

Writers Elevated

Issue #1/Spring 2011

Inside This Issue

[From the Editor](#)

[Spring 2011 Consultants](#)

[Retracing Steps](#)

[Planning Waypoints](#)

[Writing Landscapes](#)

[Exchanging Views](#)

[Promoting Practice](#)

[Reflecting Outward](#)

From the Editor: A Newsletter with Altitude?

Welcome to this first issue of *Writers Elevated*—the e-newsletter devoted to information about our Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program at FRCC, Larimer Campus.

Why the title *Writers Elevated*? Well...it's true that Fort Collins isn't as elevated as some other geographic locales in Colorado. We do have some unique access to mountain ranges and views, however, and our Writing Center and WAC staff members are committed to helping our students ascend increasing levels of knowledge, confidence, and ability with their writing. In turn, our teachers and consultants are also inspired toward new heights of study and practice.

This figurative link extends to these specific e-newsletter goals:

- *To raise awareness of the Writing Center and WAC Program*
- *To conveniently extend this information to interested readers in our college communities*
- *To increase a sense of value and community around writing*

We present this newsletter for the college professional community—faculty, staff, and administrators, Writing Center consultants and WAC program participants, past and present.

Look for a future edition of *Writers Elevated* each Fall and Spring, and expect intermittent “call for submissions” to be included (or posted in separate correspondence). My additional thanks for the opportunity to serve as an inaugural guide here...and I hope I haven't let you down!

--Susan Marshall (Newsletter Editor, Writing Center Consultant, and Hiker)

*“Wordrobe...The words
and phrases that
comprise a person’s
vocabulary...”
(Wordspy.com)*

Spring 2011 Writing Center Consultants

- **Lori Adair** –Business and Arts and Letters
- **Lucinda Baker** –Social and Behavioral Sciences, Psychology, WAC
- **Julie Cline** –Business, Accounting, WAC
- **Marie Flynn** –Arts and Letters, English
- **Amy Fogue** –Arts and Letters, English
- **Lorna Greene** –Early Childhood Education, WAC
- **Ann Healy** –Cherished Community Volunteer
- **Jim Heaton** –Arts and Letters
- **Elizabeth (Crystal) Kerr** –Arts and Letters, Music, WAC
- **Sandy Lieb** –Arts and Letters, Literature
- **Therese Loeffler-Clemens** –Arts and Letters
- **Laura Manuel** –Social and Behavioral Sciences, Criminal Justice/Psychology, WAC
- **Susan Marshall** –Arts and Letters
- **Randy McCrain** –Arts and Letters, English, Literature
- **Rhonda Parmley** –Social and Behavioral Sciences, Human Sexuality/Women’s Studies, WAC
- **Barb Patterson** –Natural, Applied, and Environmental Sciences; Forestry, Wildlife, and Natural Resources; WAC
- **Heidi Petersen** –Arts and Letters, Philosophy
- **Jane Platt** –Mathematics, Accounting, WAC
- **David Redus** –Arts and Letters, English
- **Sonja Scullion** –Arts and Letters, English, Online Consultant
- **Sara Tredennick** –Arts and Letters
- **Shawna Van** –Arts and Letters, English
- **Jim Weis** –Arts and Letters, English

You can read more about the relationship between the WAC Program and our Writing Center in the [Planning Waypoints](#) and [Reflecting Outward](#) sections of this newsletter.

Special thanks to all of our Spring 2011 consultants for their vast and varied contributions....

Complete bios of all consultants are posted on the wall in the Writing Center.

Newsletter Editor:

Susan Marshall

susan.marshall@frontrange.edu

Writing Center Director:

Kathy Mendt

kathy.mendt@frontrange.edu

Writing Program Assistant:

William Foster

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Got feedback? Please feel free to contact any of us!

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Retracing Steps: Writing Center Information

From our Writing Center Exit Survey: *Students report that their most important source of information regarding the Writing Center is **faculty**.*

Writing Center information and services available ONLINE—At the FRCC Web site,

1. Link from “Current Students” to “Learning Resources & Support Programs.”
2. Link from “Learning Resources & Support Programs” to “Academic Support Labs.”
3. Link from “Academic Support Labs” to “Larimer Campus” (or the campus of your choice).
4. Look for links to **online Writing Center consulting on the Larimer and Boulder County pages**.

