

The Newsletter of the



Spring 2015

April

Daniel Heffner, Editor

Greetings, NTWCA members!
Just as many of us are planning what to plant in our spring gardens, as the semester winds to a close many of us will also be planning what new ideas to implement in our writing centers. For this conference, we are fortunate to have several presenters who will be giving us “seeds” of new ideas that we might plant, nurture, and grow.

Our spring conference is special because it highlights the ideas of the people best situated to be writing center innovators, our tutors. This year the proposals for the Mary Nell Kivviko Award ranged from the benefits of having student receptionists to the quest to maximize space in writing centers to the writing center as an arm to the liberal arts. This spring we are adding a new element to the conference with all Mary Nell Kivviko contestants being invited to present a poster session. I hope you all find in these sessions lively conversation and ideas that you might sow in your own writing centers. As a community, we know we reap the best ideas together, collaborating and commiserating.



On a final note, I offer my congratulations to the winner of this year’s Mary Nell Kivviko Award: Ms. Elizabeth Brownlow, the lead tutor of the Write Site at Texas Woman’s University. In her keynote, Elizabeth will discuss reading academic texts as a meaning-making activity when tutoring ELL students. She proposes a form of reading program that would be practical and manageable at the writing center level. I have such admiration for ELL students venturing their educations where the sights, sounds, and smells are foreign. Certainly we owe these students every opportunity to bloom!

Jennifer Phillips-Denny
NTWCA President

North Texas Writing Centers Association

Spring 2015 Conference

April 17, 2015

Hosted by

The University of Texas at Dallas

McDermott Library Rm 4.4

800 W. Campbell Road

Richardson, Texas 75080

Program Schedule

11:00-11:30	Arrival and Registration
11:30-11:45	Opening Remarks from UT Dallas
11:45-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:00	Business Meeting
1:00-1:45	MNK Award Presentation
1:45-2:00	Break
2:00-2:15	Outstanding Tutor Award
2:15-3:15	<i>Poster Presentations</i>
3:15	Closing Remarks and Writing Center Tour

Campus Map

<http://www.utdallas.edu/maps/>

Parking

Please drop by the visitor center to pick up a visitor's parking pass. You will be able to park in any green lot, and they will be able to direct you to the best places to park.

Mary Nell Kivikko Excellence in Scholarship Award

Elizabeth Brownlow



I earned a BA in English from Tarleton State University, and am currently pursuing an MA in English at Texas Woman's University. I am the Lead Tutor at the TWU Write Site, where I am currently creating an online consultant training course in order to standardize new consultant training, and have recently implemented a Help Chat feature through TWU Gmail. I serve the TWU community as the Membership Chair for the Graduate Student Council, the First Year Composition Workshop Chair for the English & Rhetoric Graduate Organization, and as the Graduate Student Advisor to the Library Advisory Council. I am projected to graduate with an MA in August, and my current research interests currently center around depictions of and the narratives regarding mental abnormality in psychological reality television.

Reading to Write: Tutoring Academic English through Reading

Abstract:

A number of investigations into EFL writing and writers suggests that, although most EFL students engage in several years of classroom instruction, and sometimes even have American classroom experience beforehand, the level of academic English writing involved when they enter into research universities proves to be outside of their scope of proficiency.

This is similar to the issue that Sugie Goen and Helen Gillotte-Tropp posed in 2003 regarding basic writing at the university level. Goen and Gillotte-Tropp's proposed solution, the integration of reading programs into writing instruction, is one that is widely practiced in classrooms today. This paper will argue that their solution of incorporating reading programs into composition learning can be transferred to the Writing Center in EFL writing tutoring.

In 2011, Doreen Ewert suggested that the most effective approach to improving EFL fluency is to focus on meaning-making activities when reading academic English texts, and this paper will take this idea a step further by suggesting that these meaning-making activities do not have to be limited to the classroom, but can be conducted within writing centers in the form of EFL academic English reading programs that encourage meaning-making and, subsequently, transference into academic English writing. Utilizing reading practices suggested by several basic and EFL writing scholars, this paper will attempt to propose a form of reading program that would be practical and manageable at the writing center level in order to better serve the EFL university population.

News from the Region

The Dallas Baptist University Writing Center is pleased to announce two promotions: Caitlin Perry has stepped up to the job of Student Coordinator, which is tantamount to being an assistant director. Among other things, her new duties include developing/updating training materials, assisting with institutional effectiveness incentives, and representing the Writing Center at DBU's Graduate Orientation.

