

Writers Elevated

Issue #5/Spring 2013

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"There's a meme on reddit where the users tend to ask, 'When does the narwhal bacon?'....The only correct answer...is 'At midnight!'"

(You can visit English Language and Usage at english.stackexchange.com to find out more about why....)

From the Editor: "go away words...."

Dear Readers—In an effort to pique your curiosity, I'm introducing this issue of *Writers Elevated* with a plea for words to "go away." Read on and enjoy. The piece below was written by my first visitor to the Writing Center this semester—Chewy J. (his chosen pen name)—and it originated as part of his freewriting for a Studio 121 class (more about Studio 121 in this issue). It's been reworked a bit by Chewy since then, but much of it remains in its raw poetic state here.--Susan Marshall (Newsletter Editor, Interim Writing Center Director, and Writing Center Consultant)

For me, writing is like unraveling a giant ball of yarn. The ball is tangled in knots and clumps together from the lack of care given. Or writing is a puzzle, or some sort of brain teaser, that needs to be solved to get some sort of reward. My ideas are there and waiting, wanting to be expressed—dying to be expressed, to get out, to reach others in a comprehensible form; however, they stick to the tip of my pen. Afraid to leave me, my words are stuck. They are afraid to make the transition from my mind, body, and soul leaving for the outside world. The fear of being misunderstood, or not articulate enough, poetic enough, intellectual enough, makes the words stay, and keeps them with me. My words stick with me and are reluctant to be captured on paper, whether they are in type or print. Maybe it's pride or ignorance or simply the unknown that causes fear. The love and the lust are there—the need to express myself to others, yet the words still cling to me. Unsure they will find their new home with new friends, new faces and acquaintances uncertain they will see me through my ideas thoughts and feelings captured on the page. When successful I am giving them a piece of me, a part of my soul never to be reproduced. So, my writing is a picture of me never to be replicated. My soul and my being can never be duplicated. Timid and all, once the words leave their end state is showing a snapshot of me, at that precise moment in time. From the age of preschool when I would write simple sentences about friends or animals; that is how I understood the world at that time. As time moved on, I grew older; it was about wants and needs. It was my world at that precise time. So go away words, show the world who I am right now, at this very moment. I don't need you. I know you, don't be scared. They can see me as I am right now.

Spring 2013 Writing Center Consultants

- **Teresa Affleck**—Arts and Letters
- **Sandy Butler**—Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC
- **Mark Doty**—Arts and Letters, WAC
- **Marie Flynn**—Arts and Letters
- **Deb Gengler**—Arts and Letters
- **Ann Healy** - Cherished Community Volunteer
- **Jim Heaton**—Arts and Letters
- **Anne Marie Jacobson**—Allied Health, WAC
- **Elizabeth (Crystal) Kerr**—Arts and Letters, WAC
- **Hollie Kopp**—Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC
- **Dru Ledder**—Allied Health, WAC
- **Therese Loeffler-Clemens**—Arts and Letters
- **Kay Lucas**—Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC
- **Susan Marshall**—Arts and Letters
- **Allison Masters**—Arts and Letters, WAC
- **Vickie McLane**—Allied Health, WAC
- **Kerri Mitchell**—Arts and Letters
- **Rhonda Parmley**—Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC
- **Heidi Petersen**—Arts and Letters
- **David Redus**—Arts and Letters
- **Nathan Scott**—Arts and Letters, WAC
- **Joe Schicke**—Arts and Letters
- **John Young**—Arts and Letters

A book of consultant biographies is available to peruse in BP 102, but we soon hope to make this good reading opportunity available online as well! For more reminders of what the "WAC" title involves, you can also find helpful information in previous newsletter issues archived at the LOC Web page.

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Please contact Susan Marshall with your ideas, requests, or feedback related to the newsletter or to Writing Center positions and services.

Reflection and Celebration

__In addition to asking his students to visit the Writing Center, Economics faculty member Jaren Seid has also been asking them to reflect (in writing) on their experiences. A number of students have mentioned not only their appreciation for the knowledge and helpfulness of our consultants, but also for consultants' abilities to put students at ease and make meetings so enjoyable. (For more about related feedback, see "Promoting Practice.")

__Thanks also to Learning Opportunity Center staff for planning a unique May 10 celebration/show of appreciation for Writing Center consultants and other LOC Help Center staff members. Here's to the spirit of support and community made available and appreciated in many ways at the LOC!