Writing Center information and services available at the Learning Opportunity Center, Blanca Peak (BP) 102

The Larimer Campus Writing Center Hours:
Monday 9 – 3 and 5 – 7
Tuesday – Friday 9 – 3

No appointments—just come on in. Faculty are welcome to bring in assignment sheets for feedback. **Bookmarks** (with reminders of basic services and hours) are available for both students and faculty.

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Planning Waypoints: Writing Center and WAC Projects in Development

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

The WAC program exists to help faculty in all programs and disciplines, online and on-campus, to use writing as a mode of learning. The WAC induction program for full- and part-time faculty runs during fall semesters. **The time is now to contact [Kathy Mendt \(Larimer\)](#) or [Mary Lee Geary \(Boulder County\)](#) if you are interested in joining the program in Fall 2011.**

Class Visits

Contact [Kathy Mendt](#) if you would like a consultant to visit your class. We have recently visited business, music, and dance classes.

Surveys

The Larimer Writing Center **faculty** survey is complete. Writing Center consultants (and anyone else who is interested) can review the results by contacting Kathy Mendt. Our Writing Center exit survey is still in progress, and an in-class student survey is forthcoming. **You can read highlights of survey results in the [Reflecting Outward](#) portion of this newsletter.**

For Larimer Writing Center consultants:
Check out your new D2L Writing Center Site.

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Writing Landscapes: Some Recommended Resources (Discovered, Uncovered, or Recovered by Consultants)

Guides/Handbooks/Variations of Handbooks

- *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* by Lynne Truss (for its popular humor as well as insights)
- *Pocket Guide to APA Style* by Robert Perrin (for ease of use and thoroughness)
- Copies of the 2010 edition of *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, also provided to our consultants as a “best practice” collection of reminders, exercises, and discussion questions—covering such topics as “professionalism,” “writing process,” “inside the tutoring session,” “tutoring in a digital age,” and “helping writers across the curriculum with synchronous (face-to-face or “real time”) or asynchronous (online) services (<http://bedfordstmartins.com/Catalog/product/bedfordguideforwritingtutors-fifthedition-ryan/about/abouttheauthor>)

Web Sites/Links/Online Articles

- TEDTalks (www.ted.com/talks) for Technology, Entertainment, and Design Talks archived online)
- *The Onion* online (<http://www.theonion.com/>) for faux news and satire that just might help with creative/critical thinking
- “Translating the Code Into Everyday Language” by Sam Anderson (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/02/books/review/Anderson-t-web.html>) for a 2010 essay on the topic “Why Criticism Matters”/the art and craft of review
- *Wordspy.com* (<http://www.wordspy.com/>) for a search of more recently evolving words and phrases, like “technorealist” or “edupunk”

Campus Writing Initiatives

- *The Front Range Review* (literary magazine) blair.oliver@frontrange.edu
- Larimer Campus Learning Communities (courses combining two disciplines, usually including composition) shawna.van@frontrange.edu
- Writers on the Storm (creative writing club) william.foster@frontrange.edu; susan.marshall@frontrange.edu
- Danger: Live Writers! (public readings of student writing) kerri.mitchell@frontrange.edu; blair.oliver@frontrange.edu

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Exchanging Views: A Summary of Consultant Discussions

Should the Writing Center be involved in plagiarism sanctions?

September 2010—"Writing Center's Role in Handling Plagiarists"?

Inspired by some related listserv postings, Writing Center consultants discussed this question last semester. We seemed to agree that turning our Writing Center into more of a combined probationary/disciplinary facility would be problematic for a number of reasons, including the negative associations that might result and a potentially counterproductive impact on course-specific accountability.

We seemed to agree that FRCC instructors should be counted on to explore appropriate plagiarism-related guidelines, resources, and practice with their students—and as more and more research involves technological resources that challenge authorial impulses and identities. Students should also be held accountable for their relationships with their instructors, and each instructor should be able to follow existing FRCC guidelines for sanctions involving levels of plagiarism, if necessary. If a student has to repeat a course because of this, then this may be a more appropriate type of "probationary period" than one involving mandatory work at a Writing Center. In the meantime, we can strive to provide workshops and discussions to help increase instructor and student confidence with navigation through plagiarism-related guidelines and resources.

Should student visits to the Writing Center be limited?

November 2010—Writing Center "Limits" for Amount and Lengths of Sessions?

