

# *Southeastern Writing Center Association*

*Writing (Centers) in the South  
Special Miseries and Extraordinary Possibilities*

*October 27-29, 1994*

*Keynote Speaker:*

*Lil Brannon  
Professor of English,  
Director of the Center for  
Excellence in Teaching and Learning  
SUNY, Albany*

*"Being a writer in the South has its own special miseries...which include isolation, madness, ties, amnesia, lust, and loss of ordinary powers of speech. One may go for days without saying a word."*

*-Walker Percy*

*Rollins College  
Winter Park, Florida*



Southeastern Writing Center Association  
Officers and Executive Board Members

President

Kirsten Benson  
301 Stokely Athletics Center  
University of Tennessee  
Knoxville, TN 37996  
(615) 974-1252  
FAX (615) 974-4691  
KBenson@utkvt1.utk.edu

Vice President & 1993 Conference Director

Christine Cozzens  
Agnes Scott College  
Decatur, GA 30030  
(404) 371-6221

Secretary

Jenna Wright  
130D Humanities  
University of Tennessee at Martin  
Martin, TN 38238  
(901) 587-7300

Treasurer & 1992 Conference Director

Tom MacLennan  
The Writing Place  
University of North Carolina at Wilmington  
Wilmington, NC 28403-3297  
(910) 395-3754  
FAX (910) 395-3114

Immediate Past President

Barry Brunetti  
Div. of Language Arts  
Gulf Coast Community College  
5230 W. Hwy 98  
Panama City, FL 32401  
(904) 769-1551 ext. 2872

Focuses Editor

William C. Wolff  
Department of English  
Appalachian State University  
Boone, NC 28608  
(704) 262-2321

Southern Discourse Editor

John Burrows  
English Department  
Florida International University  
North Miami Campus  
3000 N.E. 145 Street  
North Miami, FL 33181-3600  
(305) 940-5927

Selected Papers Interim Editor  
& At-Large Member

Steve Braye  
Box 2312  
Elon College  
Elon, NC 27244  
(910) 584-2122  
BrayeS@Vax1.Elon.edu

At Large Member

Philip Gardner  
Francis Marion College  
Florence, SC 29501  
(803) 661-1511, -1528, -1370

1994 Conference Co-Directors

Twila Yates Papay  
Beth Rapp Young  
Department of Writing Programs  
Rollins College  
1000 Holt Ave., Box 2655  
Winter Park, FL 32789  
TYPapay@Rollins.edu  
(407) 646-2191  
BYoung@Rollins.edu  
(407) 646-2669

Writing (Centers) in the South  
Special Miseries and Extraordinary Possibilities

SWCA Annual Conference  
Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida  
October 27-29, 1994

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Lil Brannon, Professor of English and Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, SUNY-Albany

Thursday, October 27

2:00-6:00p	Registration	Writing Center
4:00-5:00p	Scenic Boat Tour	Alfond Boathouse
5:00-6:30p	Southern Barbecue	McKean Lakefront
6:45-7:00p	Welcome to Conference	Galloway Room
7:00-7:30p	<i>"The Innate Storyteller"</i> Stephen Briggs, Professor of Psychology	Galloway Room
7:30-8:30p	<i>"Saving Ourselves from Madness: Directors Tell Their Stories"</i> Moderator: Tom MacLennan, Univ. of North Carolina at Wilmington	Galloway Room

Friday, October 28

8:00-10:15a	Keynote Speech: <i>"Unmasking the Writing Center: Shifting Our Angles of Vision"</i> - Lil Brannon, SUNY, Albany SWCA Business Meeting Omelette & Fruit Breakfast	Galloway Room
10:15a-5:00p	<i>"Travelling with the Written Word on the Information Highway"</i> - Hap Aziz, Intelligent Designs, Inc., Orlando, FL	Academic Resource Center
10:30-11:45a	Session One A) <i>Survivals: Directors and Tutors</i> Moderator: Thuy-Tran Nguyen <i>"Culture Wars Among Southern Writing Tutors: Babyboomers vs. Babybusters"</i> - Brenda W. Thomas, LaGrange College, LaGrange, GA This presentation addresses the difficulties of training and managing a diverse staff of professional and peer tutors from different age, ethnic, and educational backgrounds.	French House

Friday, October 28, continued

Session One, continued

*"Journal of a Writing Center Director"* - Loretta Cobb, Univ. of Montevallo, Birmingham, AL

In this retrospective journal, I hope to employ many voices, the compilation of which has led to a divine madness that kept me propelled in the teaching profession almost 30 years--long enough to draw a pension and be eligible from group insurance in order to seek a cure for madness in my dotage.