Retracing Steps: Writing Center Information

Our Larimer Campus Drop-In Writing Center is located in the Learning Opportunity Center (LOC), Blanca Peak (BP) 102, and open this Spring from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. M-F (except as noted on our schedule). Also visit the Larimer Academic Support Labs page at the FRCC Web site to access additional printable .pdf copies of our BP 102 schedule of consultants, a faculty informational flyer (to be shared with students and containing important reminders for Writing Center usage and outreach), and issues of *Writers Elevated*. (If you have any difficulty finding this part of the Web site, step-by-step instructions are reviewed in previous issues.) An additional "Faculty Writing Center Resources" D2L archive is also available to our consultants, and is being updated by consultant Heidi Petersen now that other changes to D2L have taken place.

Our FRCC college-wide online writing lab (OWL) debuted this semester!—This single-point-of-access service is available to all FRCC students and staffed by consultants from Westminster, Boulder County, and Larimer campuses—with the goal of a 24-hour turnaround time (some exceptions apply) and a screencast feedback option. Kathy Mendt sent an informational e-mail on this at the beginning of this semester, and you can also find ads now posted on campus. To access the service, you can enter www.frontrange.edu/writingcenter, use the link provided at the Larimer Academic Support Labs Web page, or use the link provided with D2L "Resources." Please feel free to contact Kathy Mendt or Online Writing Lab Coordinator Sonja Scullion with questions or feedback about the service. (This OWL initiative was also reported on in previous issues.)

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Planning Waypoints: Writing Center and WAC Projects in Development

WAC and Writing Center Presentations: More Attempts to Get the Word Out—WAC Director Alyson Huff and Writing Center Director Susan Marshall have been teaming up more often to provide information and answer questions about their respective programs and services, and to help faculty members sample related resources, objectives, and strategies. On January 31, "Recommendations and Invitations re: Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing Center Services" was offered as a paid professional development opportunity. On February 8, a WAC workshop for Business Department faculty also included Writing Center Q&A and support materials. In a meeting for the Learning Communities Training Cohort on March 26, time was devoted to "Wordhuggers, Writing Centers, and WAC"—presentation and discussion of the ways in which our Larimer WAC Program, Writing Center, and Learning Communities work separately/distinctively yet with vital and illuminating connections. Look for more workshop opportunities next semester to help discuss common needs observed in the Writing Center and explore instructional strategies and resources to help target those needs across the curriculum.

"And the survey says..."?—Brainstorming is in progress (involving Writing Center and LOC team members) to develop a new BP 102 Writing Center exit survey to help confirm details of satisfaction with services and work space. Writing Center sign-in sheets were also revised this semester to help gather even more information about course titles, instructor names, types of assignments brought in, and whether visits have been first-time or repeat or required (to help us assess traffic patterns or spikes and evolve related strategies for managing and communicating our drop-in usage guidelines and recommendations for outreach). Feedback on our new college-wide OWL service is also being gathered and will be helpful to onsite decisions. (For more on what we've been observing with Writing Center needs, see "Exchanging Views.")

A News Sampler for the 2012-2013 WAC Cohort (from WAC Director Alyson Huff, Alyson.Huff@frontrange.edu)

As WAC was helping Nathan Scott to learn more about theories for using writing to improve student engagement and learning, the article "The Writing Revolution" from *The Atlantic* caught his attention. A day's WAC workshop curriculum was modified to incorporate this interesting, relevant perspective.... Mark Doty and Dru Ledder have shared techniques for the usefulness of journaling in their courses, and Mark embraces his fresh awareness of student needs for formatting and grammatical questions by demonstrating to his students *where* and *how* to find information with the help of some Writing Center resources. [You can read more about Mark in the 3/27 edition of FRCC's *FrontLine*.].... Allison Masters works to incorporate the assessment skills learned via the Institute for Student Learning in conjunction with her WAC assessment project this semester.... Hollie Kopp and Sandy Butler will facilitate a professional development workshop "Embrace the Circus! Techniques to Create Collaborative Learning in the Classroom" reflective of a group presentation that they created for one of the WAC weekly workshops last Fall Anne Marie Jacobson will visit a Philosophy course as she looks for new ways to open up discussion and see a WAC-influenced class from a different discipline.... At a recent WAC social event, Kay Lucas shared some innovative ideas and great feedback for a "WAC 2.0," perhaps to be offered as a refresher workshop or advanced pedagogical implementation series.

