

Writers Elevated

Issue #8/Fall 2014

From the Editor: Advance and Retreat

Inside This Issue

From the Editor

[Writing Center Consultants](#)

[Retracing Steps](#)

[Planning Waypoints](#)

[Writing Landscapes](#)

[Exchanging Views](#)

[Promoting Practice](#)

[Reflecting Outward](#)

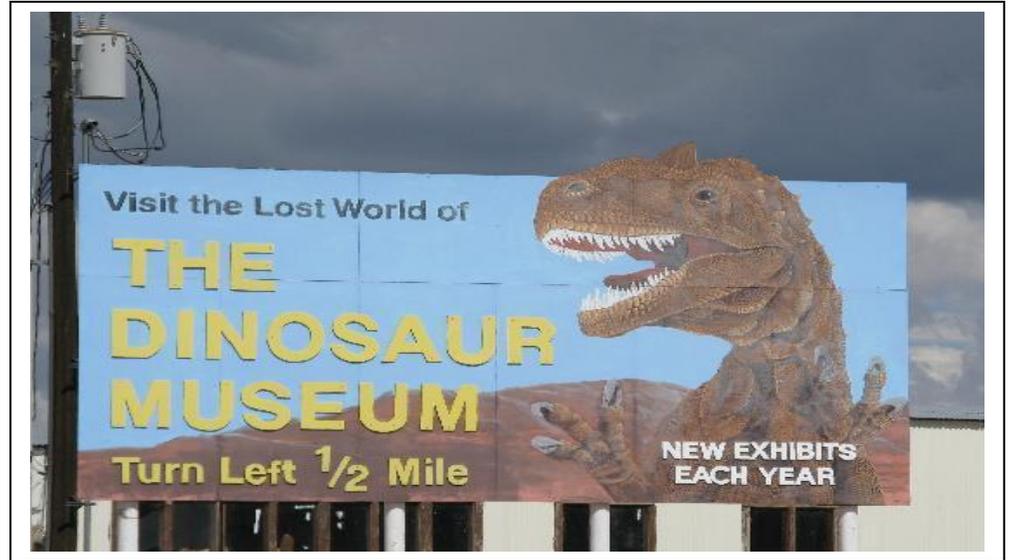


Photo borrowed from tripadvisor.com.

Has it occurred to us sufficiently that it is part of the continuing growth of this mind that it may desire to be lost ...? I have been in some degree created by ... lost objects in the grass we are sometimes aided by ... indeterminacy

--Excerpts from "The Mind as Nature"
by Loren Eiseley, as included in *The Night Country*

Dear Readers—For one month this past summer, I lived alone in someone else's house far from my usual life in Fort Collins. I had carefully chosen the setting for its unique inspirational location, privacy, and quiet—a kind of "writer's retreat." One of the most important things I was reminded about a writing retreat, however, is that it sometimes involves just as much non-writing as writing.

As individual writers/readers/thinkers, we need time to find what makes us tick, and an important part of this can be gained through many different types of retreat experiences beyond our usual patterns of thinking and doing. What can you learn about yourself during a sweltering summer afternoon of wandering alone through the vast rooms of "the Lost World of the Dinosaur Museum," for example? Well, plenty, I think, that could be connected to other experiences and topics in your life and maybe—eventually—applied to numerous pieces of your writing as well. (Writers—Always keep on the lookout for interesting billboards.)

During a "writing retreat" it's true that writing may often seem the furthest thing from what you're doing. That may very well be as it should in order for you and your words to advance.

Susan Marshall—Newsletter Editor, Interim LC Writing Center Director

Fall 2014 Writing Center Consultants

Fall 2014 Consultants for Drop-In Service, BP 102, Larimer Campus

- **Teresa Affleck**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Liliana Castro**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy (working in the Center specific to needs with ESL/ELLs)
- **William Foster**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Maureen Fox**—Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC
- **Deb Gengler**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Ann Healy**—Cherished Community Volunteer
- **Jim Heaton**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Mark Hussey**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy; WAC
- **Madeleine LeCocq**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Therese Loeffler-Clemens**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Rhonda Parmley**—Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC
- **Heidi Petersen**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy; WAC
- **Heidi Quist**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Johanna Scheurman**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **John Young**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy

