

# Writers Elevated

Issue #6/Fall 2013

## From the Editor: "a brief doorway..."

Dear Readers—A lot of my own writing started with poems, and then I studied poems so much that I started to avoid them. It's amazing what one really perceptive poem can do for your reading of other things and other people, though. Yes, poetry is available in many forms: stories, essays, paintings, choreography, music....Sometimes it's a "poem" you need, though, to re-inspire and refresh your attitude toward so much else.--Susan Marshall (Newsletter Editor, Interim Writing Center Director, and Consultant)

### Assertions

*Most of what's said is what's unsaid.*

Look, most of life is assertions  
remarked singularities that make little sense,  
nothing but a dance,  
and so you assert them anyway

You never say  
you're a beautiful woman;  
You give me heebie-jeebies.

But you say, I like your hair;  
Your coffee cup is in the kitchen.  
Stuff like that  
spoken through gesture,  
a brief doorway  
hardly more than woodwork.

And (says the minister) life is a lot like that,  
singular brief doorways:  
peartrees of childhood  
cats of menopause,  
broken teeth of old age,  
songs and dances of disappearance,  
and you dance them anyway  
anyway you want,  
without saying a thing.

--from *Notes from Otherwhere* by Treat Jamison  
(See next page.)

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Are you viewing this newsletter and little editing gremlins seem to have frolicked with the fonts and spacing? For optimal viewing pleasure, try a browser other than Firefox or make some adjustments to your Firefox setting for opening .pdfs. (Suggested reading: [www.powersolution.com/here-is-why-pdfs-look-so-terrible-in-firefox/](http://www.powersolution.com/here-is-why-pdfs-look-so-terrible-in-firefox/))

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## Fall 2013 Writing Center Consultants

- **Teresa Affleck**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Deb Gengler**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Ann Healy**—Cherished Community Volunteer
- **Jim Heaton (poet Treat Jamison)**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Elizabeth (Crystal) Kerr**—Creative Arts, Design, and Humanities; WAC
- **Therese Loeffler-Clemens**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Susan Marshall**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy; Interim Writing Center Director
- **Rhonda Parmley**—Social and Behavioral Sciences, WAC
- **Heidi Petersen**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy; WAC
- **Joe Schicke**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Steve Sweek**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **Sarah Wernsing**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy
- **John Young**—Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy

**Consultants for Drop-In Service, BP 102, Larimer Campus**

### Newsletter and Larimer Campus (LC) Writing Center Contact Information

Please contact Susan Marshall (Newsletter Editor and Interim Writing Center Director) with your ideas, requests, or feedback related to the newsletter or to Writing Center positions and services at LC.

[Susan.Marshall@frontrage.edu](mailto:Susan.Marshall@frontrage.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, please search the FRCC Web site for campus-specific "Academic Support Labs" pages.

### Consultants for the FRCC College-Wide Online Writing Lab (OWL) Service

**Jill Clateman**—Boulder County Campus

**Sarah Ener**—Larimer Campus (OWL Backup Consultant)

**Kathleen Hefley**—Boulder County Campus (Writing Center Coordinator and Student Success Coordinator for Instruction at BCC and also an OWL Backup Consultant)

**Elizabeth (Crystal) Kerr**—Larimer Campus

**Vickie McLane**—Larimer Campus

**Kathy Mendt**—Larimer Campus (Chair for Online Learning at LC and also an OWL Backup Consultant)

**Sheri Michael**—Boulder County Campus (Thanks also to Sheri for visiting our LC Writing Center debrief last May to present and share some materials related to work with ESL/ELL students.)