**B) "Mindstyles and Writing Centers: The Flexing Ethos"**

- Tom MacLennan, Univ. of North Carolina at Wilmington

Moderator: Carter Gray

This presentation will explore ways of encouraging consultants and clients to employ mindstyles outside their natural preferences, which Tony Gregory's Mind Style Delineator refers to as "flexing."

Woolson House

**C) Not All Diversity is Obvious**

Moderator: Tami Thomas, Walters State Community College, Morristown, TN

Faculty Club

*"The Artist Writes, Too: Tutoring the Visual-Spatial Student"* - Jane Bowman Smith, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC

Spatially gifted people can have unique difficulties with writing; these pose potential problems for Writing Center staff, whose primary gifts are likely to be linguistic. This presentation will discuss tutorials in which mutually discovered strategies helped an artist to use both her spatial and linguistic intelligences when writing.

*"Tutoring Learning-Disabled Students: Their Attitudes, Our Techniques"* - Gloria G. Jones, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC

While we have learned how to help students with many kinds of problems, learning disabled students present a real challenge for Writing Centers. This presentation demonstrates some of the range of learning disabilities, how their disabilities affected their attitude toward writing, and the techniques we used in working with them.

*"Tutor, Know Thyself"* - Virginia Dumont, Staci Hunneycutt, and Jennifer Goard, Lander University, Greenwood, SC

The Writing Center at Lander University recently participated for the first time in formal learning-style inventories. The impact of increased learning-style knowledge on the work in the Writing Center has been both more-and less--than expected.

Noon-2:00p

Lunch on your own

Friday, October 28, continued

2:15p-3:30p

Session Two

A) "The Trick of Treating: Diversity & Collaboration" - Ted McFerrin, Collin County Community College, Plano, TX and Margaret Rose Marek, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX

Woolson House

Moderator: Jen Judge

This interactive workshop will explore the diverse needs of Writing Center clients with a practical demonstration of techniques for moving students from isolation to collaboration.

B) Writing Center Dialectics: Dependency, Harmony, Diversity

Faculty Club

Moderator: Kristen Berquist

*"Difficult Clients and Tutor Dependency: Helping Overly Dependent Clients Become More Independent Writers"* - Kristin Walker, Midlands Technical College, Columbia, SC

This presentation helps define overdependency through a review of Writing Center theory and suggests plans of action tutors and Writing Center directors can implement to help overly dependent clients find a balance between complete self-reliance and overdependency.

*"Writing Center Co-Dependency: When Nurturing Becomes Necessity"* - Jane M. Kirby, Miller-Motte Junior College, Wilmington, NC

The interaction between a Writing Center consultant and a student can evolve into several kinds of relationships: including at best, mutual exploration of thought processes and the text, and slightly less desirable, a teacher-student relationship where the ultimate goal of improved work emerges. My presentation will focus on two case studies in which I have personally observed this phenomenon.

*"Community within Chaos: A Harmonic Dialectic"* - Dawn Radford, University of North Carolina at Wilmington

Using my own experience as a Writing Place consultant, I will explore the place of trust in the Writing Center community and how this sense of trust develops into a harmonic dialectic, simultaneously enabling student and consultant to maintain individuality and ownership of work.

C) "Free Speech, PC, and Frightful Language: A Frank Conversation"

French House

- Dee McGraw, Eckerd College

Moderator: Jen Stuart

This workshop will address some of the sticky issues of language use. How can we help clients avoid using hurtful language, without imposing an overly restrictive set of rules? How can we empower our clients to write what they want to say, without sacrificing our own values in the process?

3:30-4:00p

Coffee Break

Writing Center

Friday, October 28, continued

4:00-5:15p      Session Three

A) "Divine Frenzy: How Writing Centers Wield Order & Chaos to Create New Paradigms" - Alan Hatch, Craig Johnson, Twila Yates Papay, Beth Rapp Young, Sheila Scoville, Jennifer Young, Rollins College Writing Center, Winter Park, FL  
Moderator: Brian Maloney

Woolson House

While recognizing that structure gets things done, this workshop also recognizes chaos as an extension of order, arguing that those things which seem random may support a more complex reality. Apparent randomness encourages clients and consultants to try new ideas and experiment in writing.

