



Logo by Terry Dolson

Announcements

by Joe Essid, Writing Center Director

A THANK YOU TO LEE CARLETON

Mr. Carleton's position, as Assistant Director of the Writing Center, will end this term. As he pursues other job opportunities at and beyond Richmond, I'd like to thank him on behalf of the hundreds of writers he taught, the Consultants he trained, and the students who worked with him over the years. His enthusiasm for writing, for the Earth Lodge program he created, and for working with new media will be missed in our program.

CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR

Each year, faculty in the program nominate Writing Consultants in their fourth year for this award.

Nadine Weiss, nominated by Suzanne Jones, is our Consultant of the Year for 2011. Nadine will receive a certificate of recognition and a gift card to the UR Bookstore.

I also want to thank our other nominees: Katie Nunziata, nominated by Myra Daleng, Jessie Pascarelli, nominated by Lee Carleton, Kelsey Pietranton, nominated by Olivier Delers, and Dan Schauder, nominated by Jennifer Cable.

I cast no votes, or we would have several winners. Factors that lead me to pick our recipient include additional praise from faculty and writers received each semester. So please contact me whenever a Consultant has provided outstanding support for student writing.

To all of our nominees, your strong

Richmond Writing Across the Curriculum Newsletter

Issue 28, April 2011

work has left its mark on many writers at Richmond, and you deserve praise for this as you go beyond the campus gates.

NEW WRITER'S WEB MATERIALS

We now have a new page for locating images licensed with creative-commons status. This issue arose after a cease-and-desist order from a *New York Times* photographer landed in one of my students' in-boxes. Other changes include clarifications at the pages "Numbers and Numerals," "Capitalization," and "Titles: Underline or Quotations?"

NOMINATIONS NEEDED FOR WRITING CONSULTANTS

I need faculty assistance in finding first and second-year students who are strong writers with excellent time-management and interpersonal skills. Please let them know that you are nominating them for a Writing Consultancy / enrollment in ENGL 383, and send me their names. I will teach a section of 383 each semester next year. After successfully completing the course, the students will become paid Consultants at the Center or assigned to a class.

NO-SHOW APPOINTMENTS? IDEAS NEEDED

I audited our appointments at the Center in February, and approximately one appointment in ten has been a no-show. Many other have been last-minute cancellations. Next year, we will try a more immediate approach with no-shows: one no-show and no more appointments until the writer contacts us. Professors will also be notified of no-shows by students in their courses. Have other ideas to reduce no-shows? Please share them at our Facebook page.

ADVICE FOR CONSULTANTS STUDYING ABROAD, BY MEGAN VENABLE

Congratulations to the Consultants who will be studying abroad next fall! It will certainly be an exciting and enlightening experience. To help ensure that you can continue working at the Writing Center when you return to campus, remember to stay on the roster, fill out your preference form online, and let the program administrators know when you will again be available to work. Send your

updates to the Center, and maybe you can be featured in the newsletter or on one of our online resources!

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT TERM

Over the summer holidays, I will work on faculty & Consultant assignments for fall. Note that those not submitting the required forms make a lot more work for everyone; the forms, on the other hand, track into an easily organized spread sheet.

I'll soon put out an e-mail with the URL for the preference form.

NEW CONSULTANT-ADVISORS

This year, Lee Carleton and I began recruiting a "first team" of students we initially called "Captains" to design a program that will begin in earnest this fall. That semester, all Consultants will have an Advisor from among our experienced staff to hold occasional meetings, provide support for conferences, hold special workshops, and marshal our new-media resources to help their peers do their best work. Special thanks to this year's Consultant-Advisors!

Chanel Adams
Jerry Giordano
Athena Hensel
Sarah Lucier
Jessie Pascarelli

NEW MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT, BY MEGAN VENABLE

The Writing Center has been increasing its efforts to reach out to students in new ways in our ever-growing electronic era. In order to get short, timely messages out to Consultants and writers, the Center now has an online chat feature through Meebo.com, a Facebook profile, and a Twitter feed. Students, and especially Consultants, can "Like" our Facebook page, listed as University of Richmond Writing Center, to follow the newsfeed, and to offer as a resource for writers to find more information. The Twitter feed can be accessed directly at twitter.com/richmondwriting.

The study of writing focuses on effective communication, so we are thoughtfully deploying social media as part of a multi-faceted approach offering students several

resources through which we can answer questions about who we are, what we do, and where we can be found. Further, these media will help us form a more connected community within the Writing Center. As students add and follow the pages, Consultants can use discussion board features (Facebook) and @ replies (Twitter) to comment on the program and build its presence on campus. As we of the digital generation know, social media is ineffective without people behind it, so let's bring these projects to life with our participation & input!

A GRADE IS MORE THAN A LETTER
BY MARIJA RAJTIK

A, B, C, D, F. These letters have come to hold great power over us. Even though an "A" and an "F" are separated by a mere four letters in the alphabet, for a college student it feels like the difference between a six-figure salary and "Do you want fries with that?"

To avoid the dreaded F, students have grown accustomed to cramming for exams and memorizing facts and formulas. But when it comes to writing an essay, last minute cramming is often not an effective option. Writing cannot be quickly learned. It is a tool in a college student's kit – effective use must be perfected over time and with care.

Writing is an intensely personal activity requiring significant initiative and effort. We can't blame our own poor writing on our teachers. The grade we receive on an essay is a reflection solely of our own work. That is why a paper stamped with anything lower than an A or B can feel like an insult sometimes. However, the letter grade can be the least telling evaluation of a returned essay. It is the teacher's comments that are most valuable.

I have had professors at the extremes of commentary: one typed a page of detailed notes for every student and one never even returned an essay. Some professors use hand-written commentary while others use electronic resources to embed their feedback.

For me, the most useful feedback I have ever received was courtesy of an English professor in a film course about effectively citing films for support. This was something I wasn't used to doing in high school. After my first paper, I received a B+ with comments in the margin telling me to go beneath the surface of the scenes for what the director is really trying to say. Along with pointing out the areas where I was weak and drew too much on

class notes, the professor wrote that she liked the paragraphs where I analyzed the scenes on my own and gave my own ideas. She wanted me to do more of this on our next essay.

This was helpful to me because, with her commentary, my essay now served as an example for me to learn from and build upon for my next essay. Do not be afraid of a paper covered in a teacher's handwriting, for then you have specific guidance – fear the paper with no guidance but a letter grade. Knowing specific pros and cons of an essay is often more helpful than a list of vague statements in the margins like "More" or "Deeper" which some professors consider effective - more of what? What does "deeper" mean? The more edits and comments on a paper, the more a professor is telling you about your work. This helps you to better understand the way he or she grades to guide you in the future.

I know it is hard, but we must not obsess over the A, B, C, D or F, but focus instead on the feedback. That is what will encourage us to keep up the good work, tweak some aspects or to learn to focus our argument. If a professor doesn't automatically write helpful commentary, go in to office hours and ask for suggestions. If you leave still questioning how to succeed with future assignments, come see us at the Writing Center.

***Do YOU have a photo,
an announcement, cartoon or
idea for our next newsletter?***
Please contact Joe Essid
(jessid@richmond.edu).