**Melinda Myrick**—Westminster

**Heidi Petersen**—Larimer Campus

**Iris Rigby**—Larimer Campus

**Sonja Scullion**—Larimer Campus (FRCC OWL Coordinator and also an OWL Backup Consultant)

## 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 Fall from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. M-F (except as noted on our schedule or with announcements of special hours or events). You can access .pdf copies of our schedule, a Writing Center informational flyer, and issues of *Writers Elevated* at <http://www.frontrange.edu/Current-Students/Learning-Resources-and-Support-Programs/Academic-Support-Labs/Larimer-Campus/>. Instructors can also consider posting our materials to D2L for students.** In Spring 2013, we had over 700 sign-ins for our Larimer Campus drop-in service (up from the previous semester) with writing brought in from across the curriculum—including assignments for ENG, LIT, COM, BUS, ECON, EDU, BIO, GEO, HIS, PSY, PHI, SOC as well as for writing related to math, nursing, drawing, accounting, hospitality, and for other types of writing goals and projects such as resumes and scholarship essays. According to our log book this semester, the majority of our visitors have “been to us before,” but the number of new visitors is not far behind. We encourage instructors to use our services as well, for feedback on guideline sheets and more.

**To access our FRCC college-wide online writing lab (OWL) and review the submissions guidelines and other information for that service, you can enter [www.frontrange.edu/writingcenter](http://www.frontrange.edu/writingcenter), visit the Web page link above, or use the link provided with D2L “Resources.” We encourage students to try both our drop-in and OWL services for the unique consulting experiences that they both provide.** The OWL also provided students with service this past summer and experienced close to 900 total submissions (college-wide) last spring involving a diversity of courses. Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

## Planning Waypoints: Writing Center and WAC Projects in Development

**Professional Development Involving the Writing Center and WAC**—With help from the Larimer Campus Faculty Professional Development Council, WAC Director Alyson Huff and Writing Center Director Susan Marshall were able to provide more professional development workshops this semester (in Sept. and Nov.) with two sessions of “Why do students visit the Writing Center and how can WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) help instructors address these needs?” One important lesson was that we need to make this workshop longer than a single hour! It’s scheduled again for next January 28 from 10-12 (room TBA). A new workshop will also be offered March 13 from 12-1:30 in the LPSC West Conf. Rm.: “Talk About Writing!: Writing Center Questions and Answers” to include examples of Writing Center scenarios and opportunities for role playing along with Q&A. Look for more Writing Center and WAC informational materials during next semester’s in-service events as well. The Faculty Professional Development Council has also granted funding for a member of our Larimer Campus Writing Center to attend the annual CO and WY Writing Tutors spring conference.

**Classroom Pilots, Downtime Projects, Dev Ed Updates, and More**—This semester the Writing Center Director helped to co-facilitate some classroom workshops piloted for sections of ENG 121/Studio and Economics. Feedback from workshop surveys so far has been very positive and reinforces the importance of modeling and exploring specific kinds of questioning processes in relation to assignment guidelines. A feedback drop-box has now also been placed in BP 102, and consultants are being asked to work on a number of “downtime” projects (whenever breaks with drop-in traffic occur) including work on informative pieces for online publication at FRCC and designs for new campus workshops and events. Many new ideas are also being discussed in relation to the Dev Ed Redesign taking place on each of our campuses, and Writing Center directors are scheduled to meet with the CCR (College Composition and Reading) Subgroup on 11/15 to help with the process of confirming recommendations for spring and to determine how these plans might also connect with other Writing Center decisions for promotion, outreach, and collection of feedback. (For more about this, see page five.)

### **A News Sampler for the 2013-2014 WAC Cohort (from WAC Director Alyson Huff, [Alyson.Huff@frontrange.edu](mailto:Alyson.Huff@frontrange.edu))**

This year’s WAC cohort represents a diverse group of faculty and instructors. Our Fall 2013/Spring 2014 participants are Mark Hussey (ENG), Maureen Fox (PSY/DEV), Michael Barber (BCC-ENG), Shawn Brady (PHI), Teresina Davie (HOS/BUS), and Tim Rose (AUTO). For this year’s workshops, we’ve incorporated weekly reflections; these encourage participants to make that week’s material immediately applicable to their class, share ideas with their peers, and leave with something concrete to try. There are so many wonderful professional development opportunities available at our college, but I fear that we attend, get inspired, and yet simply lack the time to incorporate what we’ve learned into our lesson plans. My hope is that this dedicated reflection sharing will provide participants the opportunity to create activities, revamp curriculum pedagogy, and design assignments while they are in the moment and ideas are fresh in their minds.