Haley Briggs moved into the job of Senior Writing Consultant, which was recently vacated by Caitlin. Haley is now responsible for a variety of tasks beyond assisting students with their papers, including overseeing break scheduling, assisting in new consultant training, and arranging class visits.

We'd also like for you to join us in congratulating Caitlin on her acceptance and presentation at the annual Sigma Tau Delta Conference, recently held in Albuquerque, NM. Caitlin shared a selection of her creative writing, poems that focus on some of the difficulties experienced in life. Caitlin is also a two-time winner in DBU's DOXA Conference. In 2013, she took first place in Poetry with her piece titled "The Shape of Returning." The following year, she claimed first place in the Poetry category for her collection of five original poems and third place in the Nonfiction category for her memoir titled "Jonesville."

In February, one of our writing consultants, Benjamin Jones, suggested that the UWC create a blog. After discussing the benefits of having a blog at our monthly staff meeting, the UWC decided to go forth with the suggestion. Ben designed and created our page, posting our first blog on February 9th. Since then, our writing consultants have started to take turns writing and posting blogs on a weekly basis. Each of the blogs focuses on topics related to the writing center or the writing process in general. Our page has had over 130 views and continues to reach students every day. You can locate our page here: <https://dbuuwc.wordpress.com/>.

Finally, DBU's Writing Center is moving from online consultations that employ BlackBoard's WIMBA to the newer, friendlier program called Blackboard Collaborate. Although the new program presents a dazzling array of challenges, we expect to have that in place by the time of this Conference.

The UT Dallas Writing Center would like to welcome the newest addition to its team: Dawn Shedd. Dawn joins us from UT San Antonio to take on the position of Learning Specialist II to work full time with students and to help improve the Writing Center's services.

We have also introduced two new workshops for first-year composition students and continue to expand the variety of programs that we offer.

UT Arlington

National Day on Writing

Monday, October 20th was the National Day on Writing, and the UTA Writing Center, UTA Library, and Department of English co-hosted a day-long event to celebrate writing! Going along with the national theme of "Write My Community," we asked UTA students to create an eight-word story in response to the prompt "I am UTA because..." This event was held at the library mall, where students, faculty, and other community members could visit the tent and write their story. Additionally, a week long online campaign was held that allowed UTA community members to post their eight-word story on Facebook at UT Arlington Write On or Twitter. Many members of the UTA community participated in our event and helped us to celebrate both writing and our university! Some of our favorite responses were:

- "I am UTA because I appreciate all of the squirrels on campus!"
- "I am UTA because I love the incredible diversity on campus!"
- "I am UTA because I will finally write a novel this November!"
- "I am UTA because Winter is Coming!"

Thank you to all the people who worked to make this event happen and to those who participated!

Featured Tutor

Evelyn Singleton has worked at the Writing Center for more than two years and has become a role model for her coworkers. She applied for the consultant position after a suggestion from her English 1302 instructor, and although she was initially concerned about her tutoring abilities, she has become our most experienced consultant.

As a tutor, Evelyn faces certain challenges during her shifts, including sessions that don't always go according to plan. She consistently works to overcome these challenges and has noticed an improvement in her tutoring capabilities. Ultimately, she uses each session to make sure that her clients' concerns are addressed.

Not only does Evelyn help students better understand the writing process, but she has even noticed an improvement in her own writing as well by following her own advice. She says, "If I notice that one of my paragraphs doesn't support my argument, I'll think 'this is definitely something that I would have a client revise, so I should do it too.'" Evelyn also says that working with other great writers and absorbing their advice has helped her writing skills. She is a "talent-vampire," as she puts it.

Evelyn says that some of her favorite moments at the Writing Center include posting a "Quote of the Week" under the alias of "Matt Underwood."



If you would like to have your writing center featured here, send updates at any time to the newsletter editor, Daniel Heffner, at christopher.heffner@utdallas.edu.

Research in the Region

How Long is a Piece of String? (The Optimal Length of Writing Consultations)

One of the many questions asked when writing centers are established or evaluated is “How long should appointments be?” If too long, the consultant fears overly influencing a piece of writing or being drawn into co-authoring the paper. Moreover, long appointments may not appear financially feasible. However, if appointments are too brief, the student may feel short-changed and disappointed with the results. Limited learning time can frustrate both student and consultant. Such frustration on the part of the student can discourage future use of the center. Such frustration on the part of the consultant, coupled with the accompanying increase in the number of appointments scheduled per day, can, and most likely will, lead to consultant burn-out and, possibly, a failed center. So, what is the answer?

