

The Newsletter of the



Fall 2006/Issue 2

August 20, 2006

Alice Newsome, Editor

A Message From the President

This year promises to be an exciting one for the North Texas Writing Centers Association. We begin with both an educational and rewarding fall conference, which will be held on September 22 at the Northwest Campus of Tarrant County College. Mike Matthews and Vera Ornelas have graciously offered to host the event. Esteemed scholar Dr. Richard Enos, Professor and Holder of the Lillian Radford Chair of Rhetoric & Composition at Texas Christian University, has accepted our invitation to serve as keynote speaker. Dr. Enos' oration will be followed by a panel presentation on The HOPE Literacy Project, a community outreach program that teaches basic literacy skills to incarcerated men, women, and juveniles. As one of this year's winners of the Texas Governor's Awards for Volunteerism, the program illustrates how we can take our skills as writing consultants outside of the writing center and into the community. I do hope all members can attend.

In addition to our fall conference, we have many other exciting events planned for the upcoming year. To begin, the NTWCA is pleased to announce the first annual Outstanding Tutor Awards. The awards are designed to recognize professional staff and peer tutors who not only demonstrate excellent tutoring skills but also make significant contributions to their writing center. Two awards will be granted, including one award for professional staff and one award for peer tutors. We also will continue to sponsor the Mary Nell Kivikko Excellence in Scholarship Award. Winners of both awards will be recognized at the NTWCA spring conference.

As is stated in our organization's constitution, one of the goals of the NTWCA is to serve "the writing centers in the region as a clearinghouse for exchanging information." In the past, we have relied on our annual conferences, business meetings, and newsletter to do so. Now, however, we have yet another means of discussing important writing center issues. The North Texas Writing Centers Association listserv was created this summer by Dr. Shannon Carter and will be sponsored by Texas A&M-Commerce. I strongly encourage all members to utilize this new avenue for communication.

On behalf of the organization, I would like to extend a special thank you to Mr. Nick Lilly, Assistant Professor and Director of Technical Writing at Tarleton State University, for designing a new logo for the NTWCA. Mr. Lilly has also offered to use his creative talents to construct our forthcoming brochure. Both the logo and brochure are instrumental in giving a professional visual representation of our organization.

And, lastly, the NTWCA extends its deepest condolences to the writing center staff at both the Collin County College Spring Creek and Preston Ridge campuses on the recent passing of Jann Bresnahan. Jann, a long-time member of the NTWCA, respected colleague, and friend, will be missed.

Cheryl Carithers
President
North Texas Writing Centers Association

North Texas Writing Centers Association

Fall 2006 Conference

Extending the Conversation

Hosted by
Tarrant County College Northwest
Fort Worth, Texas

The meeting is scheduled in the Academic Classroom Building, WACB 1123, the scenic Optimum Room, overlooking Marine Creek Lake.

Program Schedule

11:30-12:00	Arrival and Registration
12:00-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:15	Opening Remarks and Business Meeting Cheryl Carithers, Texas Christian University
1:15-2:15	"Writing as a Skill for Success in College: Observations on the New SAT Examination and Curriculum" Keynote Speaker, Dr. Richard Enos, Texas Christian University
2:15-2:25	Break
2:25-3:25	HOPE Literacy Project <i>Introduction:</i> Dr. Shannon Carter <i>From the Perspective of the Founder and Director:</i> Lucy Smith <i>From the Perspective of a Tutor:</i> Jake Pichnarcik
3:25	Writing Center Tour, Tarrant County College Northwest

Campus Map

<http://www.tccd.edu/campus/about.asp?menu=2>

Parking Information

NTWCA visitors can park in student parking spaces in the North B Lot.
Please see campus map for more details.
Place attached permit in the windshield of your vehicle to avoid parking fees.

Lunch

Lunch will be provided by Tarrant County College at no cost to attendees.
RSVP by September 18 to Mike Matthews (mike.matthews@tccd.edu).

About Our Presenters

Dr. Richard Enos, Texas Christian University

Richard Leo Enos (Ph.D., Indiana University, 1973) is Professor and Holder of The Lillian B. Radford Chair of Rhetoric and Composition at Texas Christian University (1995 to the present). He is a former Professor of Rhetoric in the English Department (1979-1995) and the Past Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (1985-1988) in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Carnegie Mellon University. His research emphasis is in the history of rhetoric with a specialization in classical rhetoric. Much of his work deals with understanding the relationship between thought and expression in Antiquity. Professor Enos has studied in Italy and Greece and has done research through the American School of Classical Studies at Athens under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Science and Culture. He has also received support for the study of ancient rhetoric from the National Endowment for the Humanities and is the recipient of the Karl R. Wallace Award for research in classical rhetoric and the Richard E. Young Award for the best article in *Rhetoric Review* in 1992-93. He has several publications dealing with ancient rhetoric; his most recent major efforts include *Greek Rhetoric Before*



Aristotle (Waveland Press, 1993) and *Roman Rhetoric: Revolution and the Greek Influence* (Waveland Press, 1995). In 1996 Professor Enos was selected to present the Giles Wilkeson Gray Lecture at Louisiana State University and in 1998 he delivered the Kenneth Holder

Memorial Lecture at Nebraska Wesleyan University. He serves on several editorial boards and is the Past Chair of the Board of Directors and Past President of The Rhetoric Society of America. He is the founding Editor of *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* (1997-2002), an annual publication of The American Society for the History of Rhetoric.

