

NEWS FROM THE FRONT RANGE COMMUNITY
COLLEGE WRITING CENTER AND WAC PROGRAM
LARIMER CAMPUS, FORT COLLINS, CO
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Writers Elevated

Issue #7/Spring 2014

From the Editor: Admired, but not Duplicated

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<http://library.harker.org/content.php?pid=464886&sid=3807277>

*Lavishly
Gah!
Epiphany in wih-line,
Crotchety habitation,
Spiral fermenting,
Zoom.*

Skull flooding

--Communal poem (words submitted on notecards then shuffled and read) at the World Poetry Day event at FRCC LC. Writers on the Storm helped to facilitate the event, with participation from other students, faculty, and community members.

Dear Readers—I've been Interim Writing Center Director now for the past two+ years as Kathy Mendt has worked to diversify her efforts and appointments at FRCC (including her position as Chair for Online Learning). Now it's official, though, that Kathy will be retiring from FRCC Larimer Campus after this semester. When I asked if I could announce this in the newsletter she asked that I spend no more than a few lines doing so.

Well, Kathy, I hope you don't mind that I've decided to put those few lines here on the cover. You have made such an impact on so many people and how they think about writing and engage with it. Yes, of course, there's happiness that you are soon off to explore new pages and chapters in your life (sorry—couldn't resist those magnetic clichés). You are, of course, an original, though—not to be plagiarized or duplicated—and will be missed by students and colleagues here at FRCC.

So...those few lines being said...promise you'll at least write once in awhile? ☺

Spring 2014 Writing Center Consultants

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

- **Teresa Affleck**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Shawn Brady**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy; WAC 2013/2014
- **Liliana Castro**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy (working in the Center specific to needs with ESL/ELL)
- **Teresina Davie**—Business, WAC 2013/2014
- **William Foster**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Maureen Fox**—Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC 2013/2014
- **Deb Gengler**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Ann Healy**—Cherished Community Volunteer
- **Jim Heaton**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Mark Hussey**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy; WAC 2013/2014
- **Therese Loeffler-Clemens**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Rhonda Parmley**—Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC
- **Heidi Petersen**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy; WAC
- **Tim Rose**—Integrated Technology, WAC 2013/2014
- **Steve Sweek**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **John Young**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy

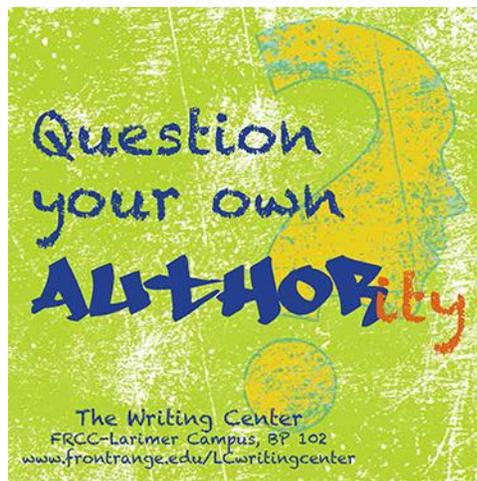
Learn more about our consultants online. Visit the “Writing Center Consultants” link provided at our new LC Writing Center Web page (www.frontrange.edu/LCwritingcenter) for narratives and photos.

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

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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.)



Spring 2014 Consultants for the FRCC College-Wide OWL

Marissa Campbell (Larimer Campus), **Jill Clateman** (BCC), **Sarah Ener** (Larimer Campus, OWL Backup Consultant), **Mark Hussey** (Larimer Campus, OWL Backup Consultant), **Elizabeth (Crystal) Kerr** (Larimer Campus), **Vickie McLane** (Larimer Campus), **Sheri Michael** (BCC), **Melinda Myrick** (Westminster), **Heidi Petersen** (Larimer Campus), **Iris Rigby** (Larimer Campus)

FRCC OWL Coordinator—Sonja Scullion

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. According to our log book entries, we had approx. 551 sign-ins for Fall 2013 in BP 102. The Director also helped to pilot some in-class workshops with sections of ECON and ENG. So far, between 1/27 and 4/11 of this semester-in-progress, we’re already approached 500 sign-ins. For both totals, at least approx. half of the sign-in entries appeared to be from visitors who had been to us before.

