



spring
2017

Rocky Mountain

Writing Center Association

A Letter from President Kelly Webster

We are pleased to share with you a newsletter that showcases the best writing centers have to offer: our good work with writers across contexts. Read here about the writing centers at the College of Southern Nevada and Eastern New Mexico University. Our “Tutor Column” highlights Wendy Whatcott’s experience presenting at the 2017 RMWCA Tutor Conference, hosted by Montana State University, where many of us gathered to celebrate our tutors and their impactful work. I spent the conference “getting lost” in the thinking, problem solving, learning, and orienteering that are hallmarks of writing center work.

In the handful of sessions I attended, I listened as tutors recounted creating

more inclusive physical and intellectual spaces, outlined plans for navigating sometimes bewildering disciplinary expectations, explored possibilities for more effective classroom outreach, and shared stories of impactful collaborations between college and high school writing centers.

In short, the tutors at the 2017 RMWCA Tutor Con, to quote my eloquent colleague at UM, “crushed it.” Thank you all for the time and thought you put into your presentations.

A big heartfelt thanks goes to Michelle Miley and her fantastic team of tutors for pulling off a successful conference. And we are grateful to have had the mentorship and thoughtful presence

of Michele Eodice, who facilitated a directors’ workshop and gave a wonderfully provocative keynote.

The conference prompted us to consider how we might go about allowing ourselves to get lost and be humble in the face of the great transformative work we do. It’s, as Solnit says, a “basic tactical question in life.” How to get lost, become uncertain, and come to know, together. This opening into the wellspring (not the obstacle) of uncertainty is what I love about writing center work.

Kelly Webster
RMWCA President
Director, Writing Center
University of Montana

2019 RMWCA Tutor Conference

DENVER, COLORADO

LOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION TO COME!



A Work in Progress: Three Centers, Multiple Disciplines, One Vision

Robyn Rhode, Assistant Director, College of Southern Nevada Writing Center

The College of Southern Nevada (CSN) Writing Center is a cross-disciplinary, peer- and professionally-staffed center located on each of the college's three main campuses: W. Charleston, North Las Vegas, and Henderson. Situated within CSN, the Writing Center very much reflects the community college in terms of size, operations, and diversity, in both the students who visit the center and the material they bring to discuss. Approximately 30,000 to 35,000 students take courses across three main campuses. The Writing Center at CSN serves anywhere from 18-20 percent of this student population.

The CSN Writing Center staffs around 30-40 Writing Assistants and 4-6 Reading and Writing Assistants each semester. Engagement and community building is something we attempt to foster not only across all of our centers through a shared mission and vision but also through intracampus engagement activities. Our Writing Center staff on Henderson Campus recently started an all-center, all-campus newsletter that is sent out each month with articles written by and for the staff. We just started a methods database we call CAS On Demand as well. For this, staff submit methods or session-needs to the leadership team, and then we script and produce a short methods video to release back to the staff each month. Two years ago, the Centers for Academic Success (CAS), which includes the Writing and Reading Centers, also started hosting a yearly CAS Symposium, a two-day, conference-style training and professional development session where staff from all centers, including the Math Resource Center, Science Resource Center, Communication Centers, and Tutorial Learning Center, come together to deliver and attend workshops centered around their



Photos provided by CSN Writing Center

session needs. We invite faculty, staff, and community members to join us over these two days to provide insight, guidance, and advice to our staff regarding various professions, leadership, networking, and tutoring needs.

In academic year 2015/16, the CSN Writing Center held 20,866 sessions for 6,315 individual students across all campuses. Out of these sessions, nearly 60% were held for writing assignments in English courses. The other 40% of writing center sessions were for 98 different disciplinary prefixes across all academic schools at CSN. In 2015, we added reading support to our centers, and in 2016, we integrated the Communication Centers into the space on two of the campuses. As such, we are transitioning into new territory as the

Reading, Writing, and Communication Center becomes more integrated.

In the next year, we plan to expand our collaborations and partnerships outside of the institution. For instance, we just spoke with leaders at Nevada State College to perhaps co-host a local writing center and tutoring conference for the institutions in and around Southern Nevada. As we move forward, we hope to continue to learn from centers within our region and look forward to continued collaboration with the Rocky Mountain Writing Center Association. The CSN Writing Center is a work in progress, and we appreciate the support we receive from those who have come before us as we continue to support our students, faculty, staff, and community college mission of creating opportunities and enriching lives.

Change at the Eastern New Mexico University Writing Center

Carol Singletary, Director, Eastern New Mexico University

After Nancy Petersen retired from the Eastern New Mexico University Writing Center last year, I accepted the position as Director. Following Nancy was both easy and hard. Easy because after her many years running the program she had so many procedures already in place, but hard because she was so good at her job.

