

Writers Elevated

Issue #3/Spring 2012

Inside This Issue

From the Editor

[Writing Center Consultants](#)

[Retracing Steps](#)

[Planning Waypoints](#)

[Writing Landscapes](#)

[Exchanging Views](#)

[Promoting Practice](#)

[Reflecting Outward](#)

*"A lot of people never
use their initiative
because no one told
them to."*

*(from Banksy's Wall and
Piece)*

From the Editor: Stuck and Unstuck

Dear Readers—

This semester, I had the privilege of attending a Bard College Institute for Writing & Thinking workshop at Larimer Campus. One of our first assignments was to write about anything on our minds—without stopping. I wrote the following:

stuck/like a needle on an album—why does it sometimes get unstuck and sometimes not—what force or forces are at work to determine its potential unstuckness—what message there for the listener to read—when all is said and done and you sit down to listen to the music what do you expect to happen—well it depends on the medium, right? I mean if it's a CD you don't expect the "stuck" of a needle, but maybe another kind of "stuck." Maybe you crave the unpredictability of the needle in a world where stuck is so taboo—and yet what about "skip"—the idea that what was stuck was potentially really just a skip—how much more acceptable is that to the masses or to you or to someone planning the next technology—and where would you/me/we want sticks or skips or scratches to occur—where would we want that noise that is also a kind of music or message or whisper—where do we remember the/our records skipping or sticking and why do we remember or not remember and what does the record potentially remember for us

I hope that this freewriting and this Spring 2012 edition of *Writers Elevated* helps you with your own meditations and lessons on "stuck" or "unstuck," as we transition through another spring and semester as lovers of language, writing, and that timeless resource called "thought."

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

Spring 2012 Writing Center Consultants

- **Beverly Byer** – Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC
- **Marie Flynn** – Arts and Letters
- **Deborah Gengler** – Arts and Letters
- **Ann Healy** – Cherished Community Volunteer
- **Jim Heaton** – Arts and Letters
- **Elizabeth (Crystal) Kerr** – Arts and Letters, WAC
- **Therese Loeffler-Clemens** – Arts and Letters
- **John Mandley** – Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC
- **Susan Marshall** – Arts and Letters
- **Vickie McLane** – Allied Health, WAC
- **Rhonda Parmley** – Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC
- **Heidi Petersen** – Arts and Letters
- **David Redus** – Arts and Letters
- **Shana Salaff** – Arts and Letters, WAC
- **Sonja Scullion** – Arts and Letters, Online Consultant
- **Annita Stansbury** – Allied Health, WAC
- **Sara Tredennick** – Arts and Letters
- **Julia Weingardt** – Arts and Letters, WAC
- **Jim Weis** – Arts and Letters

Newsletter and Writing Center Contact Information at Larimer Campus

Susan Marshall
 Newsletter Editor and
 Interim Writing Center
 Director (during Kathy
 Mendt's appointment as
 Chair for Online Learning)
Susan.Marshall@frontrange.edu

Please contact Susan Marshall with your ideas, requests, or feedback for the newsletter and for the Writing Center. She wants to hear from you!

A Note on "WAC": Each of our consultants has invaluable experience and expertise with writing, as well as training and orientation specific to their work in the Writing Center. Why do some also have "WAC" next to their names? It means that these consultants have participated in our Larimer Campus Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Professional Development Program. Some are consulting for the first time as part of this (and are paired with a more experienced consultant), and some are returning consultants. To learn more about the WAC program, you can contact WAC Co-Director Alyson Huff at Alyson.Huff@frontrange.edu. Also look for WAC-related announcements and presentations at our campus.

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Retracing Steps: Writing Center Information

Reminders for online access to Larimer Campus Writing Center information and online submissions:

Follow FRCC Web links to the “Academic Support Labs” page for FRCC Larimer Campus (steps outlined in previous issues), or type www.frontrange.edu/writingcenter to help you link instead.

Consultants can also access the following types of “Faculty Writing Center Resources” via D2L: discussion prompts, training and “best practice” materials, information on screencasting, WAC activities, style sheets and exercises, presentations, tutorials, Web links, and *Writers Elevated* archived. (Note: Thank you for your patience while some updates to these D2L items are in progress!)