Professor Enos has served on the Honors and Awards Committee for the Modern Language Association (1997-2000). He recently completed his service as the Chair of the Department of English at Texas Christian University (2002-2003). He has been selected by The College Board to help design and test both the curriculum guidelines (middle school through high school) and the reading/writing components for the 2005 SAT examination. On May 28, 2006, Richard Leo Enos was presented with the George E. Yoos Distinguished Service Award by the Rhetoric Society of American and inducted as an RSA Fellow.

Texas HOPE Literacy Project

In 1997, Lucy Smith founded Texas HOPE Literacy, a unique faith-based non-profit organization dedicated to empowering at-risk children, youth, and adults to become productive citizens in today's world. For over nine years, the HOPE non-profit service oriented corporation has significantly contributed to the criminal justice system by training inmates to be peer educators. HOPE targets functional illiteracy in prison and remediation of learning disabilities.

Mrs. Smith holds a Masters in Education from SMU with a concentration in Learning Therapy, is a Certified Academic Language Therapist, a Qualified Instructor of Therapists, and Advisor for the Learning Therapy Department at SMU. She is a national conference speaker and expert on issues relating to learning disabilities and criminal justice. In her private practice, she teaches people of all ages who are struggling with dyslexia, oral language disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and written expression disorder.

In 2000, she received the Governor's award for Religious Volunteer of the Year. In 2001, she was the recipient of the Dallas Reads award for Champion Educator in

Adult Literacy. In May 2005, her design and development of the



HOPE inmate *city* concept received the Governor's award for the *Most Innovative Program*. Also in 2005, HOPE was selected by the National Crime Prevention Council

for inclusion in *Faith Community and Criminal Justice Collaboration: A Collection of Effective Programs*, in recognition of its crime prevention efforts and important work to build safer and more caring communities.

www.ncpc.org. In 2006, HOPE was one of fourteen recipients in the state to receive a Texas Governor's Community Capacity Builder Award.

Please visit Texas HOPE



Literacy online for more information (<http://www.hopelit.com>).

NTWCA Officers

President: Cheryl Carithers, Texas Christian University

Vice-President: Shannon Carter, Texas A&M University Commerce

Secretary: Peggy Vera, Collin County Community College

Treasurer: Ben Sword, Tarleton State University

Newsletter Editor: Alice Newsome, Tarleton State University

Web-Spinner: Shannon Carter, Texas A&M University Commerce

Archivist: Cynthia Shearer, Texas Christian University

Past President: Steve Sherwood, Texas Christian University

Cheryl Carithers earned a B.A. in English and history from Tarleton State University in 1996. Specializing in rhetoric and composition, she received her M.A. in English from Tarleton in 1999. After obtaining her M.A., Ms. Carithers served as the Assistant Director of the University Center for Writing at Dallas Baptist University. She has also taught composition at Howard Payne University and composition and literature at Angelo State University. In addition to teaching, Ms. Carithers has worked as a professional editor. Her research interests include the history of composition, feminist studies in composition and literature as well as writing center and developmental writing center theory. She is currently a Writing Consultant in the William L. Adams Center for Writing and an instructor in the TCU English Department.

Dr. Shannon Carter is Assistant Professor of English at Texas A&M University-Commerce, where she directs the Writing Center and the Basic Writing Program and teaches basic writing and graduate courses in composition theory. Her scholarly interests include prison literacy and potential applications of New Literacy Studies and activity theory to writing center work, tutor training, and the basic writing classroom. A forthcoming issue of *College Composition and Communication* will include **Carter's "The Writing Center Paradox: Talk About Legitimacy and the Problem of Institutional Change."** She has also recently completed a book-length study entitled *The Way Literacy Lives: Rhetorical Dexterity and the "Basic" Writer* (currently under review), an article-length version of which will appear in a forthcoming issue of *The Journal of Basic Writing*.

Peggy D. Vera is the Director of the Online Writing Lab at Collin County Community College, and is also an Associate Professor of English at the college. She has taught composition and rhetoric courses, along with technical writing. She holds both a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in English from the University of Texas at El Paso. In addition to teaching and directing the online lab, she also presents writing workshops to students.

