

# — From the Center —

## The Newsletter of the William L. Adams Writing Center

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### Center Presents Inaugural Poet Miller Williams

As a special feature of TCU's 1998 Creative Writing Awards Program, the William L. Adams Writing Center is pleased to present a reading by Miller Williams. Williams will read in the ballroom of TCU's student center at 3:30 p.m. on March 26, immediately after the Creative Writing Awards Program. His reading is made possible by a grant from the King Foundation.

Williams was commissioned to craft a poem for the Second Inauguration of President Clinton, following in the footsteps of past inaugural poets Robert Frost and Maya Angelou. "Of History and Hope," the poem Williams wrote for the occasion, traces the path of the American people—where they have been and where they might go.

Mr. Williams is a Professor of English at the University of Arkansas and former director of the University of Arkansas Press. He is the author of twenty-seven books including *The Ways We Touch* (University of Illinois Press, 1997), which includes the Inaugural Poem; *Points of Departure* (University of Illinois Press, 1994); and *Living on the Surface: New and Selected Poems* (Louisiana State University Press, 1989). In addition to these books of poetry, Mr. Williams has published critical studies about the works of John Ciardi and John Crowe Ransom, and he is the author of such popular textbooks as *Contemporary Poetry in America* (Random House, 1972) and *How Does a Poem Mean?* (with John Ciardi, Houghton Mifflin, 1974). Williams is also an accomplished translator; he is currently contributing editor of *Translation Review*, and

he has served as President of the American Literary Translators Association.

Williams, the son of a Methodist minister, was born in Arkansas. From the first time he wrote a poem (to ease the loss of a favorite pet), Williams felt the lure of poetry. It would take many years, however, before he could follow that lure to his true contentment. Starting out as an English major in college, Williams was advised to switch to biology by a school counselor. Thinking the man had his best interests at heart, Williams did as he was told. He would pursue this line of study to the verge of a Ph. D. before committing himself to poetry. Williams took a job at Sears to support his family as he began his new life as a poet.

Soon Williams was publishing poems in a number of journals and newspapers. He also began forging friendships with fellow writers. One of these new friendships resulted in a recommendation for a fellowship at the Breadloaf Writers Conference, a prestigious workshop in Vermont. This fellowship opened the door to several teaching jobs, among them a professorship at the University of Arkansas. It was there that he met, counseled, and campaigned for a politically ambitious young law professor named William Jefferson Clinton. This friendship with Clinton led to the invitation to compose and read a poem for Clinton's Second Inauguration.

Williams's reading is free and open to the public. Please encourage your students and other interested parties to attend.

### Writing Center Offers a Variety of Services

The William L. Adams Writing Center offers a variety of services to the entire TCU community: faculty and staff as well as undergraduate and graduate students. The staff of writing specialists provides advice and instruction about many types of writing projects: essays and research papers, summaries and abstracts, proposals, recommendation reports, case studies, lab reports, and theses and dissertations. The staff is also happy to help students and faculty with business and professional letters, speeches and presentations, letters of application, résumés, and creative writing projects. Usually a specific piece of writing or an assignment serves as the focus of the conference; however, upon request, staff members will also provide tutorials to review a specific aspect of writing such as essay exams, documentation, punctuation, or usage.

Staff members will help students organize ideas, expand and develop a paper, and clarify matters of style and correctness. Tutors will also explain specific rules of usage and answer questions about research and documentation of sources. However, the staff cannot assist students with take-home exams and final portfolios or proofread student papers. Also, staff members cannot guarantee a particular grade or even suggest what grade a student is likely to receive on an assignment.

The Writing Center has a computer lab equipped with Windows 95 computers and software for Internet research, word processing, and presentation design.

### Staff Members Available to Address Classes

Professors who would like to arrange for a Writing Center

staff member to address their classes and inform students about the services of the William L. Adams Writing Center should call 921-7221. The presentations are around ten minutes in length and, therefore, will not consume an entire class meeting.

### **Center Reports 4,552 Student Contacts in the 1997 Fall Semester**

Students made good use of the Writing Center in the fall of 1997; the Center recorded 4,552 student visits. Students used the Writing Center computers a total of 2,901 times during the fall, and writing consultants and peer tutors offered their advice concerning student writing in 1,651 tutorial sessions. In addition to these contacts, staff members answered many phoned-in questions about writing and documentation and helped a number of professors polish papers for publication.

### **Writing Center Initiates Research Projects**

The Writing Center has begun several research projects designed to assess the effectiveness of the Center and to explore ways in which the Center can better serve the TCU community. During the last weeks of the fall 1997 semester, students visiting the Writing Center for help on papers were asked to complete a survey at the conclusion of their tutorial sessions. The survey asked students how they learned about the Center, how often they visited the Center, and how effective they found the tutorial in terms of improving their writing. The survey also asked students if they planned to continue to make use of the Center's services and if they would recommend the Center to friends or classmates. On the back of the survey, students could write comments. Dr. Jeanette Harris, Director of the Writing Center, plans to use the results of the survey as part of a long-term project to assess the effectiveness of the Center.

In addition to this basic research, Jennifer Mansfield, a graduate student in education, conducted a study concerning students' perceptions of Writing Center tutorials. For two days, Mansfield surveyed and conducted exit interviews with students and tutors in order to determine the main concerns of students who sought help at the Center and to discover how they felt about their tutorials.

The initial findings of the surveys conducted by Dr. Harris and Ms. Mansfield indicate that students are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences at the Writing Center.

### **Tutor Profiles**

The Writing Center is proud of its peer tutors, students who have been specially selected and trained to conduct writing conferences. Training for peer tutors is conducted by Dr. Harris and is an ongoing process that extends throughout the semester. The Writing Center would like to acknowledge the hard work and professionalism of several peer tutors who are graduating seniors this spring:

#### **Spencer Baum**

Spencer is an economics major from Albuquerque, New Mexico. In addition to working at the Writing Center, Spencer has written numerous editorials for the *Skiff*, and he recently extensively revised the Writing Center's web page. After graduation, Spencer plans to travel abroad before seeking a position in business. He is currently taking a course in Chinese because he hopes to work in Shanghai.

#### **Denise Nichols**

Denise, who is from San Antonio, has worked at the Writing Center for four years, longer than any other student tutor. She is an English and political science major with a minor in Spanish. She plans to attend law school and study Latin American affairs after graduation.

#### **Mary Ripper**

A modern dance major from Houston, Mary has taught at the *Universidad de las Américas* in Puebla, Mexico, and she has studied with Fernando Bujones, a world-renowned classical dancer. Her senior choreography project was selected for performance at the American Dance Festival. Mary intends to travel, perform, and teach after she graduates from TCU.

#### **Chris Smith**

Chris is a history and philosophy major from Burleson, Texas. He is well known about campus for his many *Skiff* editorials. After graduation, Chris plans to pursue a graduate degree in philosophy.

**The William L. Adams Writing Center is located in the Rickel Building, Room 100. The Center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. till 5 p.m. Phone 921-7221 to arrange for consultations and appointments.**

**Internet address:**  
<http://gamma.is.tcu.edu/wrt>