Our Larimer Campus Writing Center is physically located at the Learning Opportunity Center (LOC) in Blanca Peak (BP) 102. Drop-in hours are M—F from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and also M from 5 to 7 p.m.: Detailed copies of our Writing Center schedule (showing names of our consultants and their hours of service) are available onsite. Use of our space and resources is reserved for our Writing Center consultants, for those in sessions with our consultants, and for those waiting to begin a session. Questions about LOC tutoring or other academic support lab services (as different from the services at our Writing Center) are handled by staff at the LOC desk.

Would you like to request a class or event visit from a Writing Center representative who can talk more about our services or present on a related topic? **Do you have any questions or suggestions re: Writing Center promotion and awareness** (for example—Writing Center signage, ads for Wolf TV or *The Stall Street Journal*, online information, or promo at campus resource fairs and other events)? If so, please contact Larimer Campus Interim Writing Center Director Susan Marshall (Susan.Marshall@frontrange.edu).

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Planning Waypoints: Writing Center and WAC Projects in Development

Larimer Campus LOC and Writing Center Remodel-in-Progress

__ Walls have been painted, new furniture is being ordered, and decisions on artwork and updated signage are being orchestrated. Artwork might include some photography from Larimer Campus students, and a plan for a new display of our Writing Center consultant photos and biographies is also in-the-works.

__ The SARS tracking system is being tested and tweaked for sign-in and sign-out at the LOC front desk. This helps LOC staff to track visitors and direct them to appropriate services, and it will help supplement data from the Writing Center log book that will continue to be used for its own unique reference benefits.

__ With help from the LOC's Melissa Shay, a second computer was added to our Writing Center space, for exclusive use by consultants and their visitors during Writing Center hours of service.

OWL Initiative—Kathy Mendt has helped to coordinate a “Proposal for a College-Wide Online Writing Lab (OWL)” for Front Range Community College. As stated on the cover of the proposal, the purpose is to...

Create a unified and consistent online Writing Center presence for students college-wide, including those in the online environment. This initiative would be planned to begin Fall 2012 and proceed through Summer 2013, though training would commence during summer 2012. It is hoped the initiative would become a regular program with budgetary support after the first year.

Mary Lee Geary (Boulder), Kathleen Hefley (Boulder), Aaron Leff (Westminster), and Susan Marshall (Larimer) also assisted with development of the proposal currently under review.

For more information on Writing Center sessions and the 19th Annual Colorado Wyoming Writing Tutors Conference (“How’s My Driving?: Assessing Our Work as Tutors and Centers”), see [Reflecting Outward](#).

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

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

Web Links and Resources

- *Across the Disciplines: A Journal of Language, Learning, and Academic Writing* (<http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/>)
- "Biblioburro: The Donkey Library" (<http://www.pbs.org/pov/biblioburro/>)
- Community Literacy Center for "alternative literacy opportunities" (<http://literacy.colostate.edu>)
- *Connections* newsletters (<http://www.cccs.edu/Communications/ConnArchive.html>)
- "Electronic Literacy Classes" (<http://www.poudrelibraries.org/classes/>)
- "eReader Q&A"—for information on the latest Harmony Library eReader options and checkouts (<http://www.poudrelibraries.org/catalog/ereaders.html>) Also ask about options for eReader preferred searches and alerts.
- "Have Online Comment Sections Become 'a Joke'?" by Doug Gross and archived at <http://www.cnn.com/TECH/> (You'll need to search from this link.)
- Khan Academy for a "free world-class education for anyone anywhere" (<http://www.khanacademy.org>)
- *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* (<http://praxis.uwc.utexas.edu/index.php/praxis>)
- "The Dirty Little Secrets of Search" archived at <http://www.thespec.com> (Also see "The Top 100 Alternative Search Engines" by Charles Knight and editor Richard MacManus archived at <http://www.readwriteweb.com>.)
- "The The Impotence of Proofreading" by Taylor Mali (for mature audiences at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OonDPGwAyfQ>)
- "The Power of Introverts" by Susan Cain (author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*) (http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts.html)
- *The Straddler* (<http://www.thestraddler.com>)
- "Theater Professor's Firefly Poster Declared Threatening"—a unique "Censorship" topic archived at <http://gawker.com/5844187/theater-professors-firefly-poster-declared-a-threat>

Recommended "Writing Landscapes" change with each edition and are accepted for consideration on an open basis. The Editor is also seeking reviews of local library resources.