Ben Sword Ben Sword received a B.A. in English from Howard Payne University and an M.A. in English from Tarleton State University. His thesis **"Playing the Game: The Discourse of ESPN"** served as a vehicle for presentations at CTE and at the NTWCA Spring 2005 Conference. His research interests include discourse acquisition as it pertains to written discourse

and the role of genre and discourse communities in the development and evolution of discourse. He is currently an instructor at Tarleton where he teaches composition courses and literature. In addition, he serves as a mentor for graduate students in the English program and writing center tutors.

Alice Newsome has a B.S. in Counseling and English from Texas A&M University-Commerce and holds an M.Ed. from Tarleton State University, with specialized courses taken post-Master's in rhetoric, composition, and literature. She is an instructor at Tarleton where she directs the Writing Center and the Basic Writing Program, and she teaches basic writing, composition courses, and children's literature. In recent years, she has presented at NTWCA, CCTE, and SCWCA conferences. Her research interests include the examination of the psychology of the basic writer and the application of writing center theory to the composition classroom (individualized instruction in the classroom). For a number of years, she has helped select and train graduate assistants who work with the basic writers and in the writing center.

Cynthia Shearer holds an M.A. in English from the University of Mississippi and is the author of two works of fiction, *The Wonder Book of the Air* (Pantheon /Vintage 1996) and *The Celestial Jukebox* (Shoemaker &Hoard/Avalon, 2005). Her work has appeared in such publications as *Tri-Quarterly*, *The Missouri Review*, *The Quarterly*, *The Oxford American*, *The Hungry Mind Review* (now *Ruminator*), and *Speakeasy*. Awards for her short fiction include Honorable Mention in Best American Short Stories, and inclusion in various anthologies such as *Beyond O'Connor* (University of Georgia Press, 2003) and *The Best of the Oxford American*. Her first novel won the 1996 prize for fiction from the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters. She was the recipient of a fiction fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 2000. In October of 2005, her *Speakeasy* essay, based on her six years of experience as the curator of the William Faulkner home Rowan Oak, will appear in the thirtieth anniversary issue of the *Pushcart Prize Anthology*.

Dr. Steve Sherwood, director of the William L. Adams Center for Writing at TCU, has been a writing specialist with the Center and an instructor for the TCU English Department since 1988, teaching a variety of creative writing and composition courses. Before assuming the directorship in July 2002, he served the Center as interim director, associate director, and coordinator of peer tutor training. Sherwood received a bachelor degree in journalism from the University of Colorado in 1977, a master of fine arts degree in creative writing from the University of Montana in 1987, and in 2004, a doctorate in rhetoric and composition from TCU. He has presented papers at CCCCs, NCTE, the International Writing Centers Association Conference, the National Conference for Peer Tutors in Writing, and a number of other national and regional conferences. His publications include essays in *Writing Center Journal*, *Dialogue*, *Journal of Teaching Writing*, *Rendezvous*, *English in Texas*, *Weber Studies*, *Writing Lab Newsletter*, *Wiring the Writing Center*, *Writing Center Perspectives*, *Northern Lights*, *Outside*, and other journals. Sherwood's fiction has appeared in *Red Rock Review*, *Chiron Review*, *New Texas*, *RiverSedge*, *descant*, and *Amarillo Bay*. With Christina Murphy he edited the *St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors* (1995) and with Murphy and Joe Law he compiled *Writing Centers: An Annotated Bibliography* (Greenwood Press, 1996). The second edition of the *St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors* appeared in 2003, and the third edition will appear in 2007. In 1997, with Murphy and Law, he received the National Writing Centers Association Award for the Outstanding Book published in 1996 on writing center theory and practice. Sherwood's mystery novel, titled *Hardwater*, won the 2003 George Garrett Fiction Prize and has recently been published by the Texas Review Press. Recently, Sherwood was elected to a three-year term as an at large representative to the International Writing Center Association Executive Board.

NTWCA Awards

Announcing the North Texas Writing Centers Association Outstanding Tutor Awards

The NTWCA is pleased to announce the first annual **Outstanding Tutor Awards**. The NTWCA Outstanding Tutor Awards are designed to recognize professional staff (full or part-time consultants) as well as peer tutors (graduate or undergraduate) who not only demonstrate excellent tutoring skills but also make significant contributions to their writing center. Two awards will be granted, including one award for professional staff and one award for peer tutors. Winners will be recognized and the awards presented at the NTWCA spring conference.

Any nominated professional consultant and graduate or undergraduate peer tutor at a writing center in the NTWCA region is eligible to receive an award. Nominees should be current members of the NTWCA.

Writing center directors may nominate a professional consultant and/or an undergraduate or graduate peer tutor who is an employee in his/her writing center. Nominations should include the name, institution, address, telephone, and email address of the consultant and/or tutor as well as a letter explaining why the individual should be considered for the award, including information regarding tutoring abilities and contributions to the center.