If you’re interested in participating in WAC next year (Fall 2014), please express your interest to me. Keep your eyes open for an information sheet that will be email distributed in early Spring semester. There is a cap on enrollment, so get your name in early. Return to [Inside This Issue](#)

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

### Musings in the Garden of Ink

There's nothing worse  
than having a pen that won't write  
when an image rises through the inky  
silence of your befuddled mind.

You warm the instrument, carefully  
tucking it under your left armpit,  
but upon withdrawal, you knock over  
your freshly brewed cup of coffee.

Now a contorted brown stain slithers  
like a demented serpent across  
the once blank page, and you think,  
this might be coiled into metaphor.

But you soon feel the real image  
running dark blue down your left side –  
an alphabetically erratic tattoo of a poem  
you should have written yesterday.

You rush to the bathroom mirror  
to translate, but everything is smudged  
backward, so you incorporate a second  
looking glass, and become confused.

Now you hobble forward - or what you think  
is forward - returning to bed to rest, to sleep,  
perchance to dream, cradled in the sumptuous,  
sweaty arms of your inconsistent Muse.

**--Stephen R. Roberts**

"Musings in the Garden of Ink" was published in the Spring 2013 issue of the *Front Range Review*. The author's most recent book is *Almost Music From Between Places* (Chatterhouse Press).

**Note from Blair Oliver, Founding Editor of the *Front Range Review***—Founded in 2001, *Front Range Review* is the annual literary magazine of Front Range Community College—Larimer Campus. The *Review* publishes fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction from established and emerging writers. In our pages, work by *Best American* and Guggenheim Award winning authors has appeared alongside pieces from writers earning their first publication credit. Our reading period is August 15<sup>th</sup>-December 1<sup>st</sup> each year. All correspondence should be addressed to Blair Oliver, Founding Editor and Faculty Advisor. Please see [www.frontrange.edu/frontrangereview](http://www.frontrange.edu/frontrangereview) for more details.

Please see last semester's issue of *Writers Elevated* (accessible via the link near the top of page three) for reminders of some additional contact information for writing initiatives at our Larimer Campus.

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## Exchanging Views: A Summary of Consultant Discussions

What questions have some of our consultants been asking re: the Developmental Education redesign at our campus?

Here's a summary of some of the basic Q&A that has been taking place in regard to overall features and stages of the "Developmental Education (Dev Ed) Redesign" evolving at FRCC. This semester a number of our Writing Center consultants have been participating in meetings and training opportunities to learn more about the changes taking place with developmental reading and writing courses:

Q: Where is a copy of the recommendations of the Developmental Education Task Force adopted early this year by the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE)?

A: A detailed five-page overview of the statewide Task Force recommendations for the "Developmental Education Redesign" can be found at the Colorado Community College System Web site by visiting <http://www.cccs.edu/developmental-education/index.html>.

Q: What does CCR refer to, and do the statewide Dev Ed recommendations have to be implemented in identical ways across our FRCC campuses?

A: There is room for some variation as to what gets implemented and how. While our campuses have some plans in common, there are also some differences in progress.

"CCR" refers to College Composition and Reading. As quoted from the link mentioned above, "Colleges will offer the following accelerated model which provides students with the opportunity to enter a 100 level class no later than their second term in enrollment." Specifically related to the redesign of developmental classes for "English and Reading" at our Larimer Campus, this involves the following new course options to replace 030, 060, and 090: (Cont. next column....)

CCR (CCR 092) and Studio D (CCR 093) courses will start being offered in the spring, while some sections of Studio 121 (CCR 094) have already been piloted. Matt Stilwell and Erica Delgadillo have been developing and leading Studio 121 training sessions this fall, Amy Holly has been doing this for CCR 092, and Mark Hussey will be helping to pilot CCR 093. (Brief descriptions of these CCR course options and additional "Soft Landing" and "Placement and Transition" options can be found at the CCCS.edu link. )

Q: What aspects of the redesign are currently being deliberated across our campuses and do any of them involve Writing Center or consulting services? What committees are involved?