This question was also inspired by some related listserv postings. Several of us discussed this question, and seemed to agree that a more formal attempt to track and place "limits" on sessions with each individual client would be problematic for a number of logistical reasons involving cost, design, and monitoring. In addition, a tracking system like this could threaten our mission to "enable" our visitors. Instead, we continue to consult with *recommendations* for limits in mind, and we use our discretion. For example, based on research, our "policies" sheet recommends 20-30 minute sessions, with a 40 minute max (though our *Bedford Guide* also reminds that an hour-long session can sometimes also be appropriate). It is also recommended that students "spend no more than 40 minutes in the Writing Center on any given day," and with no more than three sessions per week, so that "services are not misused or abused by any one person," to "help students to learn to work independently," and so that "staff do not burn out or run into a wall with any one student." Using these as guidelines, we can encourage merits of flexibility as well as the development of ongoing relationships between visitors and consultants.

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Promoting Practice: What We've Been Studying in Meetings and Workshops

Last semester, our face-to-face meetings highlighted work toward an updated "Strategic Plan" for our Writing Center and WAC Program partnership. This February, another copy of the updated plan was e-mailed to all consultants. Here are key goals mentioned in the document (and additional sub-goals can be found on the new Writing Center D2L site):

Mission: To develop a cooperative network on campus to support campus writers, as well as the academic community, in their aims to improve writing, to embrace a regard for writing proficiency, and to enrich lives.

- I. Monitor and enhance delivery and effectiveness of services through ongoing data collection
- II. Provide ongoing training to consultants for both online and in-person consulting
- III. Improve budget process and funding
- IV. Enhance awareness and presence on campus
- V. Provide campus leadership on issues related to writing (including leadership with WAC)

During a kick-off writing retreat at the start of Spring 2011 semester, consultant work groups were further organized in relation to categories above. These key areas and goals remain vital to plans for additional meetings and workshops.

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Reflecting Outward: Highlights of Surveys, Research, and Feedback

SURVEY/FEEDBACK HIGHLIGHTS: RESULTS FROM OUR WRITING CENTER SURVEY FOR FACULTY

The Writing Center surveyed over a hundred faculty on the Larimer Campus this spring. Some highlights are described below. As you compare/contrast these responses with your own, does anything surprise you, inspire you, and/or cause you concern?

Some questions that received a clear majority response of "no."

- Did you ever use a college writing center at any time when you were a student?
- Have you ever worked as a consultant or tutor in a college Writing Center?
- Have you completed the...Writing Across the Curriculum program on the Larimer or Boulder County Campus?
- Do you give students EXTRA CREDIT for using the Writing Center...?
- Do you REQUIRE students to use the Writing Center...?

Continued next page...

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

SURVEY/FEEDBACK HIGHLIGHTS: RESULTS FROM OUR WRITING CENTER SURVEY FOR FACULTY

Continued from previous page

Questions that received a clear majority response of “yes.”

- In general, do you assign graded writing in any of your classes?
- When you give a graded writing assignment, do you give students an assignment sheet handout?
- In general, do students appear to need extra assistance with the writing they do for your course(s)? (Though there was also a 14.8% response of “unsure,” in another section of the survey there was overwhelming agreement with “We need a Writing Center because students are not prepared for college writing.”)
- Do you mention the Writing Center... [in course materials]?
- Have you ever been in the Writing Center?

In sections with “true,” “false,” or “I don’t know,” here are some areas that seemed prone to a lack of consensus:

- The Writing Center is staffed by English teachers.
- The Writing Center is a tutoring service.
- The Writing Center is mainly for students who need tutoring because of weak writing abilities.
- There is a stigma attached to having to use the Writing Center.
- I would consider using the Writing Center myself for my own professional writing.
- Students who take a paper to the Writing Center should leave without any plagiarism in their writing.

Of those who felt comfortable “rating” our Writing Center, the majority chose “Very Good” or “Excellent.”

Survey respondents also indicated popular interest in the following services: classroom visits (or an “informational session”) with reminders about Writing Center services, and workshops for instructors to help with everything from assignment development (including lessons in punctuation and grammar) to evaluation/feedback strategies.

Special thanks to everyone involved, as we continue to evolve with this feedback in mind....

In our Fall 2011 issue:

- More results from the Writing Center Exit Survey and the In-Class Student Surveys
- A history of the Larimer Writing Center
- What do we mean by *academic writing*?

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)