



fall  
2017

# Rocky Mountain

## Writing Center Association

### Letter from the RMWCA President

Dear RMWCA Friends:

Happy 2018 to our friends and colleagues across the Rocky Mountain West!

I write this letter while my family drives across Montana, Idaho, and Utah on our way to visit loved ones for the holidays. This wide-open country offers a stark contrast to our busy, loud, and often crowded writing centers. I'm thankful for these open, quiet margins, but I'm also thankful for the voices and crowded activity that characterize our centers.

The RMWCA Executive Board has been busy, pursuing new ideas that we think will engage our membership. Here is a preview of what is to come this winter and spring:

The Executive Board is focusing on building the value RMWCA

brings to you and our region. In Summer 2018, we will institute for the first time RMWCA membership dues. We'll offer an affordable tiered dues structure that allows for individual memberships and writing center memberships. Be sure to read more about what the dues will provide in these pages.

While we hope you'll use RMWCA as a resource for connection across our large region, we also hope you'll connect in person as often as possible. Sure, big conferences are fun and energizing opportunities, but so too are small, more informal gatherings. We've listed the upcoming gatherings for our regions in this newsletter. Please let us know if you have planned one of your own, or share it on our listserv, [rmwca@uidaho.edu](mailto:rmwca@uidaho.edu)!

Finally, our State Reps are ready to

bring your ideas, concerns, shout-outs to the Board. You can contact your representatives (via email on the [rmwca.org](http://rmwca.org) State Representatives page) to ask questions, share concerns or successes, and provide updates for the RMWCA Directory. State Reps are your direct link to other centers in your area. We hope you will help them feel needed and appreciated.

We want to hear from you. Happy 2018, everyone.

**Kelly Webster**  
**President, Rocky Mountain**  
**Writing Centers Association**  
**Director, The Writing and Public**  
**Speaking Center**  
**The University of Montana**

To stay updated, visit the IWCA and RMWCA websites:  
<http://writingcenters.org/>  
<http://www.rmwca.org/>

# Tutor Column

Taylor Veltkamp - Peer Tutor

Last month, four of our Writing Center tutors attended the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPTW) at Hofstra University in New York. I had the opportunity to present my individual research applying a concept we are practicing in our writing center: participatory hospitality. My presentation was on a sociological concept, mattering, and how tutors and writing center staff should practice this in their writing centers. I hoped my presentation would be beneficial in other writing centers, and that I could further the conversation about mattering within writing center realms.

What surprised me was that during the conference keynote address, the faculty presenters cited various undergraduate research articles published in the MSU-based journal, *Young Scholars in Writing*. Lauren Fitzgerald and Melissa Ianetta, authors of *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors*, made a case for the merits of undergraduate research. When questioned about the authority of undergraduate researchers, the presenters responded that they consider undergraduate research to be more valuable than the research published by writing center professionals. Tutors are tutoring everyday. And who best to discuss tutoring and tutor development than tutors?

As tutors we accept a certain authority over writing, and we use that authority to have conversations about writing with students who come to our center. In our writing center, we set aside time to discuss any struggles we encountered over that week in tutoring. We seek out each other's expertise when we are faced with our uncertainties. So why would we not seek out and utilize that expertise from other institutions' tutors? After attending NCPTW, I have a more fully formed idea of the resources that are available to us as tutors. I'm glad to



Above: Tutors Taylor Veltkamp, Destiny Brugman, Erin Strickland, and Adrienne Geraci represent Montana State University at NCPTW.

know we have this cache of undergraduate writing-center-centric research where we can feel represented, validated, and challenged by our peers.

## SAVE THE DATE! GATHERINGS AND CONFERENCES WITHIN OUR REGION.

- Mini-RMWCA Conference at the University of Utah, March 2018
- Colorado/Wyoming Writing Tutor Conference at Regis University, April 2018
- Rocky Mountain Writing Centers Association Tutor Conference in Denver, Winter 2019 (joint conference with the CWWTC)

## 27 members of RMWCA presented their research at NCPTW in Hempstead, NY! Thanks to all of you for representing our region!