Campus Writing Initiatives and Reflective Groups

- *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)
- Reflective Practice Groups/"Talking About Teaching" (including meetings for English instructors, those interested in "Thinking Across the Curriculum," and more) (Barbara.Patterson@frontrange.edu)

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Exchanging Views: A Summary of Consultant Discussions

Should our Writing Center provide help with preparation for the Accuplacer?

October 2011—Can Writing Center visitors expect assistance with preparation for the essay portion of the Accuplacer test (since there are currently no Advancer tutorials available for that section)?

This was a question posed directly to Writing Center administrators and consultants at our campus last year.

Here are just a few examples of the kinds of concerns and questions mentioned in discussion of the topic:

One concern was that we would potentially support or encourage a “short term” outcome that could lead to further problems. For example, a student might find a consultant’s assistance temporarily valuable, pass the test, and then be at a related disadvantage once placed (without a more extended and internalized relationship with the writing skills tested). This might also complicate the student’s confidence and his or her understanding of the role and potential value of academic support services.

Logistical questions and concerns were also raised. What range of training and staff adjustments would be needed? How might these negatively impact, or detract from, other aspects of Writing Center assistance and operations?

At present, we do not offer Writing Center assistance with the Accuplacer, and we hope that our colleagues and visitors understand some of the compelling reasons for this policy.

Why do we have “consultants” and not “tutors” at our Writing Center?

Ongoing—Why do we have “consultants” at our Writing Center when some centers have “tutors” instead?

This is a topic discussed intermittently between consultants and with others on campus as we try to promote awareness of our unique services. Why do we emphasize the term “consultant” vs. “tutor” when other centers don’t, or when some appear to use the terms interchangeably?

Here are some reasons that have been discussed:

The title helps to immediately distinguish us from “tutor” services also available at the Learning Opportunity Center (involving “global tutors” or those for specific subjects).

Definitions for “consultant” also often emphasize words such as “advice,” “advisor,” or “counsel” (vs. “instruction” or “instructor”). This kind of focus relates very strongly to our goals to question, respond, and offer/illuminate choices vs. trying to evaluate/estimate grades, prescribe, or ultimately “teach” subject matter.

We continue to develop and learn more about our unique value as “consultants” the more we think about the specialty of the title itself!

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

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

In-Service Meetings and Workshops

This January, Writing Center staff met with Learning Opportunity Center staff for some Q&A about their combined services. The meeting included a mock consulting session to help illustrate consultant strategies-in-play (the multifaceted Therese Loeffler-Clemens playing her familiar role as consultant and the dapper David Redus playing the role of a fashionable yet rather frustrated student). Consultants were also invited to the Assistive Technology Lab (one of the labs located in BP 102 for centralized supplemental services) to explore Inspiration and WYNN software that can help students to organize their ideas and to read and edit with auditory assistance.

The following presentations were also offered by Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Co-Directors Eric Salahub and Alyson Huff during in-service week: "Writing and Rubrics," "Plagiarism," an overview of WAC, and "Writing-Based Classroom Assessment Techniques." (Also see *50 CATs* by Angelo and Cross and information on CATs being used for an English Assessment Expansion Plan on our campus.)

February 11 and 12 Workshop, Organized by WAC Co-Director Alyson Huff and Facilitated by Robert D. Whittemore, Faculty Associate for the Institute for Writing & Thinking at Bard

Participants from various campuses were treated to another intimate, in-depth, and highly interesting Bard College professional development opportunity held here at Larimer. This one included discussion, writing, and readings related to the following topics: freewriting, process writing and metacognitive thinking, loop writing, interrupted reading, collaborative learning, writing and sequencing prompts, believing and doubting techniques, dialectical response notebooks, text rendering/collaborative reading, writing to read in the zones, ways of responding, and questions of evaluation. Readings included a chapter from Paul Woodruff's *The Silent Teacher*, John J. Sullivan's *Lahwineski: Career of An Eccentric Naturalist*, Peter Singer's "The Singer Solution to World Poverty," and numerous works of poetry. A relentlessly informative and inspiring weekend!