To learn more about our FRCC college-wide online writing lab (OWL) and submit writing for feedback there, visit www.frontrange.edu/writingcenter, 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. According to figures provided by Kathleen Hefley (Writing Center and Student Success Center Coordinator at BCC), OWL submissions totaled 1002 last Fall (including those from students who used the OWL more than once). WC led the number of submissions totaled per campus, followed by BCC, and then LC. As of the OWL's opening for Spring 2014 through 3/26, there had been a total of 466 submissions for this semester-in-progress.

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Planning Waypoints: Writing Center and WAC Projects in Development

Professional Development—In January, WAC Director Alyson Huff and Writing Center Director Susan Marshall were once again able to offer their PD workshop “Why do students visit the Writing Center and how can WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) help instructors address these needs?” Then in March “Talk About Writing!: Writing Center Questions and Answers” was presented by Susan Marshall with assistance from consultants Steve Sweek and John Young. Both workshops were funded by the Larimer Campus Faculty Professional Development Council (FPDC) and received excellent feedback, so please keep on the lookout for more potential offerings next semester and help us spread the word to colleagues. The FPDC also helped make it possible for us to have some LC Writing Center representation at the Colorado and Wyoming Writing Tutors Conference (CWWTC) this April in Denver. You can read more about the experience in the “Writing Landscapes” and “Reflecting Outward” sections of this issue, and stay tuned for new project ideas and additional PD that have been inspired.

Writing Center Reflective Practice Group—This semester, Barb Patterson gave us an enthusiastic “go” and approval for funding to pilot a Writing Center reflective practice group at Larimer Campus. See “Exchanging Views.”

Writing Center Web Page and Campus Promo—Our new LC Writing Center Web page debuted this semester at <http://www.frontrange.edu/LCwritingcenter>, and, with help from FRCC's Web content and design team, you can now learn even more about us online and access a collection of helpful resources links. (Please let the LC Writing Center Director know if you have any requests for additions or updates to this site.) Did you also happen to notice the “Question Your Own Authority” logo on the previous page? It's a brand new graphic design (from Jay Demore in FRCC Marketing and Communications and with wordplay by Susan Marshall) that we hope to have integrated with LC Writing Center promo materials for next semester, including stickers to give to LC Writing Center visitors.

Writing Center Feedback Forms (Exit Survey)—In early April we started piloting some brief new feedback forms that visitors can complete after sessions and leave in our LC Writing Center drop-box. Basic questions include the following and can be answered anonymously: “How did you hear about us?” “How was your consultation helpful to you?” “Would you visit again?” “How can we improve our service or space?” Between 4/3 and 4/18 the Director had collected 24 surveys, and everyone replying had confirmed (often emphatically) that they would visit the LC Writing Center again. Brief notes about the sessions involved appreciation for help with questions, for constructive criticism and help to identify strengths, for help to focus or with direction, for insight toward personalizing a piece of writing or improving explanation, for help with flow or a closer look at detail or sentence-level concerns or citations, and for inspiring confidence and a feeling of progress. Suggestions included adding even more consultants to the schedule and getting a larger room and some private rooms for sessions. In terms of “How did you hear about us?” some visitors had seen ads or links online or walked by and noticed us; however, many had learned about us from other students, teachers, or staff. Many thanks for these referrals and to everyone who gave their very helpful feedback to us! More feedback TK!