- Katrina Bell, Roy Jo Sartin, Eviva Kahne, Sophia Pray, Anika Grevstad - Colorado College
- Alicia Mountain - University of Denver
- Erin Strickland, Destiny Brugman, Michelle Miley, Taylor Veltkamp, Adrienne Geraci - Montana State University
- Eduardo Mabilog, Paige Hall, Adam Ward, Jessie Swinney, Tucker St. John, Paula Ramirez - Nevada State College
- Alexander Markle, Isaiah Trujillo, Brandon Morris - Clovis Community College
- Lydia Mongie - Utah Valley State University
- Donald Prunty, Megan Fairbanks, Allison Borzoni - Southern Utah University
- Mitchel Poen, Emily Beck, Lori Brock - Salt Lake Community College

# The Writing Center Spotlight

*University of Nevada, Reno Writing Center*

At the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), our campus has experienced rapid growth for the last several years. This growth in the university has resulted in an increase in requests for writing support. Our growth has brought an increased awareness of the diversity of our campus community and the need for our writing center to respond in ways that support a complex array of students and texts.

Our writing center provides almost 7,000 one-on-one consultations each year and has another 10,000 student contacts through classroom workshops and campus presentations. As a generalist writing center on a campus with signature STEM programs, we diversify our disciplinary expertise on our staff—we have six different types of engineering majors represented on our staff.

In addition to the diversity of disciplinary support, our writing center has been working on a statement of support for diversity



Above: Writing Center Tutor Reece Gibbs works with a student at the University of Nevada, Reno Writing Center.

on our campus. After a year of staff discussions, surveys, and several drafts of a diversity statement, we are presenting our campus with eleven principles that our writing center is committed to, which include principles such as “We do not condone hate speech” and “The University Writing Center welcomes free and open discussion among those with different perspectives.”

We have recently become a Human Library site, and we will host events that allow people to check

out Human Books, people who have volunteered to have open and respectful conversations with other people about challenges, stereotypes, or prejudices they have faced. These events will highlight the ways in which diversity contributes to our understanding of ourselves and the communities in which we engage.

The UNR Writing Center understands that to support writing, composing, and communicating is to support diverse people and perspectives.

## MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURES TO INCREASE THE VALUE OF RMWCA FOR YOU

The Executive Board is working to increase the value RMWCA brings to you and our region. Summer 2018, we will institute for the first time RMWCA membership dues, priced to ensure our organization remains accessible for all in our region. We'll offer an affordable tiered dues structure that allows for individual memberships and writing center membership. This planned change will usher in a host of new benefits for our members. We plan to provide:

- Robust travel grants for our members
- Access to research grants
- Seed money for mini, sub-regional conferences and gatherings
- A webinar series led by experts in our region
- A New website that serves as a site for announcements, resources, and tutor interaction
- A RMWCA Tutor Conference registration discount

# Tutor Spotlight

Jessica McDermott - Peer Tutor and RMWCA Tutor Representative



Above: Tutor, Jessica McDermott

## How have your own thoughts on writing changed since you became a writing tutor?

Tutoring as an undergraduate and graduate student both challenged and enhanced my learning experience.

It taught me that revision is the key to successful writing and the necessity of trusted feedback. To this day, tutoring continues to enhance and challenge me both as a writer and a professional. I currently work at the Community College of Aurora as an English instructor and the Writing Studio Coordinator. Part of my responsibilities as a coordinator includes tutoring. I began tutoring in 2011 as an undergraduate student at Utah State University. At the time, I questioned my knowledge and experience, but Star Coulbrooke (Director) and Susan Andersen (Assistant Director) instilled in me an understanding that tutors don't house all the answers. Because of them and other mentors, I have learned that it is the questioning and conversational aspect of sessions along with mirroring the use of guides and resources that truly produces positive tutoring experiences. Now, after tutoring for close to seven years, this explorative nature of the craft and the relationships it fosters is what I most enjoy.

## What do you find difficult when tutoring?

Each tutoring session brings its own unique challenges and questions, but by immersing myself in the assignment and subject at hand, I find that the student trusts that I care about them and their success. When students feel genuine concern, they begin asking tough questions and feel comfortable exploring along with me. Their active participation breeds confidence. For this reason, I don't feel accomplished as a tutor unless the tutee fully engages. Indeed, this is also one of the hardest aspects of tutoring: fully engaging a student and helping them learn in a short tutoring session. To do this, one must be encouraging, inquisitive, and deliberate. One must put aside their expectations for the session and let the student express their concerns

and work together to accomplish the task at hand.

