

NORTH TEXAS WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

APRIL TRAFTON

Welcome to the North Texas Writing Centers Association 2019 Spring Conference! I'm excited to see a group from so many different institutions coming together. As you know, supporting students in the writing center is crucial work that is often done behind the scenes when compared to the work done in the classroom. Writing Center professionals are the ones who answer the question that the student was too nervous to ask in class, the ones who sometimes have to pick a student's confidence up off the ground, dust it off, and tape it back together before getting the student back on track. We're sometimes lifelines. The work we do is never the same, and it involves knowledge, practicality, resourcefulness, flexibility, and more, but perhaps most importantly, it involves empathy and human interaction. Behind every research paper is a human with unique desires, thoughts, fears, and experiences, and in every interaction we have with students, we are given an opportunity to be a mentor, whether we know it or not.

The theme of this conference, "The Mentoring Mindset," focuses on the human connection that takes shape in the writing center and the role writing center professionals play in the lives and futures of students and also other staff members in their center. This focus is particularly relevant and timely, especially as some of us are anticipating or already adjusting to changes to programs we support. State requirements, department structures, course content, expectations from administration, and budgets can and will change, but if we're able to maintain our focus on the students and each member of the writing center team, relating to them as fellow humans, empathizing with them, and supporting them in reaching their goals, we'll be able to continue our work with the same heart and dedication that we always have. After all, the human aspect is the heart of the writing center.

It can be easy to fall into the day-to-day grind seeing paragraph after essay after works cited page or spending day after day, scheduling, hiring, training, and signing time cards, but as you interact with others and engage during presentations or round table discussions throughout the day, I challenge you to reflect on your writing center work and the interactions you have with the students and other staff members in your center. Do they embrace the natural role of mentor? Do they communicate the values and priorities you hold?

I hope you enjoy the conference today, and let's take this fabulous opportunity to share, learn from, support, and connect with others engaged in the work we do.

Thanks again for coming!

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NTWCA Spring Conference
hosted by

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Check-In	10:00
Welcome &	10:30
Announcements	
Business Meeting	10:45
Breakout 1	11:00
Lunch	12:00
IPM Presentation	1:00
Breakout 2	2:00
Writing Center Tour	2:45

INSTITUTE FOR PEER MENTORING

DR. JULIE MURPHY

STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER DIRECTOR

MIKE SAENZ

STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

The Institute for Peer Mentoring (IPM) launched in Fall 2017 as part of a University of Texas system-wide initiative to create a sense of belonging on campus. IPM created a campus-wide standard for peer mentoring training, building relationships with the following on-campus partners:

Student Success Center

Freshman Mentor Program

Transfer Mentor Program

Peer Advisors

First Year Leaders

New Student Programs

IPM EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Through expanded peer-to-peer mentoring, students will be able to identify qualities of effective mentoring relationships
- Demonstrate best-practice mentoring techniques such as coaching, advising, active listening, and providing positive feedback
- Strengthening of peer-to-peer mentor programs through greater credentialing, specifically College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA)

Campus Impact & Success of IPM

Semester	Total # of Workshops	Total # of Participants
Fall 2017 - Level 1	9	1433
Fall 2017 - Level 2	6	43
Spring 2018 - Level 1	11	464
Spring 2018 - Level 2	12	70
Fall 2018 - Level 1	16	2205
Fall 2018 - Level 2	14	82

MAKING INFORMATION LITERACY A PRIORITY IN WRITING CENTERS

MONICA DAVENPORT - COLLIN COLLEGE - FRISCO

SESSION 1
MC 3.612

An important function of any writing center is to foster critical thinking, which often involves supporting students as they interact with information from sources. Instructors do not have time to guide every student through the process of locating and managing pertinent material, and typical library instruction on research methods has proved largely ineffective because it is too general for students to apply later. Furthermore, little or no emphasis is given to evaluation and integration of sources. This is where writing centers can play a role, mentoring students through both research and writing, which are interdependent and recursive; effective research often leads to changes in scope, thesis or even topic, becoming a key part of the writing process itself. Making information literacy a priority in writing centers may mean making some changes, such as providing better tutor training, collaborating with librarians more extensively, and promoting the center's research assistance services.

WRITING: OPENS DOORS TO YOUR FUTURE

STEVEN LeMONS - TCC TRINITY RIVER

SESSION 1
MC 3.606

According to a national study, 88% of surveyed college freshman identified "getting a better job" as the most important reason for attending college. This statistic proves the relevance of writing centers as a necessary resource for assisting students in achieving this objective. With focused efforts, writing centers help bridge the gap between transferring what some students may interpret as theoretical classroom subject matter into real-world applications. By presenting realistic examples of how various writing assignments may appear in the workplace environment students can make positive connections between their classroom assignments and real-world applications. Writing centers become a critical link in helping them create that connection.