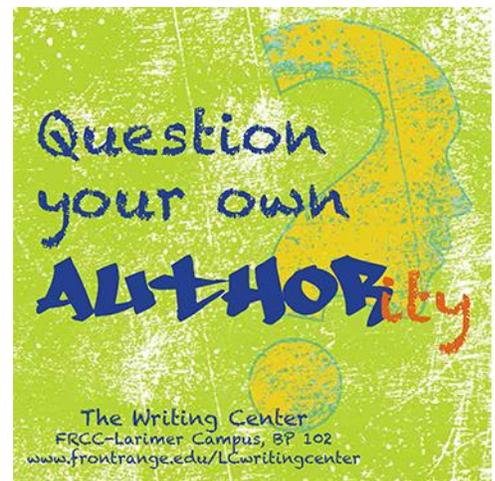
Learn more about our consultants online. Visit the “Writing Center Consultants” link provided at our LC Writing Center Web page (www.frontrange.edu/LCwritingcenter) for narratives and photos. Also see Liliana’s article “English Language Learners in the College Class” in the “Writing Landscapes” section of this newsletter.

Newsletter Editor, Interim Writing Center Director, and Consultant FRCC Larimer Campus

Susan Marshall

Susan.Marshall@frontrange.edu
(970) 226-2500 ext. 2343
FRCC Learning Opportunity Center (LOC), BP 102, 4616 S. Shields Street, Fort Collins CO 80526

For drop-in service information for other campuses, you can search the FRCC Web site for campus-specific “Academic Support Labs” pages. (See “Retracing Steps” for reminders of links.)



Fall 2014 Consultants for the FRCC College-Wide OWL

Jill Clateman (BCC), **Elizabeth (Crystal) Kerr** (Larimer Campus), **Vicki McLane** (Larimer Campus), **Kathy Mendt** (Larimer Campus), **Sheryl (Sheri) Michael** (BCC), **Melinda Myrick** (Westminster), **Iris Rigby** (Larimer Campus)

FRCC OWL Coordinator—Sonja Scullion

See “Retracing Steps” on the next page for more about the FRCC OWL.

Retracing Steps: Writing Center Information

**Larimer Campus (LC) Drop-In Writing Center, open 9 a.m.-3 p.m. M-F (except as noted on the schedule or announced)
Located in Blanca Peak (BP) 102 as part of the Learning Opportunity Center (LOC)**

Visit <http://www.frontrange.edu/LCwritingcenter> for more information and resource links (and consider posting the link to D2L for students). You can also link from the FRCC home page to “Current” Students,” “Learning Resources & Support Programs,” and then to “Academic Support Labs” for your campus (though these steps may change with FRCC’s Web redesign). The LC Writing Center has experienced a lot of usage this semester, with log book entries showing approximately 365 sign-ins between the start of the semester and early November. The Director also visited several classes by request to help give Writing Center orientations, and, with assistance from Madeleine LeCocq, helped to pilot a research essay workshop with some sections of SOC (thanks also to John Wilkins!) that will be helpful to our work across disciplines as well.

To learn more about our FRCC college-wide online writing lab (OWL) and submit writing for feedback there, visit www.frontrange.edu/writingcenter and see the OWL link at the Writing Center Web page, or use the OWL link provided via D2L “Resources.” We encourage students to try both our drop-in and OWL services for the unique consulting experiences that they both provide. Our FRCC OWL Coordinator Sonja Scullion reports that the OWL is busy “and thriving,” and Kathleen Hefley reports that as of Nov. 11, OWL consultants had reviewed a total of 622 submissions from across FRCC campuses this semester.

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Planning Waypoints: Writing Center and WAC Projects in Development

Professional Development—In late August, Writing Center Director Susan Marshall and Jim Heaton and Johanna Scheurman worked together to present a new PD workshop installment of “Talk About Writing: Writing Center Questions and Answers,” funded for another semester through the generosity of the Larimer Campus Faculty Professional Development Council (FPDC). The workshop continues to receive excellent feedback, and the Director will apply for additional funding to continue the tradition next semester. We also hope to be able to receive funding for another Writing Center/WAC joint PD workshop as offered in past semesters. The Writing Center Director is also very pleased and grateful to announce that our Larimer Campus FPDC has approved another semester of funding for us to have representation from our LC Writing Center at the Colorado and Wyoming Writing Tutors Conference (CWWTC) in the spring.

