

FEBRUARY 7, 1975

UNB Counselling Services offers free writing labs

By HILLARY RANDALL.

It is too late to go back to high school to pick up basic essay writing skills, but University of New Brunswick counselling services offers free writing labs to help students solve their writing dilemma.

Writing lab services do not engage in creative writing or content but the basic skills involved in doing any research papers, term papers, essays, etc.

M.T. Dohaney is director of writing lab services.

The program offers classes in three areas, the first of which is reading effectiveness, which is structured for the students who seem to have "no idea of evaluations and judgement" of writing. Their vocabulary is often limited and thus they do not have the skill of rapid reading and comprehension. Critical readings which many students find relate to their courses are given for practice. Secondly, the fundamentals of English consist of classes that deal with the mechanics of English such as sentence structure, punctuation, paragraph writing, etc. The third class deals with skills relating to research papers. Such items as organizing the information, planning outlines, bibliographies, footnotes, and introduction are stressed here.

Class outlines are extremely flexible. If a student has a problem he feels is urgent, Dohaney will make it the topic for discussion. Dohaney believes that "in order for the program to be completely effective, home assignments

should accompany work" but feels that the students are carrying full loads of credit subjects and thus refrains from assigning any. The students give up two to four hours a week to come to the lab where they work on assignments pertaining to their lessons. They are not pressed to attend regularly.

The ideal situation would be to have everyone start together and progress "sequentially." However, students' needs are such that they require the advanced skills at the same time as the primary ones in order to do their essays. Thus classes can be taken simultaneously but according to Dohaney there "is no hard line between one section and another. Wherever I see deficiencies or errors, I will help the student to correct them."

At present about 30 students (mostly Canadian) are taking advantage of the sixty student hours available weekly. Dohaney prefers to have a maximum of eight students so as individual attention can be provided but due to class schedules, it is not always possible. If she sees that a student is having difficulty, she asks him to come and see her during an afternoon for extra help.

Students faced with the mentioned problems are urged to make an appointment to see Dohaney. They are requested to bring a previously marked assignment so that their level of development can be assessed. Areas of weakness are then pointed out to the student and appropriate classes are suggested. Dohaney feels that the students' greatest problems lie in the area of

organization and in their ability to

"source" material. She finds that many of the professors complain that the students don't stick to their topic. The professors' remarks aid Dohaney considerably in detecting the students' weakness and in sorting out the relative points in a subject of which she has a limited knowledge. She tries to rectify the problem of referencing by telling the student where to go for his sources and what information is available to him.

Dohaney feels that students benefit from these labs due to the fact that they become aware of the language and the "rights and wrongs" attached to it. This aids them greatly in later life as they learn to organize their thoughts which in turn enables them to speak and write fluently even when under pressure. They gain confidence in expressing their opinions and similarly having learned the methods of researching, they can convincingly verify their conclusion.

The student is often in awe of the professor and is hesitant to ask the meaning of his comments. Dohaney's manner removes the fear of seeking help and makes it easy for the student to see where he is making his mistake. If a student

has been attending classes, she will correct grammatical and structural errors in essays before they are due.

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