Please submit nominations to Cheryl Carithers (c.carithers@tcu.edu), President of the NTWCA, by February 28, 2007. Electronic submissions only, please. Winners of the two awards will be notified via email no later than March 7, 2007, and should plan to attend the NTWCA spring conference, at which time they will receive their award.

The 2007 Mary Nell Kivikko Excellence in Scholarship Award

The North Texas Writing Centers Association is now accepting entries for the 2007 Mary Nell Kivikko Excellence in Scholarship Award. The award is open to all writing center professional staff, graduate tutors, and undergraduate peer tutors in the South Central Writing Center Association region (Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana).

The paper based on the winning proposal will be presented at the NTWCA Spring Conference to be held April 2007 (location TBA). The winner will receive a \$150 honorarium upon presentation of the paper.

The 250-word abstract of the entry should include a title and the name and contact information of the presenter. Please submit entries to Dave Kuhne (d.kuhne@tcu.edu), Contest Coordinator, by **February 14, 2007**. Electronic submissions only please.

News from the Region

As many of you know, **Dr. Dave Kuhne (TCU)** is now president of the **Texas Association of Creative Writing Teachers**. Dr. Kuhne wants NTWCA members to know the TACWT Conference will take place in San Angelo, September 28-30. The program includes fiction and poetry readings as well as sessions on teaching creative writing. For details please go to

<http://www.austincc.edu/tacwt/index.html>

Linda Noblin, Instructional Learning Lab (Writing) Coordinator (DCCCD), was presented the Dallas County Community College District's 2006 Excellence in Teaching Award for Adjunct Faculty at the District's professional conference day in February.

In the 2006-2007 academic year, **Dr. Shannon Carter** will be directing the First-Year Composition Program at **Texas A&M-Commerce**, in addition to her duties as Director of the Writing Center and Basic Writing, at least until the department can--in the words of the current department head--"formulate long-range plans for both of those integral positions." During the next academic year, the majority of the day-to-day duties associated with the latter position (Director of the Writing Center) will be entrusted to two of their most able graduate students, **Elise Flanagan** and **Jeremy Hurley**.

Dr. Carter was asked to step into this position when the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Dick Fulkerson, stepped down after nearly two decades of service to the department, and the previous Director of First-Year Composition, Dr. Donna Dunbar-Odom, was asked to move into his vacated position, leaving her administrative duties to Dr. Carter.

As Dr. Carter explains, "we are in 'crisis mode'," but she is looking forward to these

new challenges and has spent much of her summer preparing for the busy year to come. She also goes up for tenure in this next academic year, so please wish her luck!

The NTWCA has a new cyber-home and a new look! By using our brand new logo, developed by **Nick Lilly** at **Tarleton State**, and importing all the excellent information from our previous website, we were able to give this important organization a fresh and--we hope--easy-to-navigate cyber-presence. As we continue to offer awards like the **Mary Nell Kivikko Excellence in Scholarship Award** and the **Outstanding Tutor Awards**, this accessibility has become crucial.

The new website offers information about recent and upcoming conferences, membership dues, and our brand new NTWCA listserv. Those interested in joining the listserv may do in one of three ways:

- (1) Go to <http://orgs.tamu-commerce.edu/ntwca/list.htm> and follow the instructions there,
- (2) try <http://mailman.tamu-commerce.edu/mailman/listinfo/ntwca> and fill out the form there, or
- (3) send an email Shannon_Carter@tamu-commerce.edu and she'll sign you up.

Dr. Steve Sherwood, director of TCU's **William L. Adams Center for Writing**, has been elected to a three-year term as At-Large Representative to the International Writing Centers Association Executive Board. Immediate past president of the NTWCA, Dr. Sherwood will official begin the term as at-large representative in November.

Tutors: The Heartbeat of the Writing Center

The best part of being a Writing Center consultant

...is helping students who have already put in a lot of effort into their research/drafts and having these students return to tell us they made A's and B's on those papers. **Anonymous**

...is when the students see exactly what you need them to do to improve the paper. After all the talking and showing and reading, it can be so rewarding. **Anonymous**

...getting to help students who are sincere in their desire to learn and improve. **Matthew Smith**

...is seeing the light of understanding in students eyes when they finally see why something should be written a certain way or why a particular sentence should be changed. But it is also working with a group of people who share common goals and who are willing to help each other out so terrifically. **Ellie Mack**

The worst part of being a consultant

... is working with students who are lazy and depend on tutors to help them plan and even understand the readings and assignments from their professors and working with students who have not even taken freshman composition and yet are now required to write research papers in other classes. We don't have time to teach basic research, plus planning, plus outlining, plus drafting... **Anonymous**

...is dealing with belligerent students who are required by an instructor to come to the writing center (and they really need to be there) but they don't want any help at all. **Anonymous**

...being threatened with bodily harm by an angry student when I informed him he could not use the tutorial computers to print out his late paper. **Matthew Smith**

My worst moment in the Writing Center was years ago, on the McKinney campus, when I first started consulting. That first student walked in and I thought, "Good Lord, what if I don't answer all his questions and completely turn him in the wrong direction? What if he ends up failing his paper?" Well, that didn't happen, but it was humbling and a constant reminder to me of the tremendous responsibility we have to these students who come to us for help. **Ellie Mack**

Check It Out...