When the writing center was established at Preston Ridge, one of the campuses of the Collin Community College System, the problem of length of conferences was secondary to building a program. The college was small and the center not well known; consequently, consultants had the luxury of working with students for as long as they both needed. Not being busy and having all the time needed to work with students turned out to be a positive. A part of the record keeping for the center included keeping tabs on the typical length of sessions, so, naturally, this information served as the base line for setting up a formal system as it became necessary. Without time limitations at first, appointments lasted about an hour, which eventually became the canon for the center and continues to be so to date. Capping the appointments at an hour became a functional necessity although it may have skewed the overall length of appointments downward. However, as the center grew, it, understandably, became impossible to allow all students the luxury of staying as long as they liked.

A follow-up study of the length of appointments, covering fifteen years and approximately 30,000 appointments (with forty to fifty different consultants), shows consistent results. The average face-to-face tutoring time throughout the fifteen years hovers around fifty minutes. The center sets up all appointments for a full hour, and very frequently consultants and students use the entire time. Having a few minutes flexibility adds immeasurably to the overall satisfaction of both students and consultants. Generally, consultants and students finish most papers in an hour. While completely finishing papers is not mandatory, students and consultants alike prefer to do so. With hour-long appointments, the revision process is not rushed, allowing for interaction, time for reflection, and significant learning. Additionally, since writing is such a personal activity, the affective domain is arguably as important as the cognitive in writing conferences. In hour-long appointments, students and consultants have the opportunity to establish rapport and engage in meaningful dialogue and closure. In the few instances the entire hour is not completely taken up by the conference, consultants have time to recharge for the next appointment, check school e-mails, look up handouts for their students, write

reports to instructors, and handle the myriad other demands of a consultant. Shorter appointments can lead to rat-on-the treadmill or factory production-line mentalities, consultant burnout, and disgruntled students. Students may feel rushed and frustrated or treated merely as numbers, leading them to question whether or not their appointments were worth their time. Since the writing center philosophy is to teach students to become better writers and not merely to churn out papers, adequate time is essential. No one ever said learning is an efficient process, but it is an essential one, requiring whatever amount of time it takes.

Betty Mayeur
Preston Ridge Writing Center

CONSTITUTION OF THE NORTH TEXAS WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION
(REVISED SPRING 2007)

- I. The North Texas Writing Centers Association serves writing centers of the region as a clearinghouse for exchanging information, as a forum for discussing important writing center issues, and as a means of promoting the professional status of writing center personnel.
- II. Membership in the NTWCA includes directors and staff of writing centers and persons interested in writing centers. Membership can be multiple-campus institutions (\$25 per campus), single-campus institutions (\$50), or individual (\$10). Institutional memberships include writing center staff and tutors at the institution.
- III. NTWCA assesses dues annually at the fall meeting. Memberships run from September through August. Monies collected are used for communication, publication, and conference expenses.
- IV. The right to vote and to hold office extends to all individual and institutional members.
- V. The following elected officers serve a two-year term and may be elected for multiple, two-year terms:
 - a. President: The president chairs all meetings, facilitates the operations of the association, and serves as co-chair of the Membership Committee.
 - b. Vice-President: The vice-president functions as program chair and assumes the duties of the president in the president's absence.
 - c. Newsletter Editor: The newsletter editor gathers information, edits articles, publishes the newsletter, and handles mailings.
 - d. Secretary: The secretary takes minutes at meetings and reports at executive board meetings and conferences.
 - e. Treasurer: The treasurer collects dues, records memberships, reports finances and memberships at meetings, and serves as co-chair of the Membership Committee.
 - f. Immediate Past President: The immediate past president serves as an advisor and assists other officers in discharging their duties.
- VI. The president appoints the following officers for two-year terms:
 - a. Web Spinner: The web spinner maintains the NTWCA website page.
 - b. Archivist: The archivist serves as custodian of the organization's records.
- VII. The Membership Committee is co-chaired by the president and treasurer and consists of three volunteers from the organization membership. The membership committee promotes involvement by serving as the NTWCA's outreach liaisons, contacting potential members at colleges, universities, and secondary schools in the area, and conducting an annual membership drive.
- VIII. The Executive Board, consisting of the six elected officers and two appointees, meets at least twice per calendar year to plan meetings and conferences. When officers and

appointees are selected at the spring meeting, they immediately assume their duties and plan the schedule of events for the following year.

- IX. If an officer resigns, the Executive Board will appoint an interim officer to serve out the officer's term. If the resigning officer's term has more than one year remaining, the association will elect a new officer at the next regular meeting to serve out the remainder of the term.
- X. The NTWCA sponsors two conferences per calendar year.
- XI. This constitution may be amended or replaced by a majority vote of the executive board and membership at any business meeting.