Writing Center Reflective Practice Group—Our fabulous new Instructional Coach for Larimer Campus, Carla Alejos, also approved us for another semester of generous funding for a Writing Center reflective practice group. This opportunity has been invaluable to us! Many thanks to Carla, and to everyone who has participated to make this happen! (See “Exchanging Views” for a look at what we’ve been discussing this semester.) Plans are also being made to start a communal journal for consultants in the Writing Center as an additional forum for sharing insights and posing questions that can be reviewed by the Director to help generate new discussions, training approaches, and resources.

Writing Center Web Page and Campus Promo—Remember to check for information and updates to our LC Writing Center Web site at <http://www.frontrange.edu/LCwritingcenter> as it evolves along with plans for the FRCC Web design, and let the Writing Center Director know if you have any requests for additions. Our new “Question Your Own Authority” slogan and logo design also debuted on promotional posters and stickers for our visitors this semester. We’d love to hear what you think about it!

2014-2015 Larimer Campus Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program—WAC Director Alyson Huff is pleased to announce the following participants for the 2014/2015 WAC cohort:

Jan DeBell
Sue Davidson
Katie Leber
BT Huntley
Jeannie Mobley-Tanaka
Cindy Burkhart

Each of these participants will be working one hour per week in the LC Writing Center next semester as part of their WAC program requirements, so the Writing Center Director will be meeting with the WAC cohort on 11/18 to help start welcoming them to our team of consultants for next semester.

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

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

English Language Learners in the College Class—From Guest Author Liliana Castro

(Please see our “Writing Center Consultants” link at www.frontrange.edu/LCwritingcenter for more about Liliana and her work at FRCC.)

Many instructors wonder about how to best support their English Language Learners (ELLs) in the classroom. Without doubt, instructors have their lessons prepared, they make themselves available for consultation, and they genuinely care about these students. Yet, many ELLs are not performing at the college level or seem to be unable to understand college course practices.

Pedagogical approaches to best support these students are informed by Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, but these understandings are *sparsely* known by non-ESL (English as a Second Language) educators. Providing a crash course on recommended pedagogy is beyond the purpose of this note. Instead, I will here outline some considerations that might help you reach an ELL's needs, become familiar with best instructional practices, and understand how to better support ELLs in their learning.

The Iceberg Metaphor—This is a very helpful image of an ELL's language and cognitive development. The tip of the iceberg represents the ELL's ability to communicate on a social basis. SLA theories refer to this observation as Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS). Based on BICS, many instructors assume ELLs are able to understand subject specific terms and make the mental connections expected as they present the information in their lectures or assigned readings. SLA theories refer to this capacity as Cognitive Academic Language Performance (CALP). For language development reasons, an ELL's BICS does not equate to CALP. In fact, the ELL's cognitive capacity lies at the bottom of the iceberg. So, assessing the ELL's critical thinking ability or their capacity to monitor their learning takes a lot of effort from these students and different instructional skills from their instructors.

Sheltered Educational Instruction—Instructors of ELLs need to put into practice instructional strategies that shelter these students' access to a deeper cognitive and metalinguistic realm. There are a number of resources that provide instructors with sheltered instructional strategies. Here are a few recommendations:

- When explaining new concepts, check the ELL's comprehension of terms that you would deem common knowledge, such as the term “implication.” Have these students explain in their own words what they think the word means. This practice will help them understand the term's meaning and *collocation*, that is, the way the term is commonly used in the English language or in your subject. The students will then transfer and apply this understanding to similar contexts in other classes or topics.
- If your PowerPoint presentations are based on very limited information, make a handout available to allow students to take notes of the information discussed in the slide. Allow time to register this information and verify that the notes are relevant. Having students try to explain the information in the slide helps them assimilate the concept.
- When clarifying a concept, try multiple ways of conveying the information without making it more complex or repeating the same explanation. Paraphrasing or making connections with concrete or more familiar concepts will help these students understand more abstract concepts. This means going from familiar concepts to less familiar concepts in steps.
- Always articulate clearly! Comprehension is improved when ELLs hear clear speech.

