiered approach to the problem of Tutoring the Learning Disabled Student in a University Writing Center. Patricia Godwin adopts a theoretical stance in providing background information about learning disability theory and how this theory applies to the tutor who must attempt to recognize a writer with a disability and then proceed to help him. Sara Baumhover provides us with a case study of an entering freshman who struggled with her disability in trying to meet the requirements of her pre-college writing course. Char Heitman presents some practical approaches to working with learning disabled writers that help tutors provide the support and guidance necessary for successful writing. Each of these essays can stand alone, but together they give a comprehensive picture of the kinds of work peer writing tutoring staff are doing across the country to help learning disabled students meet the demands of university writing assignments. Our work with learning disabled writers has been rewarding, frustrating, enlightening and revitalizing. This volume hopes to convey our sense of the importance and fulfillment present in working with these special learners.

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\*Special thanks go to the University of Northern Iowa Intercollegiate Academic Fund Committee for partially funding the students' panel presentation at Purdue University.