SUPPORTING UNDER- PREPARED STUDENTS IN THE WRITING CENTER

APRIL TRAFTON - TCC NORTHWEST

The great part about working in the writing center is that no two students who walk through the door are the same. Their interests, values, personalities, etc. run the gamut, but all are able to find assistance and benefit from their visits. The differences between students are what keep writing center work interesting and fresh, but students' varying experience levels in the college environment and with academics can also pose challenges. This presentation discusses some of the challenges that under-prepared students face in navigating college and getting the most from their experience. It will also share practical strategies for writing center professionals to use when they encounter under-prepared students, whether knowingly or not.

SESSION 2
MC 3.612

TOUGH CONVERSATIONS IN THE WRITING CENTER: MENTORING STUDENTS AND STAFF

**ELIZABETH PARRISH & HANNAH HARREL - TCC
NORTHWEST**

As tutors working with student essays, we are in the position to observe more than grammar and organizational issues in writing. We learn about students' concerns, written and unwritten, in addition to the nonverbal clues exhibited during sessions. Problems range from first time in college errors like plagiarism, to food scarcity, dangerous home situations, and emotional traumas. In order to mentor students effectively, we must prepare to explain concepts and refer individuals to additional resources that will promote collegiate success. Our presentation will explore how to approach difficult conversations with students when addressing troubling academic and nonacademic issues. We will explore how to say things we need to say. We will spend some time looking at ways to reset after these challenging exchanges and support each other as part of a team. As tutors, we are in the position to have conversations with each other to maintain a safe space for students and each other.

SESSION 2
MC 3.610

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE WRITING CENTER

ALLYSON JONES - COLLIN COLLEGE - FRISCO

The majority of campus writing centers are staffed by students and part-timers, many of whom have limited pedagogical training and/or experience working in education. Writing center administrators offer training in the form of discussions, observations, reading assignments, and other activities that help tutors remain attentive to the development of their practice. Although the main goal of such training is to improve the quality of tutoring in the writing center, the professional development offered—coupled with the invaluable lessons learned from working one-on-one with students—can provide an important pedagogical and philosophical foundation for tutors who may ultimately move on to other positions. This interactive discussion will focus on ideas for tutor professional development and interrogate the role that writing center administrators play in rounding out the pedagogical knowledge, philosophy, and credentials of tutors who may eventually seek full-time positions elsewhere—as writing center administrators, professors, teachers, librarians, or editors—or in areas unrelated to writing center work.

SESSION 2
MC 3.606

NTWCA OFFICERS:

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April Trafton

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TREASURER:

Elizabeth Parrish

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Mallory Matyk

WEBSPINNER:

Normandy Rindahl

ARCHIVIST:

Jennifer Phillips-Denny

UPCOMING EVENTS:

OKIE ROUNDUP

May 17, 2019

Oklahoma State University

IWCA SUMMER INSTITUTE

June 16-21, 2019

Baltimore, Maryland

IWCA/NCPTW

October 16-19, 2019

Columbus, Ohio

NEWS FROM NTWCA MEMBERS

DBU WRITING CENTER TO UPGRADE TRAINING PROGRAM

The Writing Center (UWC) at Dallas Baptist University (DBU) is currently working to enhance its Consultant Training Program. By the end of the year, the office plans to achieve Level 2 training status by implementing training procedures consistent with the College Reading and Learning Association's International Tutor Training Program Certification.

UWC Director Kā Riley is working closely with Office Manager Ashley Green and Consultant Coordinator Trisha Gracy to evaluate the requirements for Level 2 certification and brainstorm potential training procedures. The team's goal is to develop a training program that further equips its consultants to communicate effectively during sessions.

With this end goal in mind, the team has narrowed its focus to a few integral training areas, one of which includes teaching consultants how to better communicate in unique situations, such as with international or special-needs students.

According to the DBU International Office, the university enrolls more than 650 international students who represent 68 different countries and make up 14 percent of the total student body population. Many of these students eagerly seek the UWC's services.

"My first grade on my first English assignment was horrible!" Brazilian international student João Costa says with a cringe. "But now I'm able to get A's without needing the Writing Center because you've not only helped me, you've taught me how to do it myself."

With Level 2 certification, the UWC hopes to produce more success stories like this for the diverse student body of DBU. "We want to be the hands and feet of Christ to every student by making sure that people feel comfortable in the UWC," says Consultant Coordinator Gracy. "There are different cultures that have different norms and values, and we want to make sure that we're able to work within those."

The Level 2 training program will also strive to enhance consultants' ability to ask strong probing questions. Acknowledging the danger of telling rather than teaching during sessions, Writing Consultant Ryan Thompson says, "When somebody tells you what to do, you start to build a reliance on that figure. Then, every time you approach the same problem, you just resort back to them."

According to UWC Director Riley, a dependence mentality is not what her office is striving to create in students. Rather, she hopes Level 2 training will teach consultants how to more effectively engage students in collaborative sessions rather than tutorial sessions.

"There's no such thing as a perfect paper," she says, emphasizing that the Writing Center does not want to be viewed as a remedial service but an office capable of helping the most experienced writers improve their work.

When asked what she thinks is the biggest benefit of Level 2 certification, Gracy said, "It will help us better serve students. The UWC is about showing Christ's love and being servant leaders. By expanding our knowledge and being as effective as possible, we hope to make students' experience with us more impactful."