Take a second look at these few recommendations. Would they also help your native speakers in the class? They should! Thus, sheltered instruction is beneficial to all students, but especially so to ELLs.

LC Writing Initiatives, Groups, and Projects—Please let the Editor know if you would like news of your writing initiative, group, or project included in an upcoming edition. See our archive for previous news/listings.

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Exchanging Views: A Summary of Consultant Discussions

What have we been discussing in our LC Writing Center reflective practice group?

This semester, we've been so grateful to our new Instructional Coach, Carla Alejos, for continued support to hold multiple sessions of our LC Writing Center reflective practice group (see the previous issue for a description of our pilot session and overarching goals). Here's a summary of this semester's reflection themes.

Our first meeting of the semester was held on 9/30, with eight consultants attending in addition to Carla and the LC Writing Center Director facilitating. The first prompt for writing and reflection was for each consultant to briefly describe a time when he or she questioned the confidence to continue (productively) with a consultation to help the student.

Many concerns involved students who visited who were facing major challenges when trying to identify, navigate, and comprehend information on writing assignments (including some serious difficulties with language/vocabulary for English language learners). Some common types of requests from these students have been "What do I do?" "Am I doing this right?" "Can you fix this?" There can be a lot of tension and emotion when these students finally meet with us, and a big part of our job then seems to be to help reduce the tension while also getting the student to focus on concrete steps and feel a sense of movement and progress. Our confidence about the best ways to proceed can feel shaken or undermined with such intense challenges toward movement in a single session. This seems to be an arc of concern with arrival and direction/destination: being concerned about where a student is coming from in terms of prior knowledge and practice in relation to what is "wanted" or "expected" by the students and/or instructors.

The second prompt asked what beliefs each consultant had about what is valuable during a session, regardless of what has come before or what may come after.

The types of beliefs mentioned involved these themes:

__Respect maintained for the integrity/complexity of the student, consultant, and instructor (as also demonstrated through actions and beliefs described below)

__Directness, honesty, sensitivity, and explanation about what we can/can't offer with our service and why (And does the student need our help finding information on additional resources?)

__Empathy and engagement

__That something of value will be taken away from the session, no matter what, with guided participation as key (for example—the value of our questions, our proactive listening, our suggestions for additional prep. or resources or follow-up to help empower the student vs. the student's expectation for us to "fix" things)

__The importance of not thinking of the consultation as the "be-all and end-all" (and conveying that to the student in a way that helps the student understand that as well)

In connection with this, it was decided that additional reflection on our work specific to English language learners (ELLs) would be helpful. Six of our consultants met on 11/11 with the LC Writing Center Director, Carla, and Center for Adult Learning Director Margie Wagner as a guest. It was a fantastic chance to write, reflect on, and discuss questions and concerns we've had related to our support of ELL visitors to the Writing Center and to increase our awareness of the complexities of educational as well as cultural backgrounds of these students. We are working on concrete goals for more training and workshop opportunities related to this and are so grateful to Carla and Margie for their input and support!

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

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

Writing Center In-Service—This semester's in-service included some very helpful overview from Liliانا Castro on "English Language Learners in the Writing Lab" and categories of some theoretical perspectives, a reminder of the complexity of educational challenges, some review of "needs to be addressed in the Writing Center" connecting with instructional methods, and a reminder of backgrounds of English language learners who "may focus on grammar rather than content and organization" and "may not be able to explain/see [a] problem due to unfamiliarity with rhetorical conventions." Liliانا has supplied some follow-up in the "Writing Landscapes" section of this edition, and we are building on the topic with our reflective practice and evolving new plans for related training and resources.

LC Writing Center Reflective Practice Group Project—Featured in "Exchanging Views"

LC Writing Program Meeting—The LC Writer Director was invited to attend the 11/14 Writing Program Meeting, a very helpful opportunity to catch up with news being discussed specific to CCR and transfer-level English courses and to also share news of questions and developments related to our campus Writing Center. One goal also being discussed is a comparison of themes going on across reflective practice groups in our department and our potential to build on any overlap/connections.

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Reflecting Outward: Highlights of Surveys, Research, and Feedback

More Notes from the Spring 2014 Colorado and Wyoming Writing Tutors Conference (CWWTC)

As follow-up to the LC Writing Center Director's CWWTC report in the previous newsletter issue, here are some notes composed by Heidi Petersen on the CWWTC sessions that she attended. As with the other information that we gained from the conference, we'll be using ideas contained here as a springboard for further Writing Center discussions and potential projects.