A: As confirmed by Lisa Donaldson, Larimer Campus Instructional Dean, as part of a "Dev Ed Update" in a Nov. Larimer Campus Memo—Subgroups for CCR, MAT, and SS (Student Services) have been meeting and submitting proposals to the Developmental Education Steering Committee (DESC). The proposals involve strategies for student advising, orientation, academic planning, and more as specific to "planning, initiating, and sustaining success" with the redesign. The "Student Support" section of the overview at the CCCS.edu link explains more about the "affective dimensions," and John Young's article on the next page also summarizes some key points and questions addressed in a Dev Ed seminar "funded through FRCC's TAA grant" that was also mentioned in the Nov. memo.

Before recommendations are finalized in December, our FRCC Writing Center directors are also meeting with the CCR subgroup to discuss questions and ideas related to how Writing Center and consultant services might best be communicated, utilized, and in some ways possibly re-envisioned as part of the strategic goals being pursued.

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

### Highlights from Oct. 17 "Window into an Accelerated Classroom" Seminar—From Guest Author and Writing Center Consultant John Young (Rhetoric, Languages, and Philosophy; Larimer Campus)

"Teaching accelerated courses has changed my outlook on student capacity. I learned to trust students' ability to handle tough academic challenges." These words from a college educator and participant in the California Acceleration Project (CAP) served as a theme for "Window into an Accelerated Classroom," presented by Katie Hern, Ph.D., and attended by Larimer FRCC English faculty and instructors at the Community College of Denver.

As FRCC and the Colorado Community College System transforms developmental courses, instructors who have taught developmental reading and writing separately are training to combine them, and to accelerate students from English 060 or Reading 060 into English 121 in one semester. At FRCC, the new vehicle for that is CCR 092, a developmental reading-writing course starting spring semester. Hern demonstrated how her classes in writing and critical reading at Chabot College prepare developmental students, including the lowest performers on the Accuplacer (scoring 50 and below) for credit-level college classes in one semester. She showed passing rates comparing her accelerated classes to those of a traditional course and showed how more students succeeded in the former "without adding a semester to their completion path."

Her class has three objectives: (1) reading critically, (2) writing critically, and (3) thinking critically—with the following key components for achieving each:

- Pre-reading activities and discussions "to activate students' background knowledge" relative to what is to be read
- Post-reading activities in which students verbalize what they have gained from their reading and model for those slow to take on the assignment
- Open-book quizzes as students move from "informal and largely oral discussion to explaining key ideas and information" from the reading

This progression leads to the major-grade writing assignment to which all the activities are directed. Hern sees this approach as her students "collaboratively making meaning, rather than receiving meaning." She advises instructors, "Don't trust Accuplacer" in gauging students' abilities. And don't assume that more time, an additional semester, will make the difference. Those in her classes "are at risk for not succeeding," she acknowledges, "but a longer pathway is not paying off for them."

Her approach is to assign demanding reading that many students might find intimidating. While acknowledging the challenge, for Hern the secret is employing conversation as a component of comprehension. She discourages the use of novels or literature for this purpose, in favor of nonfiction reading that fits into themes for her classes. She says the objective is an "across the disciplines" quest that will pay off in whatever credit-level courses lie ahead for her students. In reading, "go for volume," she urged. "Give them a lot of reading, because they become better readers." However, along with their reading, "they need the space to make sense of what they'd read in the classroom, with support from their peers and the teacher."

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## Reflecting Outward: Highlights of Surveys, Research, and Feedback

### Reviewing Peer Review—From Guest Authors Aaron Leff (Writing Center Director/English Faculty, Westminster) and Michelle Medeiros (English Faculty, Westminster)

Composition instructors love peer review days for a variety of reasons. The idealist in all of us imagines students reading work critically, taking their own ideas seriously, and, more importantly, engaging in an intellectual exchange about their arguments. The exhausted instructor, on the other hand, sees peer review days as a class time when s/he can step away from the front of the classroom, let students "own" their learning, and regroup before grading stacks of papers. In reality, we never occupy either of those extremes; we are not eagerly conquering our Sudoku as students quickly read papers, nor are we engaged in consistent and thoughtful dialogue with them as they happily and critically assess their work. Thus, peer review rarely yields the papers we want to read. Given these extremes, why do we still use and value peer review? (Cont. next page....)