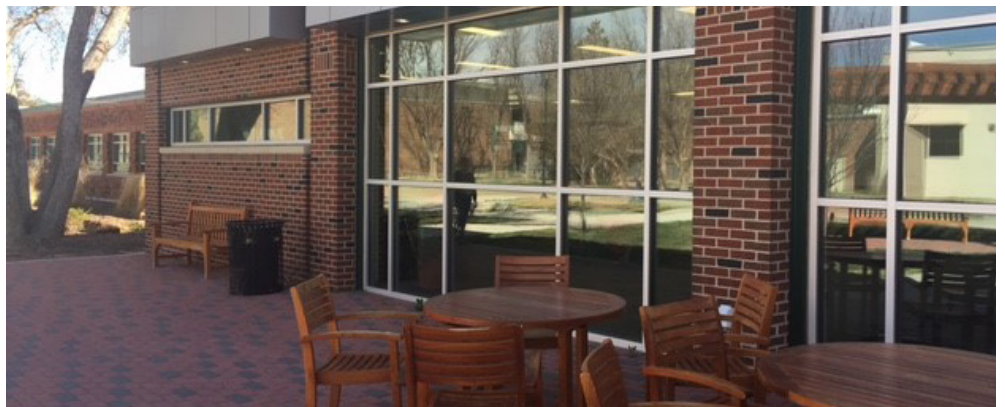
Although I have been teaching English and journalism for thirty years, most of those were in a high school. I had only been at Eastern for three years, and I felt a bit overwhelmed when my department chair asked me to take over from Nancy. I need not have worried, because graduate students are a wonderful group to work with.

One of my favorite aspects of running the Writing Center is getting to work with graduate students from different majors. We have tutors from English, of course, but we also have some from education, archaeology, and communicative disorders. This diversity helps us better meet the needs of all students in all programs. I tell all my tutors that our purpose is to help students become adept at fixing their own writing, and our goal is to make our job obsolete.

In addition to having a new director, we are also in a new location. The building that houses our College of Liberal Arts and Sciences was recently completely renovated, giving us a bright and shiny location for our Center. After years in tiny, dark and cramped cubbyholes, we now have a spacious and airy room with plenty of natural light. I am so fortunate to have a job I enjoy in a place I love.

RMWCA NEWS

- Proposal deadline for NCPTW 2017 at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York is April 15, 2017.
- Join us at CWWTC 2017 summer gathering for WC administrators.
- Look for the RMWCA Meeting/Reception at IWCA in Chicago, November 10-13, 2017.
- Join us at RMWCA Tutor Conference in Denver in Spring 2019.
- Keep an eye out for local mini gatherings happening in states!



Above: Patio space outside of the ENMU Writing Center

Below: ENMU Writing Center Tutors discuss tutoring issues



“Getting Lost” at RMWCA Tutor Con

Wendy Whatcott - Salt Lake Community College

Usually, when you hear the directive “Get lost!” it’s not a positive thing. After attending RMWCA Tutor Con 2017, I can’t wait to “get lost” in the art of tutoring.

Conference participants could be found “getting lost” in a myriad of ways. Friday night, there was fun for all! We tutors made our way in groups around Wilson Hall, where the writing center resides, participating in activities representative of Montana’s popular recreation.

Meanwhile, the directors were enjoying a workshop led by co-author of *The Everyday Writing Center*, Michele Eodice. Eodice also delivered an eloquent keynote address on Saturday afternoon. From a family hike involving cairn-building to a video gamer’s version of “getting lost,” Eodice engaged her audience with captivating and meaningful stories - leaving us all with a greater desire to “get lost (in the best sense of that term).”

Together with Bethany Bibb, Director of the Academic Literacy Center at SLCC, I was able to be involved in giving a conference presentation - a first



Wendy Whatcott and Bethany Bibb present at RMWCA Tutor Con 2017

for me.

Inspired by an online post, Bibb decided to explore the effects of using “help-focused” terminology in class visits (ie. words like “help,” “struggle,” and “trouble”). In January, we began performing a study that involved 214 students in 12 English classes.

Interested in learning from the strategies implemented by other writing centers in their class visits, we analyzed scripts and checklists used by writing centers at various colleges and universities.

The following are some of the notable strategies we identified: establishing the ethos of tutoring staff, displaying audiovisual slides to accompany verbal information, and engaging students interactively during the class presentation.

Attending the RMWCA Conference was a fun and invigorating experience! My thanks to everyone who planned, presented, and participated.

Reflections on 2017 RMWCA Tutor Conference:

“Michele E’s legacy and speech encouraged me to be joyous in my wandering (both physical and intellectual).”

“The growth mindset session has helped me work on the way I present information to foster a growth mindset. I use this in session and when volunteering.”

“I’ve been thinking about what/when is literacy sponsored. The high school collaboration panel in particular really informed me and added to my appreciation for my own role as sponsor.”

“From the non-traditional writer’s session, I learned that for some people, learning starts with identity. If someone has a negative view of themselves (i.e., I am just a dropout or I’m never going to get this), a teacher/tutor’s primary job is to help that person feel capable of learning.”

Helpful Resources from RMWCA Writing Centers

- **tutor blog**
<http://www.msuwritingcenterblog.wordpress.com>
- **for group project communication and project management**
<http://www.freedcamp.com>
- **for staff training and professional development**
<http://www.guidebook.com>