Assessing the Non-classic Consultation: Did Our Methods Work?—This session [facilitated by a group of presenters from the University of Wyoming] reviewed working with diverse writers, including those with ADHD and Autism, those who are English language learners, those who are required to visit the Writing Center, and those who show up to class-specific workshops. How are these visits assessed? Success is measured through engagement, focus, return visits, ending comments, improvement over multiple sessions, ability to repeat ideas/learning in the writer's own words, comfort visiting the lab throughout the writing process, and body language.

[Additional note from the LC Writing Center Director: One related goal will be to gain even more specific information about methods for trying to assess "improvement over multiple sessions" and also new ideas for surveys connecting to the criteria mentioned in this workshop.]

The Writing Center Road Trip: Embedding Writing Center Consultants in Non-composition Classrooms—

This session [facilitated by Writing Center Director Aaron Leff and other participants from FRCC Westminster] discussed the experiment inspired by the University of Montana Sidecar Project, which embedded consultants into different environments. In their rendition of the project, the Writing Center consultants formed 4-5-person teams; these teams visited the same courses four times throughout the semester as arranged with the instructor to achieve maximum impact through "timed interventions." The aim has been to bring the skills of the discipline and writing together. The results have included increases in the students' confidence, enthusiasm, [...] and improvements in the teachers' assignments. Both instructors and students have felt supported by the project.

(cont.)

More Notes from the CWWTC (continued)

Theories of Second Language Acquisition: What are Their Implications & Applications in the Writing Center?

This session [facilitated by a group of presenters from CSU] reviewed five interactionist hypotheses that are common to the theories of Second Language Acquisition in order to discuss their usefulness to Writing Center consultants. Should these concepts be included in Writing Center training? The five ideas are as follows (quoted from the session handout):

Comprehensible Input Hypothesis—Language acquisition occurs when learners receive messages that they can understand; input should be slightly above student's ability level.

Interaction Hypothesis—[The] most effective kind of comprehensible input learners can receive is individualized and achieved through negotiation for meaning, which includes "moves" performed in response to either actual or perceived comprehension problems, with the purpose of making meaning comprehensible to both interlocutors, including clarification requests, confirmation, and comprehension checks.

Noticing Hypothesis—Students must notice gaps in their knowledge; learners cannot learn grammatical features unless they notice them.

Comprehensible Output—Learner's production of the target language is necessary to acquisition.

Affective Filter—Motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety level[s] of student[s] must be taken into account. If their "affective filter" is up, they cannot acquire as much new information.

After clarifying each of these concepts, the group considered the ways in which these theories are helpful to consultations.

[Additional note from the LC Writing Center Director: One related goal will be to gain even more specific examples of how these theories are being applied in a variety of consultations.]

Another Note of Thanks

As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, our thanks to the LC FPDC for their support to make FRCC Larimer Campus representation possible again at the next CWWTC!

A Few More Words About Loren Eiseley (quoted at the start of this newsletter from "The Mind as Nature")

In her introduction to Eiseley's *The Night Country*, Gale Christianson explains the following:

Eiseley began composing what he termed the "concealed essay," cloaking his vision of the world in the raiment of science. These pieces, including the majority of those in *The Night Country*, begin with a personal anecdote such as the discovery of a skull or the black night of a yawning chasm, then expand in both a scientific and contemplative direction. Fictional and autobiographical information are merged with scientific fact, literary allusions, and poignant quotations through a sophisticated style unique to the author. Eiseley described how he arrived at this juncture in a moment bordering on epiphany: "In a silence which nothing could impinge, I shifted away from the article as originally intended. A personal anecdote introduced it, personal matter lay scattered through it, personal philosophy concluded it, and yet I had done no harm to the scientific data."

Later in the introduction, Christianson writes, "it is Loren Eiseley writing about himself as much as [Sir Francis] Bacon in the essay "Strangeness in the Proportion" when he describes a "great synthesizer" as "a kind of lens or gathering point through which past thought gathers, is reorganized, and radiates outward again into new forms."

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)