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

Landscape Feature: Service-Learning and Writing From Guest Author Marissa Campbell

When I was first hired as a member of the English faculty, I inquired if FRCC had a service-learning program. After learning that such a program did not exist, I realized that by asking that innocent little question I had volunteered myself to create one. Thus began my journey into one of the most rewarding experiences of my career.

Since that initial inquiry, I have worked closely with faculty, staff, and students to create the framework of a service-learning program at the Larimer Campus. We have developed guidelines, policies, goals, assessment tools, training materials, and grant opportunities. The number of service-learning courses we offer grows each semester, as does the number of community partners who benefit from our students' service.

Once faculty experience the benefits of using this pedagogical tool, they become convinced that the time and energy spent developing service-learning assignments and partnerships are well worth the effort. For student writers specifically, service-learning provides a real world audience for their writing. We can all design assignments that ask students to imagine that they are writing for a particular audience or purpose; however, both we and they know that they are really writing for us and their overall purpose is to figure out what the teacher "wants" and to receive a passing grade.

But when students are asked to create a pamphlet or update the content on a web page or write a grant proposal on behalf of a community partner, they are creating real documents for a real audience that have an impact beyond the classroom. Service-learning creates more authentic and valuable learning experiences for students, and they become more invested in their writing when they know it is making a difference in their community.

I am happy to talk with anyone who would like to discuss how service-learning can reinvigorate your teaching and lead to greater student success. For more information about service-learning in general or how it can be used in a writing classroom specifically, I also recommend the following resources (some of which are available in the service-learning library in my office):

- Campus Compact (www.campuscompact.org)
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (www.servicelearning.org)
- Community College National Center for Community Engagement (<http://www.mesacc.edu/other/engagement/>)
- *Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit*
- *Service-Learning Course Design for Community Colleges*
- *Writing Partnerships: Service Learning in Composition* by Thomas Deans
- *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service Learning in Composition* by Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters
- *Writing to Change the World* by Mary Pipher
- *Making Writing Matter: Composition in the Engaged University* by Ann Feldman

Other Contact Information for Campus Writing Initiatives and Reflective Groups

- Larimer Campus Learning Communities (courses combining disciplines and often including composition) and Developmental Ed. Redesign (of which Studio 121 is a part) (Shawna.Van@frontrange.edu, Matt.Stilwell@frontrange.edu, Kerri.Mitchell@frontrange.edu)
- *Front Range Review* literary magazine (Blair.Oliver@frontrange.edu)
- Writers on the Storm creative writing club (William.Foster@frontrange.edu)
- Danger: Live Writers! public readings of student writing (Kerri.Mitchell@frontrange.edu; Blair.Oliver@frontrange.edu)
- Reflective Practice Groups—including a group specific to part-time and full-time Writing and Reading faculty members teaching developmental-level reading and writing as well as transfer-level English courses with the Larimer Campus Writing Program (Barbara.Patterson@frontrange.edu)

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Exchanging Views: A Summary of Consultant Discussions

How do you try to gauge whether you and a student are listening actively during a consultation?

March 2013—The theme of this semester's CO and WY Writing Tutors Conference is "Listening in/to the Writing Center." We'll be talking more about the theme after the conference takes place in April, but in the meantime the question above was posed to our Larimer consultants for some e-mail discussion.

Everyone who replied to the question above seemed most interested to talk about questioning as vital to active listening, for example:

Nathan Scott frequently poses questions like these: "Is this what you mean?...Is that what you are trying to say?...What's another way to say this same thing?"

Jim Heaton also tries "to get a 'reflection' of what [he's] said from the student..." using a prompt such as "So, do you think your thesis fulfills the qualifications we've talked about?" He says, "Then, often the student just needs to listen to what she herself says to get the 'aha' to get through a conceptual rough spot. Similar to proofreading—really proof reading..." The overarching question such as "Why did you come in this morning?" also encourages a spirit of active listening on both sides from the start.

John Young remembers a particularly "rewarding exchange" that he experienced with a student who was writing about a theme of discrimination in a rather distanced or "abstract" way. As John listened to this student, he sensed that "in fact this young man had a personal story to tell..." John asked the student to sit at the computer and attempt a new introduction to the essay, to learn what might develop. John explains that "you could see [the student's] interest and intensity flare...one of those 'I've been meaning to say this' moments...I was thrilled...and so was he."