The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors by Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood

Center Will Hold by Michael Pemberton

Noise From The Writing Center by Elizabeth Boquet

Writing Center Research: Extending the Conversation by Paula Gillespie (Editor), Byron Stay (Editor), Alice Gillam (Editor), Lady Falls Brown (Editor)

Musings

The North Texas Writing Centers Association was honored to have **Dr. Rebecca Day Babcock**, the 2006 Mary Nell Kivikko Award Winner, as the keynote speaker at the spring conference. In addition, Texas Christian University writing center tutors **Ben Graber**, **Janna Pate**, and **Katie Quinn** presented their observations about working in the writing center. Below are excerpts from these four presentations. (Please check the website for full-text versions of these papers.)

“Opening the Conversation between Disability Studies and Writing Centers”

by Rebecca Day Babcock

“It’s about time that writing center and disability studies scholars begin a conversation, as their agendas have a great deal in common. This conversation can expand and enhance both programs. Writing center studies and disability studies share much of their philosophy and approach to education.

Do institutions actively seek out disabled writing center directors to enhance diversity, or do institutions consciously or unconsciously discriminate? One of the authors in our upcoming collection *Writing Centers and Disability* writes of how, after an accident and surgery that left her with brain damage, instead of accommodating her, her supervisors gave her new, difficult, and even impossible tasks, seemingly in an effort to frustrate her or to show that she was no longer qualified for the job. And how about our tutoring staffs? Many directors may strive for a representative gender, racial, or ethnic mix of tutors, but how many writing center directors consider the importance of having disabled tutors on the staff? It may even be the case that writing center hiring practices are possibly exclusionary to tutors with disabilities. Couldn’t requirements like minimum GPA, writing samples, and grammar tests possibly be exclusionary? We can talk about serving students with disabilities

in the writing center and taking a disability perspective. But we have to look at whether or not disabled people actually work in the writing center. The Writing Centers Research Project survey doesn’t ask about disability. Perhaps that could be added in future surveys. Some of my colleagues and I are planning a survey of diversity in the writing center. Most articles written about disability in the writing center focus on serving tutees with disabilities and are written as reports of I tutored a student and here’s what happened. I did a search of Comppile and could find no articles about writing center workers’ experiences with their own disability and the academic profession. With my co-editors I am currently working on an edited collection called *Disability in the Writing Center* that will contain writings by directors and tutors with disabilities, however, even in a collection such as this some authors choose not to disclose their disabilities. The fact that people would find this risky shows that discrimination is still real. Even with these risks, the literature would be enhanced by the inclusion of even more experiences of tutors, tutees, and directors with disabilities in the writing center.”

In addition, Dr. Babcock calls for writing centers to be aware of students’ disabilities and to be accessible. She also challenges those who work in writing centers to research this area and to continue the dialogue with diligence.

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Undergraduate Tutors from the William
L. Adams Center for Writing at Texas
Christian University

Ben Graber, a senior tutor in the spring of 2006, reflects on his experiences as a writing center tutor. He explains how he was recommended as a tutor to the writing center after having performed exceedingly well in some literature courses. Here is an excerpt from his paper.

“Three Years in the Writing Center: A
Tutor’s Retrospective”

“In retrospect (now I’m getting the hang of it), I’m a bit surprised it wasn’t more of a power trip for me than it turned out to be. It’s hard to explain if you haven’t been there the sheer surrealism of being a sophomore, still on the uphill side of your college career, and being paid to tell people what’s wrong with their writing – sometimes people who are taking courses much more advanced than yours. It’s intimidating, on the one hand, but you also realize very quickly what a genuine sort of power is entrusted to tutors of whatever discipline. To tutor writing, especially, is to advise the uninitiated on the very language they ought to use to convey meaning – a sort of mental midwifery, helping to bring ideas out and onto a page, where they can have a sort of life and existence independent of the one from whom they sprang. While you’re actually on the job (at least while *I’m* actually on the job), this isn’t the kind of metaphor that would come easily to mind, but it’s sort of appropriate, and it came from Socrates or somewhere, so it must be good. Something that’s not yet fully formed is in the mind of each client, and at our best, we manage to guide it out and see it become embodied in a written work.