## What has been your experience as the RMWCA tutor representative been like so far?

In my new role as Tutor Representative for the Rocky Mountain Writing Centers Association, I feel that I am channeling the expectations, challenges, and joys of a tutor. Similar to tutoring, my main goal is to engage. I want tutors across our region to feel comfortable sharing their experiences and needs. Engaging tutors across eight states has proven difficult, but the responses from the recent tutor survey I created and sent out was an encouraging reminder that these tutors have unique perspectives and ideas that need to be heard. I hope to continue to build and retain these relationships and work to improve their experiences both as tutors and as scholars in this ever-changing field of writing tutoring.

### 36 members of RMWCA presented their research at IWCA in Chicago! Thanks to all of you for representing our region!

- Brenna Ram, Michelle Stuckey, Molly Rentscher – Arizona State University
- Jason Schlueter – Arapahoe Community College
- Katrina Bell – Colorado College
- Elizabeth Kleinfeld – Metropolitan State University of Denver
- Matthew Balk – University of Colorado, Colorado Springs
- Rebecca Tulloch – University of Northern Colorado
- Monica Brown, Sierra Williams, Mitzi Luna, Madison Hansen, Nicole Carrobis, Gretchen Wagner, Shea Golob, Michelle Szurgot, Melissa Keith, Clyde Moneyhun, Skyler Meeks – Boise State University
- Michelle Miley, Jess Carrol – Montana State University
- Kelly Webster – University of Montana
- Nick Plunkey – Rocky Mountain College
- Robyn Rohde, Courtney Danforth – College of Southern Nevada
- Maureen McBride – University of Nevada
- Lisa Bell, David Stock – Brigham Young University
- Jasilyn Heaps – Utah State University
- Clint Gardner – Salt Lake Community College
- Romeo Garcia – University of Utah
- Meg Mikovits – Writing Fellow Program
- Kelsey Hixson-Bowles, Leigh Ann Copas, Elena Garcia – Utah Valley University
- Jennifer Toney – Westminster College

# The Writing Center Spotlight

*Renaissance High School Writing Center, Idaho*



## The Scribe

### Renaissance High School's Writing Center

At Renaissance High School, students choose to pursue an International Baccalaureate diploma, certificates from the International Baccalaureate Career Path program, or an associate of arts degree through Idaho State University. Our student-run writing center, The Scribe, supports each of these programs with face-to-face appointments and e-consultations. We currently have 43 volunteer consultants who work for about an hour a week at lunch, or after school. Last year, we conducted over 1,200 consultations. All of this is a long way from where we started in 2010 with only six consultants and a handful of appointments.

Each year, we select 4-6 student managers, who help plan and conduct consultant training, maintain records, publish the monthly newsletter (The Scribble), observe consultations to provide feedback, and oversee the day-to-day operations of The Scribe. Two teachers, Shawna Schneiderman and Karly Bryant, are the co-directors who train and collaborate with the managers, oversee the writing center, and act as liaisons between The Scribe and the school administration.

The Scribe is visible in every aspect of RHS life. Two years ago, we implemented a program that puts Scribe consultants in almost every freshman and sophomore English classroom. The Scribe TAs work with students during the writing process, provide feedback on written work, and conduct mini-workshops. Each April, The Scribe sponsors a poetry slam. In preparation, we hold poetry workshops and visit some of our community poetry slam competitions. We also participate in the Renaissance Insane Party (R.I.P.) each fall, where we dress like pirates, tell pirate puns, and play Punctuation Pirate. We like to write, and we like to have fun!

Given our small school size (about 800 students) and multiple programs, our training has traditionally taken place outside of school hours. Orientation and team building begins with Super Saturday, which takes place the first Saturday of the school year. Throughout the year, consultants read writing center articles and discuss them in our online forum, or with other consultants in person. Once a quarter, we meet for a two-hour training session. Our goal is to support our consultants' ongoing training so they can better help all students. We are currently working to bring a writing center theory and practice course to our course schedule in the spring of 2019. We hope to continue our mission of supporting writers at every stage of their writing for many years to come.



Above: Students attend The Scribe's 2016 Super Saturday.



Above: A tutor works with a student at The Scribe.