B) Southern Voices & Fearful Spirits  
Moderator: Jenn Trono

Faculty Club

"*Maintaining and Transforming the Southern Voice*" - Carol A. Howell, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL

The traditional Southern voice is a voice applauded and revered, sought after and nourished--until the speaker enters college and becomes part of the academic world. Part of our job as Writing Center tutors is to help students develop an academic voice that will be listened to and respected by the academic community. This paper explore the need for the development and the means for developing this new voice.

"*Familiarity Breeds Contempt, or 'What am I Gonna Write?'*" - Katharine Wilson, Francis Marion University, Florence, SC

Some TV-indoctrinates students can't write personal-experience papers because life isn't always revved up to TV's artificial levels, these students think their own lives are untextured and not worth dissection. I discuss how TV dulls students' ability to investigate familiar subjects, and how to sharpen that ability.

C) Research & Ideology in the Writing Center  
Moderator: Christine Ng-A-Fook

French House

"*Writing Centers and Qualitative Research*" - Kirsten F. Benson  
University of Tennessee at Knoxville

The major journals in composition publish articles which borrow methodologies from other disciplines, calling themselves qualitative, ethnographic, or case studies. How do these borrowed techniques contribute to inquiry in composition studies? How well have we learned to adapt them to the needs of our discipline?

Friday, October 28, continued

Session Three, continued

*"Political Ideology and Pedagogy: The Light We See By, The Thing We See"* - Phillip Gardner, Francis Marion University, Florence, SC

My paper will focus on the value of Writing Centers as sites for innovative ideas and practices, a litmus test of sports for putting theory into action. The light we see by may be ideological. The thing we see however, must always be pedagogically sound, or we have gone too far.

5:15-6:30p	Reception	Writing Center
6:30-7:45p	Dinner on your own	
8:00p-?	The Mystery of Edwin Drood (optional)	

Saturday, October 29

8:30-9:15a	Continental breakfast	Galloway Room
------------	-----------------------	---------------

9:30-10:45a	Session Four	
-------------	--------------	--

A) *Extraordinary Possibilities: Creativity & Professionalism in the Writing Center*

Woolson House

Moderator: Cary McWhorter

*"Becoming a Creative Writing Center"* - Lisa C. Birnbaum & Cathleen Kaufmann, University of Tampa, Tampa, FL

This presentation suggests ways for writing centers to unify the campus writing community by involving creative writers. Co-sponsoring campus readings, staffing the writing center with prominent student writers, and offering workshops in preparation for readings and publication can promote the center's usefulness as a resource for all writers.

*"Nurturing Spirits: Training and Morale in the Writing Center"* - Marshall Thomas Barth, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL

Creating an environment for students that fosters trust, learning, and creativity requires such an environment among a Writing Center's staff. Fostered by training, morale transforms training into a sustentative intra-Center rapport, into an endeavor in which all join, a quest for the Center of Writing.

Saturday, October 29, continued

Session Four, continued

B) Writing Center Evolutions

Moderator: Josh Heald

Academic Resource  
Center

*"Making a Case for Computer Grammar Checkers: How One Academic Resource Center Helps Students Negotiate the Madness of Grammar Checker Programs"* - Sarah Cordi, Nora Bingenheimer, Ava Field, Jessica Klarp, Brook Loope, Jen Mock, Wendy Brandon and Suzanne Robertshaw, Rollins College Academic Resource Center, Winter Park, FL

This presentation will explore the arguments against several grammar checker programs, at the same time demonstrating how this software is used in the Academic Resource Center with students of all backgrounds. Then we will present data from quantitative and qualitative research on student preference and use of grammar checkers at Rollins.