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

Notes on the “From Poetry to Paperwork: Understanding Writing as a Creative Sensory Process” workshop at the April 12 CWWTC (For more on the CWWTC, see “Reflecting Outward.”)—Being called a “creative writer” for much of my life, I had already been thinking a lot about links between critical and creative writing with my teaching and my own educational experiences. In fact it was already a central theme in a book-length manuscript that I had completed, so I had to check out this workshop led by peer consultants from the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs. It began with an invitation for us all to do a brief freewrite using the prompt “15 minutes in.” We were then asked to do another freewrite and “treat English like it’s a foreign language” (one we hadn’t learned) and to focus on our awareness of sound and not meaning when deciding which words to use. A few of us were given time to read our second freewrites to the group, and then we were all asked to revisit our first freewrite and try to re-write what we said there in a new way. Author/editor Ander Monson once told me that a piece of writing I had submitted to a journal had “interesting argumentative density” but not enough “linguistic density,” and those terms help to describe the valuable evolution I now witnessed between my first freewrite and my third (conceptual and linguistic densities both being activated and available to integrate further). The workshop leaders went on to talk about the freeing capacity of those “free” writes to help lower inhibitions, to help explore sound as a rhetorical tool, to help with “invention” and “navigation,” to emphasize personal process and individualization, and to challenge the idea that “creative” and “academic” writing need to be separated or compartmentalized. This theme of crossover was beautifully articulated throughout the workshop and reminded me of similar activities and ideas being communicated in our campus WAC program. This is definitely a topic for more discussion with our own consultants (how to integrate related ideas and approaches during consultations) and for more PD projects-in-the-making.

Freewrite #1

15 minutes in...to something, anything—what happens? Is there some common waypoint that occurs at the 15 min. mark with many different people? Do you know, for example, whether you’re going to be truly engaged with something after 15 minutes of giving it a try? And then what if you are told to stop at the end of 15 minutes and can’t continue even if you wanted to? There’s everyone’s 15 min. of fame, right? What if you’re feeling “out” of it, though, even when 15 min. “in”? What does it mean to be “in” 15 min. anyway vs. around or between or under or over the spaces of minutes?

Freewrite #2

Ricochet the freshness in suave dioramas, the stars and hillocks, leaflets, opaque, transparent, mangroves and everglades, sand dunes, resplendent transcendence.

Freewrite #3

15 minutes in...to vortexes, to villages, to segues and orchestrations, to the dark day space or light nightness—What happens? Are there banshees, oompahs, wakes in the waves, bubbles in space that occur—most precisely and predictably at 15 min.? And then what after that? Do we drown, wake up, admit, procrastinate, jump, fall, escalate, inflate, run, expand, hope for more time?

Recommended Reading on the topic of “Ecomposition”—Earlier this semester, LC Writing Center staff were sent the following link and asked to read “Redefining the Writing Center with Ecomposition” by Bonnie D. Devet and published in *Composition Forum*: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ985762.pdf>. The piece includes some historical context re: the evolution of writing centers in the U.S. as it also focuses on the writing center now “examin[ed]...through the lens of ecomposition.” An interesting piece to also consider in connection with other discussions of writing center “environment” at the CWWTC....

LC Writing Initiatives, Groups, and Projects—Please let the Editor know if you would like news of your writing initiative, project, or group mentioned in an upcoming edition. Search previous listings and news items in past issues of *Writers Elevated* archived at our LC Writing Center Web site.

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Exchanging Views: A Summary of Consultant Discussions

What are the goals for our Larimer Campus Writing Center reflective practice group, and what was the value of our pilot session?

This semester, LC Interim Writing Center Director Susan Marshall met with Instructional Coach Barb Patterson to explore the possibility of getting a Writing Center reflective practice group funded as one of several others at LC. Barb thought it was a great idea and helped to lead our pilot meeting on March 11. The goal will be to continue these meetings for LC Writing Center staff into next semester to help inform our work in the Writing Center and our PD and outreach.

One of the first questions....What exactly is a reflective practice group and why is it potentially so valuable? Barb has a number of resources that explain some of the history and context of reflective practice groups at various institutions and why they've been so helpful to instructors. It becomes easy to see why this practice can be helpful for Writing Center consultants as well.

To quote from a "What is Reflective Practice" handout that Barb shared, "In essence, it [reflective practice] is a readiness to constantly evaluate and review your practice in the light of new learning (which may arise from within the context of your professional practice)." In our case, for example, we might deal with questions of planning and preparation for sessions, our Center environment, session focus and feedback, and communication with colleagues.