Of course, it’s comfortable enough to apply this metaphor to nice clean analyses of literary works or

articles or rhetorical strategies or what have you; in my experience, these tend to need to have shape given to their shapelessness, to be coaxed out of the shadows, where they exist as vague impressions, affinities or aversions, and given a clear structure, a skeleton of thesis, supporting argument and conclusion. What’s frightening is when you realize that, once in a while, not only are clients offering hypotheses or opinions to their professors, but they’re actually revealing themselves, sometimes in poignant and meaningful ways, and the tutorial becomes a sort of confessional. I remember, in one of those three years I can’t believe have gone by, a tutorial with a young woman working on a “literacy autobiography” assignment. I don’t remember the particulars of her argument; I think it was a solid enough paper, and I was reading through it with her, stopping occasionally for minor recommendations, when all of a sudden, out of the clear blue (it seemed to me), I read the words “I was raped.”

She was raped – when she was 11 or so, I think it was. It almost stopped me dead – what was I doing reading about this? What business did her professor have knowing this, for that matter? How many people knew this about this girl? But here I was, and she’d brought her paper to me, and now I was within this privileged circle of those to whom she could share this kind of experience, because I was supposed to be helping her to make it read better, to make it seem more real to those who were presumably to try and attach a grade to this revelation. I sent up a silent prayer of thanksgiving that that particular sentence hadn’t had a comma splice or a misplaced modifier. I don’t really remember finishing out the tutorial, but I know it was tough, and I remember thinking about it for a long while afterwards. This would not be a safe job, apparently, a place where writing comes in and writing goes out

(hopefully with better semicolon use); we're in the business of helping people to put their lives on display, or at least to publish their lives for a select audience, and it's something very serious because of this. For all the hundreds of students who've come and gone and gotten this or that advice without much fuss or interest beyond polishing their work up to the next letter grade if possible, there are a few out there who have something to say."

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Janna Pate examines the ethical dilemmas tutors face in the writing center. She points out that sometimes the lines are blurry, and it isn't unusual for tutors to struggle with "How much is too much?"

"Writing Center Ethics: The Process"

"Jordan had been sitting at one of the student computers in the writing center for the better part of an hour, working absently on a paper. Mostly, though, she was talking to Lindsey, one of my fellow peer tutors. I assumed the two girls were friends, that more than studying, Jordan was simply waiting for Lindsey to get off work. But at 4:00, Lindsey went home for the day while Jordan stayed at the computer. She would write a sentence or two, stop, spin around in her chair, talk to me for a moment, then spin back to face the computer.

"Can you take a look at my paper?" she asked at length, motioning to the screen. It was about 4:30.

"Sure, but why don't you print it off first?" I responded.

"I don't have my student ID with me."

I drummed my fingers once on the desk. "You can print it off on my ID." I handed her my card. "How long is the paper?" I asked, realizing that I

probably should have inquired about this first.

"Five pages." The sheets came off of the printer. I picked them up.

"You have Dr. Fontenot," I said, looking at the heading—Honors Literature and Civilizations. It was the Patroklos paper. I had written the same one only a year before. Her paper began, "In Homers novel The Iliad by Homer . . ." and from there continued to commit some of the more egregious syntactical errors known to so-called honors writing.

"It's due by 5:00," she said.

I looked at the clock. It was now 4:34. I could feel my pupils dilating.

In the moments that followed, I worked through Jordan's paper frantically, marking things in her paper, mumbling through the text and pausing only briefly for comments. A myriad of thoughts were tumbling through my mind. What would Dr. Fontenot think if he knew that I had supposedly helped this student with her paper? Was she really going to turn it in like this? I was embarrassed—for her and for me. There were numerous unaddressed issues on the conceptual level that could and should have been discussed in the paper, but I kept those to myself. Instead, I dished out some garden-variety tips about organization and structure and wished her good luck. She thanked me and returned to the computer, seemingly unconcerned. I took the data entry form to the front desk. It was 4:46, leaving her exactly fourteen minutes to make revisions and email the paper in to Dr. Fontenot.

Now, I suppose there is a chance that Jordan actually had time to implement some of the suggestions I made about her paper before her 5:00 deadline, but I doubt it. And it is possible that some of the things I said will benefit her as a writer in the long run, but I doubt that also. It is more likely that she will never again think of that paper or her writing until the grade

comes back and another assignment is due. Then, I suppose, she will repeat something of the same process.

It was not until about 5:22 that evening (as I was depositing my first check from the writing center to the bank) that I began to think about all of the things that had gone so terribly wrong in Jordan's tutorial.