11:00a-Noon

"Breaking the Rules: Peer Tutors Tell Their Stories"

Galloway Room

Co-hosted by peer tutors from Agnes Scott College (Nora Kelly Holton, Geraldine Amis, and Pamela Peel) and Rollins College (Melissa Franklin, Mims Rouse, and Johanna Weiss)



## Lil Brannon

*I write all the time, every day, usually in the morning, but always every day. I write some of my best stuff at work, at my desk, with pen and paper, and plenty of interruptions. Give me some quiet and I go nuts. Give me solitude and I'll vacuum. I fill my writing up with people. And I never stop. Take that back. I did stop once, and learned never to do that again. Stopping is bad, only because starting up is so hard. The hardest part is getting started. So if you don't stop, you skip the hardest part. So I don't stop. . . .*

*Telling tales is risky business--risky, that is, if you want to know the truth. Facts are a lot easier than the truth. Facts only need witnesses--need corroborating storytellers. I have none here--no one to step forward and say, "Hey y'all, Lil ain't joking. This is the way it is." All I have is the way I remember the story. And if I can fashion it carefully, say it just right, then I may have crafted the truth, however uncertain the facts. So with that as a preamble (or a downright ramble if you want to get technical), let's get down to business. Tom tells me that you want to know how I write.*

*Can't imagine why anyone would care about that, why anyone would give a hoot, why anyone would be dying to know how I put words on paper, anyone--except Alice, and only Alice because she asked me once, asked flat out when she caught me writing poetry back in Commerce, back then when I'd gone into hiding, been in hiding since my experience with a famous Southern poet back in college. See, I had gone to this small college, this women's college back in South Carolina. Each year the fifteen women in the creative writing seminar got to have their poetry commented on by the distinguished poet who they imported to campus each spring. Every year I was in college I applied to be in that class--loved writing poetry--thought I could spend my whole life doing that. No one told me that most poets get paid in copies of journals (hard to pay rent on that). No one told me to my face either how godawful my poetry was. I should have known, should have inferred, each year when I was turned down for that class. It wasn't until my senior year that I got in, and then probably because I was the only English major who hadn't taken it.*

*Well, about midterm we sent our three best poems to this famous poet. I thought mine were great, couldn't wait until he came to Converse to discuss them with the class. He came. He came to the class. We sat around a large oak table; he stood at a podium. He began. Miss Smith? One young woman raised her hand. And then he would describe the imagery or the sense of the poem. It was fantastic. I waited impatiently, waited for him to get to mine. He did another, then another, and then, Miss Errop?--that was me--I raised my hand. The room changed. He walked from behind the podium over to where I was sitting. Folded my poems. Bent over. Looked me square in the eye--and said, "You need to learn to lie." I was dumbfounded. But somehow I managed to say, "Mr. Dickey, I though poetry was about truth." And then he said, "If this is truth, you need to learn to lie."*

*That's how I learned about truth, how it's important to a good story or a poem to get it right even if it ain't accurate . . . .*

From *Writers on Writing*, Volume II, edited by Tom Waldrep, New York: Random House, 1988)

Lil Brannon is Professor of English, and Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, at the State University of New York at Albany. She has been a member of the executive committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication; of the delegate assembly of the Modern Language Association; and the executive committee as well as the team of consultant/evaluators of the Council of Writing Program Administrators.

She is the author of three books: *Writers Writing*, written with Vara Neverow-Turk and Melinda Knight; *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing*, written with C.H. Knoblauch; and *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy*, also written with C.H. Knoblauch. Her other publications include numerous scholarly articles and contributions to several books.

*A very special thanks to our fantastic Administrative Assistant, Nancy Marshall, whose work never stops.*

*Special thanks for cheerful assistance from Peer Writing Consultants George Bahler, Todd Bellochio, Marc Consalo, Carol D'Orto, Vanessa Garay, Heather Garrett, Leslie Gibson, Ellen Harris, Jennifer Harris, Tom Joyner, Dario Moore, Gregory Mullins, Julie-Ann Neubaum, Sam Pagan, Margey Plane, Rob Reverter, Sheila Scoville, Jessica Smith, Max Wheeler, Shelly Wyatt, and Jen Young; Peer Language Consultants Robin Bennett, Sharon Beville, Jennifer Crawford, Travis Dickson, Justin Hesenius, Jocelyn James, Kelly Klesius, David Lairson, Alex Lowe, Sharon Miller, Uyeh Thuc Nguy, Matt Raymond, Amy Sabatino, Jennifer Schaefer, Ed Scheer, Erica Veit, Peyton Waggener, Colleen Walsh, Kelly Weinmeister, and Andrea Weisman; and Amanda Dowling, Jolie Sester, Frank "Paco" Marmolejos, and Jolie Sester.*

