

The Newsletter of the



Spring 2010/Issue 1

April 12, 2010

Cheryl Carithers, Editor

Greetings, NTWCA members! I hope you have had a wonderful and productive 2010. This time of year offers so much excitement—professional conferences, end of semester writing projects for many students, planning for next year, and our own research projects. It is easy to feel rather alone and a bit overwhelmed when we have so much to do in what seems to be very little time. Because we have many different issues we encounter in our writing centers and in our professional lives, it is important that all of us realize the NTWCA is a great support system. I know I have called on different members of the organization for all types of advice and collaboration. I have always found a friendly sounding board, conversations laced with good humor, and valuable counsel. I urge all of you to take advantage of the experts in our organization. To create scholarship, to work together, and to pool our resources are truly gratifying benefits of being part of such an organization.

For the spring conference, we usually have the Mary Nell Kivikko Excellence in Scholarship Award, which celebrates writing center scholarship in our region. This year, incredibly, there were no submissions for the award. Though unfortunate, this situation offers an opportunity for members to have a conversation about various happenings and areas of concern in the world of writing centers. Many of us are facing deep budget cuts, especially those of

us at public universities. And, regardless of where we work, our writing centers face scrutiny much of the time. Even after much thorough theoretical and anecdotal proof of our viability, we still find ourselves walking on the fringes of academia. It seems we regularly face the same issue: “What do you people do in there?” Often, writing centers seem like mysterious places, conjuring meaning out of obscurity. Thus, the program for our upcoming conference will focus on these very issues as we share our experiences in trying to overcome those misconceptions, misperceptions, and misinformation about our work that still linger outside our writing centers. Ironically, though, most of our writing centers are quite transparent. Not only do we have nothing to hide, we welcome questions about the work we do and are excited to share our enthusiasm for the profession.

And, lastly, the South Central Writing Centers Association Conference will be held in Lake Charles, Louisiana, on April 22, 23, and 24 this year and is hosted by McNeese State University. I encourage you to sign on to the listserv and to be sure your college or university is a member of South Central. The NTWCA can be strong voice in the region, and our participation in the SCWCA is a benefit to both organizations. I believe our energy and focus is much needed.

Here’s to a fantastic spring!

Alice Newsome, President

**North Texas Writing Centers Association
Spring 2010 Conference
Friday, April 16**

**Hosted by
Tarrant County College-Northeast Campus
Hurst, Texas**

Program Schedule

11:30-12:00	Arrival and Registration College Hall, Room 1111, Communication Arts Building (NCAB)
12:00-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:15	Opening Remarks and Business Meeting Alice Newsome, Tarleton State University
1:15-2:15	Round Table Discussion Members of the NTWCA
	“Misconceptions, Misperceptions, and Misinformation: Writing Centers on the Fringes”
2:15-2:30	Break
2:30-3:30	“Creative Writing Is Not For The Faint of Heart” Original Works by Melanie Hass, Marsha Decker, and Luke Morgan
3:30-4:00	Writing Center Tour

Campus Map

(Please note that the NCAB is directly behind the clock tower in the center of campus.)
http://www.tccd.edu/Campuses_and_Centers/Northeast_Campus/Map_NE.html

Driving Directions

http://www.tccd.edu/Campuses_and_Centers/Northeast_Campus/Directions_NE.html

Parking Information

Parking sections are marked by color. The painted lines indicate the parking section. ***Visitors may park in the white or blue sections.*** Please do not park in the yellow sections.

The NTWCA 2010 Outstanding Tutor

Congratulations to Marsha Decker, the 2010 NTWCA Outstanding Tutor! Marsha, a two-year veteran in the Tarleton State University Writing Center, is a senior English/History major who plans to begin graduate school in the fall. According to Writing Center Director, Alice Newsome, Marsha is personable, flexible, and extremely bright. Many students drop by the Writing Center to ask specifically for Marsha because of both her professionalism and accessibility.



In addition, Marsha has expanded the Writing Center presence by attending and tutoring in composition classes. Specifically, when Marsha is in the classroom, she works primarily with L2 students who are struggling with language, writing, and the culture. Since Tarleton does not have an L2 program, this service is vital to the success of these students. And, while she is quite effective in the L2 tutorial, Marsha is quite capable of varying her tutorial style to fit the situation.