Should I have accepted her request for help at such late notice? Should I have given her my ID to print her paper? Should I have rushed the tutorial for her to make the deadline with a little time to revise? Should I have even marked anything on her paper in this situation, or should I have simply made general comments? I have recently considered these questions and others in an attempt to magically resolve situations such as these, which present themselves to us all too often in writing centers. Unfortunately, I do not know that such solutions can be reached in any complete sense.

From our experiences, we build a framework for future actions with the hope that, eventually, we will be able to recognize our moral obligations, enabling us to act more consistently in an ethical manner. We learn how to become better tutors, as Steve Sherwood says, "by doing it, reflecting on our successes and failures (both practical and moral), and trying to do better next time" (4). Many times, extenuating circumstances generate difficulties for ethics, quickly turning clear-cut rules into muddled guidelines that are impossible to rationally uphold. Thus, while I find incantations of ethical relativism largely untenable, I recognize the fact that ethical studies often require us to make what seem like subjective judgments in order to deal with specific cases that fall outside the jurisdiction of the general principles we might establish."

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Katie Quinn examines the differences between online tutorials and face-to-face tutorials. She wrestles with issues most of us face in these situations.

"A Peer Tutor's Take on Online Interactions"

"On the surface, the online tutorial and the introverted peer tutor seem to be a match made in heaven. Gone are the interminable awkward silences and the sometimes strained attempts to elicit a response. The online tutorial allows the tutor to offer advice from behind the social shield of an impersonal computer. Before I praise the internet and its tutorial innovations too highly, however, it must be noted that, for any writing tutor, providing advice online presents a distinct set of challenges. With each tutorial, one must struggle to avoid overstepping his or her bounds as a tutor. Additionally, written communication without face-to-face contact leaves numerous opportunities for misunderstandings, and even worse, apathy and inattention on the part of both the tutor and the tutee.

Peer tutoring is, by its very nature, somewhat frightening territory. It takes more than a modicum of confidence in your abilities and yourself to enter a room without advanced degrees or even much experience in the field and attempt to teach someone else "how to write". This is coupled with the fact that the student you are meeting with is not a child or adolescent, but someone your age, sometimes older. And often someone that you know! The unique challenge of the peer tutor in the writing center environment is that he or she is often working with friends, acquaintances, crushes. In other words, tutoring fellow students sometimes involves inverting the social hierarchy.

The faceless nature of online tutorials often removes the social ties that bind. The only link one gives to his or her identity comes in the signature of

the e-mailed reply: “Thanks for using our service! Sincerely, Katie Quinn, Peer Tutor.” All of the sudden, the tutor is no longer the fellow college student in jeans and a sweatshirt; though the signature still reminds the student that the tutor is a “peer”, it is more than likely that the student will attribute the advice within the e-mail to the entity of the writing center rather than to one individual.

Despite the freedom that the online tutorial provides, there are some drawbacks to this style of teaching. Naturally, the online tutorial does eliminate the typical camaraderie that develops between peer tutor and student; when tutoring face-to-face, I have a tendency to appeal to the student on a peer level. My general advice tends to be more personal (“When I write papers, I...”) and our introductory discussion often revolves around university or community events. In other words, before I attempt to assume a teaching role, I make it clear that I am a student myself and attempt to relate to the tutee as a fellow student. This rapport, though sometimes merely superficial, does establish a “we’re in this together” mentality. Similarly, humor, often the peer tutor’s most favored tool to break up an awkward tutorial, is also a challenge in online tutorials. In fact, we often avoid humor on purpose just because there are so many ways it could create misunderstandings or accidentally offend. The intonations and facial expressions are lost on the computer and, with these, so is much of the humor and rapport of the tutorial. Without humor and conversation, it is difficult to establish a working relationship for an online tutorial. The lack of back and forth conversation often means that what the tutor says is final. Though the tutor may raise questions or point out concerns, chances are that the student will either address these issues or not; however, regardless of what the student decides to do, the tutor will probably not

be informed. This means that, in offering advice via e-mail, the tutor needs to be extremely thorough in his or her explanation and anticipate possible questions the student might have.

A face-to-face tutorial feels like teaching. There is a pupil (hopefully attentive, but at least conscious) sitting in front of you asking questions, responding to comments, raising new issues, actively working with you to revise his or her paper. There is no such luxury with an online tutorial. More often than not, the student submits her paper from her home computer with a few vague comments about the assignment and perhaps a few buzzwords like “grammar” and “punctuation”. The tutor likely opens this e-mail minutes, sometimes hours later, in a completely different location with only the information the student has provided to work with. With vague guidelines and sometimes extremely challenging papers, it is sometimes difficult for the tutor to not fall into the practice of editing. When a sentence sounds awkward in a face-to-face tutorial, the tutor and student will often brainstorm revisions or new sentences together. But what about during an online tutorial? Should the tutor comment “Awkward. Needs revision” only? Or should he or she suggest possible sentence alternatives? While suggesting alternate ways to phrase things might be perfectly acceptable in a face-to-face tutorial, the online medium gives the student the opportunity to simply “cut and paste” a tutor’s suggested sentence into his or her paper. Suddenly the tutor has crossed a line by doing something that would be completely appropriate in a typical tutorial. Often, the best the tutor can do is gauge the student’s individual situation, skill level, and integrity and offer advice accordingly.”