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

Reflecting Outward: Highlights of Surveys, Research, and Feedback

19th Annual Colorado Wyoming Writing Tutors Conference "How's My Driving?: Assessing Our Work as Tutors and Centers" February 25, 2012—Colorado State University, Pueblo

Writing Center Consultant Heidi Petersen attended this conference and compiled some notes to help us think more about our own Larimer Campus Writing Center progress and goals. We hope to share more of that information via campus meetings and D2L, but here are some excerpts as well. Thank you, Heidi!

- Assessing what happens in writing centers varies according to the vantage point of the assessor [for example—consultants, writing center directors, administration, students and campus faculty]. The differing goals and expectations that each party brings to a session will influence that person's assessment criteria.
- Note that self-assessment can happen anywhere, anytime...

Continued next page...

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

19th Annual Colorado Wyoming Writing Tutors Conference NOTES

Continued from previous page

Consultants

- Self-assessment can be motivated by self-discovery. Are we serving the writer effectively? Was something learned? (By us? By the writer?) Are we making progress?
- Did we approach the type of consultation specifically? [English language learners, technical writing, creating writing, analytic writing, grammar consultation, resumes, college application essays] What's the goal? (Not all consultations can be assessed well by using the same criteria.)
- Did we generate and follow a focused agenda during the consultation?
- Did we encourage self-reflective comments from the writer? Are we guiding through open-ended questioning? Are we allowing time and silence? Did we allow the writer to make decisions?
- Are we listening actively and speaking with the writer at his/her level?
- Are we facilitating the writer's voice? Are we leaving the writing to the writer?
- How did we handle the writer's resistance or frustration? Did we provide useful resources? Have we affirmed the writing, writer, and Center?

Some Additional Items of Interest from the Conference—High schools are introducing writing centers. Surveys about WC satisfaction tend to be positive. Writing centers thrive when they are accompanied by Writing Across the Curriculum and English Language Learner programs, as well as Web resources. Recommended resources: *Writing Across Borders* (DVD from Oregon State) and Colorado College survey questions that “Molly Gross, who helped to prepare and interpret the survey, is happy to share....”

What is a “Typical” Session Like at Our Larimer Campus Writing Center?

Though it's tricky to try to describe a “typical” onsite session at a Writing Center, we can still share some basic guidelines and strategies for our sessions. Based on academic research and recommendations, our **general guidelines for session lengths and frequency** are 20-30 minutes (40 min. max.), with no more than 40 min. recommended per day and no more than three visits per week (to help students to learn to work independently). **Our drop-in session formats typically involve the following elements:**

__ **Consultants and visitors introduce themselves.** (It's important to learn each other's names, break the ice, take some breaths, help set a relaxed yet respectful and efficient tone for the session.)

__ **The consultant asks about** the type of writing brought in, whether the visitor has copies of related assignments guidelines for viewing, and what the visitor's priorities are for feedback (though the consultant might have additional suggestions as the visit progresses). If the visitor comes without any writing, without copies of guidelines, without any clear goals, and/or with an unrealistic timeline (“This is due in one hour and I need help!”) the consultant will advise to try and amend this for next time.

__ **The consultant tries to employ** many of the basic strategies reminded in the conference notes above (re: focused agenda, open-ended questioning, allowing time and silence, active listening, facilitating the writer's voice, leaving the writing to the writer, providing or modeling exposure to helpful resources) while also tailoring the session. Near the end of the session, the student might also be referred back to the LOC desk to investigate tutoring options with LOC staff.

__ **A student might** say something like “Aren't those guidelines stupid?” and the consultant tries to re-direct the student's frustration: “This is an interesting assignment. These guidelines are trying to help you to...” The student might ask “What grade do you think I'll get on this final draft?” The consultant needs to be honest about parameters. “I can't tell you that. I can only try to help you to do your best on this.”

__ **If a student asks** a consultant to “sign off” on writing, the consultant will remind him or her that the instructor can come in to check our sign-in/sign-out records instead. The consultant asks, “Has this all been helpful?” and helps the visitor remember what was covered in the session and what goals might follow.

Meet you on the pages of *Writers Elevated* again next semester, with Issue #4 for Fall 2012!

Return to [Inside This Issue](#)