In terms of format, each meeting needs to be carefully facilitated to follow a "what," "so what," and "now what" cycle. A unique prompt is given and everyone is asked to write a brief personal response. Responses are then read by their authors without interruption and the group decides which response to focus on for discussion. As Barb pointed out, it's interesting to notice how many connections between responses can be revealed through this process. Everyone has a chance to share experiences without the session feeling unmanageable or unfocused.

Here was the prompt given at the pilot meeting by the LC Writing Center Director:

Briefly describe an experience when your work with someone in the Writing Center seemed to "open up" or "shut down" in a particularly memorable/"critical" way. Maybe it was because you tried an unfamiliar feedback strategy that worked better than you expected, or tried a familiar strategy that didn't seem as effective as usual. Maybe it was because you felt like you were lacking certain tools for a consultation. Etc.

One thing that became clear as we read our responses was that some of us (incl. the Director) felt challenged to talk about just one example (or single experience) in response to the prompt. We also noticed how often aspects of opening up as well as shutting down could be perceived as part of an experience. Before long, a theme also seemed clear: the importance of "what happens before the essay."

We reflected on how students sometimes come to us seemingly distracted by a number of challenges in their personal lives, things that seem to be pulling their attention away from the writing they've just placed on the table. They can also feel unsure about themselves and how to focus next. We reflected on the importance of decisions about the space and time for those introductory moments (to question as well as listen) and how a student's talk of "distractions" can actually help with focus for the session as it can give us more insight toward approaches to the writing.

With reflective practice, we become more cognizant of common goals and mutual insights while also developing more confidence with our individual abilities to adapt and help uniquely evolve each consultation.

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

Highlights from the March 21 and 22 Writing to Learn Workshop—From Guest Author and Larimer Campus WAC Director Alyson Huff—At this year's WAC-sponsored Bard College Institute for Writing and Thinking two-day writing-intensive onsite workshop, we had representation from all three campuses and teachers from Ceramics, Early Childhood Education, English, Hospitality, Philosophy, and Psychology. Our [returning] facilitator, Rob Whittlemore, from Western Connecticut State University, carefully scaffolded the curriculum to have us move from reading and responding to texts, to reflecting on the symbolism of engaging students in a world of fleeting attention spans, to a direct piece on social media and technology. This culminated with writing an essay and sharing in small groups. During the last workshop, we used what we'd learned to provide one-on-one feedback [...] regarding an assignment we use where we struggle to get students as engaged as we'd like. This gave each of us the chance to "practice" some of the ideas we'd just explored, see a very specific connection to material in our own classes, and walk away with something immediately applicable.

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

Participation at the April 12 CWWTC—Featured in "Writing Landscapes" and "Reflecting Outward"

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Reflecting Outward: Highlights of Surveys, Research, and Feedback

The Colorado and Wyoming Writing Tutors Conference (CWWTC)

April 12 in the Community College of Denver's Confluence Building, Denver Auraria Campus

With support from the LC Faculty Professional Development Council (FPDC), we had LC Writing Center representation this semester at the annual CWWTC. Consultant Heidi Petersen and I not only attended, but attempted our first joint conference presentation. While Heidi had been to the CWWTC in 2012 (and reported on it for the Spring 2012 newsletter), this was my first time attending and experiencing the unique value of having writing center administrators, consultants, and other staff members from so many campuses and institutions together "synchronously." Here's a description of some of what was presented and what I attended during the day of workshops.—**Interim LC Writing Center Director Susan Marshall**