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A Tribute to Jann Bresnahan

About Jann...

Jann Brooks Bresnahan, a long-time NTWCA member and writing center tutor passed away on June 26, 2006 in a Plano hospital. She was 69 years old. She is survived by daughters Lynda Wood and Brynda Brooks; grandchildren Renee Brooks, Tina Brooks, Dustin Wood, and A.C. Wood; great grandchildren Jeffrey Brooks, Nicole Brooks and Catherine Brooks.



Jann began as one of Ted McFerrin's students and he was so impressed with her writing ability that he asked her to work as a consultant in the Writing Center in April of 1989. While working in the Collin County Writing Center, Jann continued her education, first receiving an associate's degree at Collin and then a bachelor's degree at UTD. She worked on the Spring Creek campus for many years before transferring to the Preston Ridge campus as an assistant director of the Writing Center there. She spoke often about her students and the many ways in which they touched her life. In 2003, Jann began working from home as an Online Tutor for CCCCD's Online Writing Lab and continued until she became ill last spring. Anyone who met her could not miss Jann's tender-hearted empathy for others, her ability to put any person at ease, and her generosity. She was also a gifted writer and she will be greatly missed.

Remembering Jann...

From Myrtle Watkins Collin College Writing Center Co-Founder and Tutor

To catch a glimpse of Jann was to be caught up in her smile and loving style. The original members of the North Texas Writing Centers Association will not have forgotten her presence at the first meeting at which she displayed such enthusiasm for this fledgling organization, an enthusiasm that never waned. The Collin Writing Center group, often squired joyously by Ted McFerrin, would never have considered taking off until Jann was aboard. Sometimes, however, Jann had to pass on such things as visiting the host-college's writing centers when they were located too far away for her to walk; but she thoroughly enjoyed the main meeting at which she could visit with her friends. Future meetings will not seem quite the same without Jann; but when we do meet, we'll feel within our hearts that she is not far away, though her smile will be greatly missed.

From Ellie Mack, Collin College Online Tutor

Jann was one of the first people I met at Collin County. She was so wonderful to be around, kind of like being wrapped in a comfy quilt. She genuinely liked and cared about everyone she met, and I think her students felt that special acceptance from her. Jann was quick to laugh and hug, and would go out of her way to help someone. I am sure students who had her review their work benefited tremendously, both in their writing and in their self-confidence.

Invitation to Join the North Texas Writing Centers Association

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.

Membership in the NTWCA includes directors and staff of writing centers and persons interested in writing centers. Membership can be either institutional (\$50 for a single campus institution, \$25 for each campus in a multiple campus institution) or individual (\$10). Institutional memberships include writing center staff and tutors at the institution. **Membership fees are due on or before September 22, 2006.**

Name: _____

Individual Membership: _____ or Institutional Membership: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Institutional Address: _____

Please indicate your profile:

____ I am a Writing Center Director.

____ I am a Writing Center Staff Member (professional consultant, graduate tutor, or undergraduate peer tutor).

____ I am interested in Writing Centers (past director, faculty member, student ...).

____ Other: _____

Send Dues to : Ben Sword
Department of English and Languages
Tarleton State University
Box T-0300
Stephenville, TX 76402

CONSTITUTION OF THE NORTH TEXAS WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION

(Revised Spring 2004)

- 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 either institutional (\$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 a second two-year term:**
 - A. President: The president chairs all meetings and facilitates the operations of the association.**
 - 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 handles correspondence.**
 - E. Treasurer: The treasurer collects dues, records memberships, and reports finances and memberships at meetings.**
 - 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. Membership Chair: The membership chair promotes involvement by serving as NTWCA's outreach liaison, contacting potential members at colleges, universities, and secondary schools in the area.**
 - B. Web Spinner: The web spinner maintains the NTWCA website page.**
 - C. Archivist: The archivist serves as custodian of the organization's records.**
- VII. The Executive Board, consisting of the six elected officers and three 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.**

- VIII. 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.
 - IX. The NTWCA sponsors at least two meetings per calendar year, including a mini-conference.
 - X. This constitution may be amended or replaced by a majority vote of the executive board and membership at any business meeting.
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In a recent meeting, the executive board, with input from members, proposed these changes to the constitution. Members will have the opportunity to ratify these changes at the fall meeting.

**CONSTITUTION OF THE NORTH TEXAS WRITING CENTERS
ASSOCIATION
(Proposed Revision Fall 2006)**

- 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.