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## Reviewing Peer Review (continued)

With our two Student Learning Committee funded projects we asked the following question: how can we improve the peer review process? We approached this question from two different perspectives. Aaron's grant supported embedding Writing Center consultants into a non-composition course with a significant writing component to learn how peer review could be adapted for courses across the disciplines. Using LIT 115 course as a pilot, he embedded five instructors to work as writing consultants on peer review days. Michelle took a more direct approach. She surveyed 18 composition faculty members at the Westminster campus on their perceptions of the effectiveness of peer review. Additionally, she surveyed 369 students in composition courses prior to their first peer review and provided a followed up with 242 students after the first peer review in their respective courses. We were pleased to find that both students and teachers alike think peer review is a valuable activity. However, the results of our projects uncovered some ideas that might help students approach each other's papers with confidence, and provide better avenues for teachers to engage in the activity while still giving students a sense of agency and ownership of their essays. Given the instructor and student feedback we culled during our projects, here are ways we are experimenting with peer review in our classrooms:

- Introducing students to the habit of critically examining each other's work at multiple stages of the writing project....We have students bring in sections of the paper and we provide a guide sheet prompting the students to look at specific aspects of those sections (e.g., use of evidence, clear topic sentences, etc.).
- Employing conference style peer reviews....We take a group of 4 – 6 students and have them meet in our offices. We allow the students to run the peer review, but we listen and confirm the meaningful feedback students give each other.
- Use of D2L discussion boards as an online proxy for peer review during the process of writing the essay....We provide specific instructions as to how we want our students to respond to each other's posts. For example, we have them comment on the use of evidence, the boldness of the thesis statement, or the use of transitions between paragraphs.
- Creating low-stakes oral and written peer review activities throughout the semester

Ultimately, we learned that peer review is a crucial and recursive part of the writing process, and we need to conduct it so that students understand and practice it as much more than a last-chance grasp at a better grade.

### JJ Aragon On Being A Writing Tutor: "Where All the Doors Are Visible"

**Editor's Note: Our Larimer Campus Writing Center consultants are current or former instructors, but recent FRCC graduate JJ Aragon works part-time as a tutor with the Learning Opportunity Center. An FRCC ENG 122 class with Amy Holly helped JJ to realize how far her passion for writing could extend, and she's now pursuing an English major with a focus on Secondary Education at UNC. JJ was also a member of the Writers on the Storm student group at FRCC.**

On her way out of the Learning Opportunity Center, the first student I tutored turned to me and said, "Thank you for everything, JJ. I don't dread essays anymore!" I felt elated. Since beginning my job as a writing tutor at Front Range in June, I have worked consistently with three students, and have been asked general writing questions by several others. I take a very hands-on approach to tutoring. Before a student meets with me, I ask that they bring their assignment on a flash drive, so that I can view it on my Braille Sense computer. Doing this allows me to completely interact with each student. I usually start by asking what the student wants me to keep an eye out for, whether it be grammar, flow, or sentence structure. I make a suggestion, explain the reasoning behind it, and let the student decide if and how something will be changed. Typically, I find that after about two or three paragraphs the student is pointing out improvements on their own and ready to make independent revisions. I always see improvement from one session to the next, which I believe is the most thrilling reward of my job.

One area of struggle I see consistently involves a lack of understanding about how to form a thesis. I think my most successful strategy for teaching this is to relate it to something visual. For example, I might liken a paper to a hotel building. The outside of the building is the thesis, where all the doors (points) are visible. To write a point, I suggest to my students to imagine the door of a room as the topic sentence, and the inside of the room as the supporting evidence and such. This usually causes a light bulb moment, which is fun to watch.

The most practical benefit of being a student tutor comes in two synchronous parts. On the one hand, I get more opportunity to practice what I have learned in English by teaching it to someone else. The flip side is that I can bring some of my experiences with how students learn to my English class as we discuss issues in education. The bottom line is that I enjoy English very much, and I am delighted to have the opportunity to transmit this passion to fellow students. I'm glad that students are comfortable with learning from someone who is in their shoes at the same time.

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