Additionally, Marsha is the president of the TSU Poetry Club and actively involved in her own creative writing pursuits. Marsha is dependable, enthusiastic, and exceptionally insightful. Her dedication to the students and her work as a tutor is without question.

Check Out These Online Resources for Peer Tutors

[Peer Centered: A Peer Tutoring Blog](#)

[The Dangling Modifier](#)

[Training for Tough Tutorials](#)

[Praxis: A Writing Center Journal](#)

Tutors' Reflections: Writing Centers: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly

What is the most rewarding thing about working in the Writing Center?

The most rewarding thing about working in the Writing Center is consoling students who claim they cannot write. I like to remind them that it is not necessarily that they are "not good" at writing in general, that they just need help adapting to this new discourse community of academic writing. I explain to them the core goals of academic writing: clarity, logical organization, etc, in these cases and help them learn what is acceptable phrasing in academic writing. When they leave much less stressed, I feel rewarded.

~Mandi Roberts

The most rewarding thing for me is watching students' faces light up when they understand a concept I'm trying to explain to them...especially if they are students I've worked with before who I've watched progress as writers.

~Marsha Decker

The most rewarding thing about working in the Writing Center for me is having students come in whose first words are "I'm a terrible writer!" and then being able to show them how that is not true. Most of the students I work with in the writing center come in with a notion that they are not good at writing because they are unsure as to where to put commas or if they need to use a colon or a semi-colon. Once I am able to show them that these are all surface level concerns, and easily corrected, and that their "big picture" work is fine, they are able to leave the writing center feeling much more confident about their abilities.

~Melanie Haas

I always like the moments when I am able to calm down a student who is clearly on the verge of a nervous breakdown. A lot of times it seems that the students' issues are based more on the tension they feel towards writing than the act of writing itself.

~Luke Morgan

I find that calming down stressed out students is the most rewarding thing I do at the Writing Center. I enjoy helping the students relax and not fear their assignment. Also, I enjoy helping the students do research for their assignments.

~Paul Petty

What have you found to be most challenging about working in the Writing Center?

The most challenging thing about working in the Writing Center is working with students who do not have their ideas very organized and helping them re-organize in a logical manner. This is especially tricky when the subject matter of the paper is something with which I am unfamiliar. The key is to glean the information from them verbally so that we can transfer it together to paper and study their assignment sheet. This is helpful because the reason for bad organization is often that they did not understand the requirements of the paper and are just placing down any ideas they can come up with sporadically.

~Mandi Roberts

The most challenging thing is the professors who choose not to use up to date citation rules and fail to let the WC know about it. They tell their students to use correct citation, and we show them the correct methods only to find out the professor prefers to use an outdated form without letting anyone know that. The student is the one who is punished for doing something wrong when technically they are not wrong.

~Marsha Decker

The most challenging thing about working in the writing center is trying to figure out how best to help ESL students. Each time I work with a student from a different linguistic background, I learn a little more about the differences in the way various cultures practice writing. I often end sessions with ESL students wondering how much I helped them and wishing that I had had the knowledge I gained in that session in previous sessions.

~Melanie Haas

I've found the most challenging aspect of working in the writing center involves students who come in and stay for most of the day, expecting the tutors to do their work for them.

~Luke Morgan

I have found that students who want to debate whether I am correct in my answers to be the most challenging aspect of working in the Writing Center. This is difficult for me because I will look up all information or ask another member of the team if I do not know an answer.

~Paul Petty

News from the Region

At CCCC in Louisville, Kentucky, **Mike Matthews** was the 2010 recipient of the Nell Ann Pickett Service Award, presented by the Two-Year College English Association to “an outstanding teacher whose vision and voice have had a major impact on two-year college professionalism and whose teaching exemplifies those outstanding personal qualities of creativity, sensitivity and leadership.”



The **Tarleton State University Writing Center** conducted a pilot survey in January to determine how the Writing Center is perceived by students. Though this is a small student sample from the Department of Social Work, Sociology, and Criminal Justice, the results are interesting and beg further inquiry. This survey and the conversation surrounding it has afforded an opportunity for a presentation at the South Central Writing Centers Association Conference. Alice Arrington Newsome and Ben Sword, Writing Center Directors; Mike Fraley, undergraduate peer consultant; and David J. Carrothers, Criminal Justice professor, will present “When the Writing Center and Homeland Security Cross Paths: Negotiating a Fractured System.”