Questioning Our Assessment of Physically and Emotionally Supportive Space—This year's conference theme was "Making it Stick," and Heidi and I hoped to successfully combine our separate research interests to explore perceptions of Writing Center "space" and what to consider when trying to assess it. I began by introducing some concepts and terms for discussion from *Researching the Writing Center: Towards an Evidence-Based Practice* by Rebecca Day Babcock and Terese Thonus, "A Treatment of Physical Space...." by Nathalie Singh-Corcoran and Amin Emika (from *Inhabiting the Writing Center: A Critical Review*), "The Rhetoric of Space" by A.N. Bemer, "Situating Kairos" by Tim Taylor (in *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*), and *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* 5th edition by Leigh Ryan and Lisa Zimmerelli. Heidi's Prezi reviewed the importance of "validation" for consultants and their visitors and was inspired, in part, by Sugata Mitra's TEDTalk "Build a School in the Cloud" and the importance of emotional presence with learning. This circled back to questions of the role of our physical writing center environments in relation to our behaviors and goals to optimize presence. For example, in what ways do concepts of identification/ethos/pathos (Bemer) and kairos (Taylor) connect with our space? What is meant by a perception of "nonplace" (Singh-Corcoran and Emika) and should we be concerned about it? How transient or stationary, fragmented or centralized, shared or self-contained do we think our writing center spaces should be as we try to allow for diverse needs and desires related to community, accessibility, transparency, personalization, confidentiality, active listening, and critical reading? What goals for communication and facilitation with this? We look forward to these discussions continuing!

(cont.)

A Report on the CWWTC (continued)

The Writing Center in a Learning Commons: Finding Ways to Not Get Stuck—This session led by Larry Giddings of Pikes Peak Community College was also of special interest to administrators in connection with writing center space. It focused on the concept of the “learning commons” being developed at a number of campuses and an invitation to discuss related questions, concerns, and ideas. Larry’s handouts included “A Select Abstracted Bibliography” and a piece from EDUCAUSE titled “Things You Should Know About the Modern Learning Commons.” In the latter, the “village green” is described as the “concept of social utility [that] underlies the philosophy of the modern learning commons, which is a flexible environment built to accommodate multiple learning activities.” The commons is further described as a place that “brings together the functions of libraries, labs, lounges, and seminar areas in a single community gathering place” (and with an emphasis on technology and “information commons” as well). Discussion during the session touched on some of the following types of questions: How might service expectations for writing centers be influenced by a learning commons environment? What is the potential administrative as well as pedagogical impact of trying to integrate writing center services in the space of a learning commons environment? It became clear to me how important the topic is for continued discussion and brainstorming between writing center administrators and how it adds to the timeliness of other conversations about writing center space and shared learning environments.

From Poetry to Paperwork: Understanding Writing as a Creative Sensory Process—Reported on in “Writing Landscapes”

Tutor Training: Learning Through Observation and Practice—The final workshop I attended included discussion from a panel of Writing Center staff at CSU Pueblo and provided a close look at how they conduct training for their peer tutors via an “observation—discussion—practice—discussion” process during their working hours (for both synchronous and asynchronous sessions) and in addition to materials and assignments offered outside of working hours and via a Wiki. The process developed, in part, due to limits with the amount of meetings that could be held outside of Center hours and also to address a hiring process that extends throughout the semester. Tutors are able to rotate through observations of several different peers, with an emphasis on questions (a “how does it work” approach) vs. critique, and then the questions can be applied for self-analysis as well. Tutors are also asked to submit their own work to the online writing lab (OWL) to study feedback. The goal is to help tutors adapt with spontaneity and find their own voice in addition to becoming more familiar with common strategies and approaches and “finding [and studying] the patterns” in their own work. “Portrait of the Tutor as an Artist” was also referenced. This is all helpful to keep in mind for evolution of our own consultant observations and training options, and to connect with an idea that was also raised in our LC Writing Center reflective practice group for the value of a communal journal.

Additional CWWTC Sessions

LC Consultant Heidi Petersen will also be sharing her notes and reporting on sessions that she attended separate from me during the CWWTC, and we’ll be considering these as well as information from the sessions above in relation to ideas for evolving Writing Center-related materials, projects, and PD. These sessions included a workshop facilitated by Writing Center Director Aaron Leff and other participants from FRCC Westminster titled “The Writing Center Road Trip: Embedding Writing Center Consultants in Non-Composition Classrooms” and a workshop led by staff from CSU titled “Theories of Second Language Acquisition: What are Their Implications & Applications in the Writing Center?” Connecting with the former, we had also published a feature by Aaron Leff and Michelle Medeiros titled “Reviewing Peer Review” in our Fall 2013 newsletter edition.

We have much to reflect on and review for upcoming semesters! Thanks to all who presented, attended, and otherwise made possible this fantastic conference opportunity.

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