What are some of the most common needs that we've been observing at the Writing Center?

March 2013—Consultants frequently mention their appreciation for the range of writing assignments and accomplishments that they are able to observe, discuss, learn from, and help students to evolve in the Writing Center! As also informed by consultant feedback and observations, the Interim Writing Center Director has compiled this list of answers to "What are five of the most common areas of need for students visiting our Writing Center?"

__To interpret and follow assignment guidelines correctly

__To locate and navigate resources (especially handbooks and online information to help with grammar, mechanics, choices for "academic" sources, and citation formats)—and to also learn more about why there are different essay and citation formats

__To find balance between class offerings, support services, peer review opportunities, and independent motivation and practice with writing-related activities

__To become more curious about, as well as disciplined with, a study and practice of language, grammar, and mechanics (and to practice with more creative and critical reading as part of this)

__To become savvier with the basic concept of a rhetorical hierarchy of concerns—yet also more flexible and open toward writing as a process and tool for learning and decision-making that can involve many different contexts and approaches in and out of school

We are also working to expand our discussion of needs and resources specific to ESL/ELL students, and develop new opportunities to share "best practice" recommendations with others from our campuses. More on this TK!

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

January 16 Writing Center In-Service—This semester, we were thrilled to welcome eight new WAC participants and three additional adjunct faculty members working for the first time in our Writing Center—along with twelve returning consultants. We reviewed orientation materials and service reminders for this semester's work in the Writing Center, but one of the highlights of our meetings was a visit from Economics faculty member Jaren Seid (also mentioned on page two of this issue) who had asked his students to write reflections about the feedback that they received from consultants last semester. Not only did students have many positive things to say about the quality of the feedback received, but Jaren also talked about the direct impact that the visits combined with the reflections (metacognitive aspects) seemed to have on his students' success with the evaluation of their own writing and awareness of steps in the process. This semester, we continue to exchange feedback with Jaren and his students and learn from their experiences with us. (Jaren also sent us the link to a YouTube video that he had produced to further help students search correctly for academic sources for their research, and he has plans to eventually incorporate a service-learning project with his writing component as well.) If you are interested to explore more ways to try and build awareness of writing and the Writing Center with your own students (including options for class visits and group feedback opportunities), and to find out more about the suggestions and guidelines for Center usage and outreach that we've been developing, contact Susan.Marshall@frontrange.edu.

January 26 and 27 Workshop, Facilitated by Robert D. Whittemore, Faculty Associate for the Institute for Writing & Thinking at Bard—Spring was time again for this in-depth, two-day workshop for those completing the WAC Program at Larimer Campus. According to WAC Director Alyson Huff, one variation this time around was more inclusion of participants' own writing samples for practice with feedback. Activities included opportunities to practice some of Peter Elbow's techniques for responding to writing, including experimentation with a variety of creative visual approaches for presenting feedback. Emphasis also remained on practice with shifting perspectives—from "teacher" to "student" and from "writer" to "reader"—to help better synthesize this awareness with the teaching of writing. For more information about readings and other materials required or made available in the workshop, please feel free to contact Alyson at Alyson.Huff@frontrange.edu.

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Reflecting Outward: Highlights of Surveys, Research, and Feedback

Inside Studio 121—From Guest Author Erich (Ricky) Werner

Peek into a "Studio 121" classroom this semester, and you peek into the future of developmental writing classes here at Front Range: more practical, hands-on activities; more individualized instruction and attention; more collaboration with fellow students; more sense of community (thanks to a smaller class size); and—perhaps most importantly—a much faster pace!

Based on hugely successful programs from colleges across the country, Studio 121 invites students who would ordinarily require "remedial" instruction to step directly into a college-level writing course—English 121. After attending each English 121 session, ten Studio students stick around for another session with the same teacher, a session in which they might talk more about what happened that day in 121. Or they might learn and practice additional sentence- and paragraph- level strategies that will help them succeed in their 121 writing tasks. Or they might jump on a computer and begin inventing or revising material while the teacher circulates, answering questions and offering advice to each student in turn.