During February the **TCC - Trinity River Campus Writing and Learning Center** hosted an Idea Exchange and Best Practices workshop. Participants discussed common challenges facing centers and their solutions. Topics included sign-in procedures, tracking, tutoring, software, building faculty relationships, identifying and resolving conflict, signage, and increasing visibility.

NTWCA Officer Elections

The time has arrived for the NTWCA to hold officer elections, which will we conduct on Friday, April 16, during the Business Meeting portion of the program. There are **five elected officers** for the organization; officers serve for a minimum of two years and may be elected for multiple, two-year terms:

The responsibilities of each officer are as follows:

President: The president chairs all meetings, facilitates the operations of the association, and serves as co-chair of the Membership Committee.

Vice-President: The vice-president functions as program chair and assumes the duties of the president in the president's absence.

Secretary: The secretary takes minutes at meetings and reports at executive board meetings and conferences.

Treasurer: The treasurer collects dues, records memberships, reports finances and memberships at meetings, and serves as co-chair of the Membership Committee.

Newsletter Editor: The newsletter editor gathers information, edits articles, publishes the newsletter, and handles mailings.

Any member in good standing may nominate another member in good standing for any of the positions listed. Members may also nominate themselves. Nominees should have paid dues for 2007-2008 (either institutional or individual) and should be able to serve a two-year term.

Members who have expressed interest in elected offices are the following:

President: Alice Newsome, Tarleton State University

Vice-President: Ben Sword, Tarleton State University

Secretary: Ka Riley, Dallas Baptist University

Treasurer: Elizabeth Parrish, Tarrant County College, Northeast Campus

Newsletter Editor: Cheryl Carithers, Texas Christian University

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.

Name: _____

Individual Membership: _____ 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:

**Please Send Dues To: TCC NE English Department
Attn: Elizabeth Parrish
828 W. Harwood Rd.
Hurst, Texas 76054**

Current NTWCA Officers

President: Alice Newsome, Tarleton State University

Vice-President: Ben Sword, Tarleton State University

Secretary: Angela Pettit, Texas Women's University

Treasurer: Elizabeth Parrish, TCC-Northeast

Newsletter Editor: Cheryl Carithers, Texas Christian University

Web-Spinner: Website hosted by TAMU-C.

Archivist: Cynthia Shearer, Texas Christian University

Past President: Cheryl Carithers, Texas Christian University

Alice Newsome, assistant professor of English, has a B.S. in Counseling and English from Texas A&M University-Commerce and holds a M.Ed. from Tarleton State University, with specialized courses taken post-Master's in rhetoric, composition, and literature. She co-directs the Writing Center and the Basic Writing Program at Tarleton, and she teaches basic writing, composition courses, and 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.

Ben Sword is currently serving as the Vice President of the NTWCA. Before serving in the capacity of Vice President of the NTWCA, Ben held the office of Treasurer for 2 years. He is an instructor at Tarleton State University and Co-Director of the Writing Center, along with Alice Newsome.

Angela Pettit is a faculty member at the TCC Northeast Campus.

Elizabeth Parrish holds a B.A. in English from the University of North Texas. She spent many years working in fields unrelated to education until she accepted a short term position teaching English in China. Returning after six months abroad, her renewed interests in the teaching field lead her to pursue a teaching certificate. She accepted the position of Instructional Associate at the Northeast campus of Tarrant County College where she directs the Writing Center.

Elizabeth recently completed the notable TCC Leadership program. She is coordinating the addition of a workshop and lecture series to her 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, appeared in the thirtieth anniversary issue of the *Pushcart Prize Anthology*.

Cheryl Carithers received her M.A. in English with a specialization in rhetoric and composition from Tarleton in 1999. In addition to teaching, Ms. Carithers has worked as a professional editor. Her research interests include the history of composition, rhetoric and pop culture, literature, and writing center theory. She is currently an assistant director in the William L. Adams Center for Writing and an instructor in the TCU English Department.

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.