The creators behind the Studio program believe that the program will accelerate students' progress in a big way, by combining two semesters of coursework into one fully integrated program of study. These teachers and administrators also believe that, while jumping into a college-level course will be challenging for students who have struggled with writing in the past (students who may feel that they "suck at writing" or simply "hate English"), the intensive Studio 121 experience will supercharge the confidence of reluctant writers. One Studio participant admits that, while she had always felt confused and lost in earlier English classes, the extended Studio format gives her the additional time she needs to practice and process lessons, and the additional opportunities she needs to pose questions to the teacher and her fellow students. (Cont. next page...)

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Inside Studio 121—From Guest Author Erich (Ricky) Werner (continued)

This semester, there are only a handful of Studio 121s offered, by only a handful of instructors; however, by Fall 2014, the Studio model will be the standard for all developmental writing classes on campus. In the meantime, students who have placed into a developmental writing course (like English 090) can ask their advisors if they are eligible to participate in the singular Studio 121 program. They'll not only have the chance to move through classes faster, as they become more confident as writers, but they'll also be able to peek into the future of Front Range Community College.

Learning About Learning Communities—From Guest Author Joe Schicke

This semester, I am teaching in my first learning community, and it's been an amazing experience so far. A learning community (LC) consists of two different instructors combining their classes into one. The LC I take part in is a pairing of my English 121 Composition class with a Music Appreciation class taught by David Wiatrolik. So far, it's been a great challenge! The first half of the semester was fine—it had several elements that were integrated smoothly, such as an assignment which had our students summarizing and responding to articles about music. But overall, David and I felt like we were not taking full advantage of the opportunity.

That all started to change this past week. Dave and I sat down and had some important, and at times difficult, conversations about disciplinary expectations and learning outcomes. We fine-tuned our major assignments for the second half of the semester, and, a few days ago, we introduced a group book project to the students. We had a visit from FRCC art instructor Kristen Bartel, who showed us how to make books—real bound books! The students are now learning about informational writing and applying that knowledge into making books about Romantic-era musical composers such as Beethoven, Chopin, Verdi, and Mendelssohn. The students are having fun collaborating, planning, drawing, writing, researching, and discussing how to communicate information to their audience, since these books will be displayed in a glass case in Mt. Antero later this semester.

After the book, we will do a rhetorical analysis of a song of their choosing. I will model for them how to analyze a song with lyrics, while Dave will analyze an instrumental piece. The exciting aspect of this project for me is that students will be connecting rhetorical terms (audience, context, ethos, pathos, and logos) to musical terminology such as rhythm, harmony, timbre, and homophony. After the analysis paper, students will give a PowerPoint/Prezi presentation in which they evaluate and compare two musical performances that they have attended, again using rhetorical and musical terms to appreciate (not just like or dislike) the historical/cultural/social relevance and musical craft of two performances.

So far, the best part about this LC experience has been the students. They know each other well and even hold each other accountable for their performance in the LC. Of course, some students speak up in class more than others, but, for the most part, everyone contributes. They not only understand the content from the individual courses, but are also beginning to synthesize that information. Sometimes it feels as if Dave and I are trying to keep up with the students! For example, today I was explaining the differences between departments to our students, and I was talking about how departments are often housed in separate buildings in which they develop their own vocabularies, philosophies, pedagogies, and agendas. I remarked that I found this strange because one would think that everyone involved in higher education, regardless of the department, would mainly be focused on...on...I couldn't think of the word. Bloom's taxonomy bounced around in my head.

"Learning," said Kenny.

Learning, indeed.

Thanks to Writing Program Leadership for Feasts (a few more words here from Joe Schicke!)

The life of a part-time instructor can be hectic. There's lots of lesson planning, meeting with students, and grading. Many instructors teach four or more sections, often at multiple colleges and universities. With all this hard work and running around, sometimes it's hard for instructors to even remember to get some food in their bellies! Thankfully, we have full-time faculty members on the Larimer campus who are aware of this and want to do what they can to show their appreciation for part-timers. This semester, faculty of the Writing Program decided to reward part-time instructors [adjunct Writing and Reading faculty members] for all of their hard work and sacrifice by preparing a sprawling buffet of home-cooked food for all to enjoy. And they did this not once, but twice!...Thanks, Writing Program faculty, for recognizing your dedicated colleagues! **[Note: Joe is also the Co-Chair of our Larimer Campus Instructor Coalition along with Hollie Kopp. His full, original article on the feasts was published in FRCC's *FrontLine* this semester. This version was edited for *Writers Elevated*. Now time to get a snack!]**

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