WE MAY BE TURNING 30, BUT
...YOU CAN STILL TRUST US.

We extend a heartfelt invitation to students, faculty, and current and all former writing consultants to join us in celebrating our 30 years of service at the W.L. Adams Center for Writing at Texas Christian University. On September 4, 2018, we will host a reception and lecture from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the ballroom of the BLUU, open to the public.

Keynote speaker will be Professor Pam B. Childers, board consultant of the International Writing Across the Curriculum organization and retired Caldwell Chair of Composition at the McCallie School in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Dr. Childers is a prominent presence in writing center scholarship. Her books include the award-winning The High School Writing Center: Establishing and Maintaining One; Programs and Practices: Writing Across the Secondary School Curriculum (with Gere and Young); ARTiculating: Teaching Writing in a Visual World (with Hobson and Mullin).

We first opened our doors to TCU's writing community on August 1, 1988, funded by a $240,000 pledge from the Union Pacific Foundation. Union Pacific’s CEO at the time was William L. Adams, a visionary geologist, oil man, and philanthropist. Adams recognized a practical need to improve the writing of students interested in future business careers. In 1993, the University named its writing center after him to honor Adams’ commitment. His foresight about the importance of writing has paid big dividends for TCU students and faculty: we set a record in 2018, completing 11,140 writing tutorials.

In our early days, we averaged about 3,500 tutorials per year. With the advent of the internet and the formation of the Graduate Writing Center (2006), we have experienced considerable growth in face-to-face and online tutorials. We now work with graduate students and faculty from all disciplines on long projects such as articles, theses, dissertations, and book manuscripts, and we co-sponsor Dissertation and Thesis Bootcamp with the Office of Graduate Studies and Research’s Graduate Enhancement Modules (GEMS) program every year. Our Writing Associates are routinely embedded as tutors in courses across many disciplines. We now have outposts for night hours in the Mary Couts Burnett Library and Tom Brown-Pete Wright residence hall. (For more of our history, see pages 4-5.)

“I would like to invite all former and current writing consultants, peer and professional, and anyone interested to come celebrate the center with us,” says Dr. Steve Sherwood. “Here’s to the next thirty years.”

Dr. Pam B. Childers

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We are always looking for mature, responsible TCU students with strong writing skills to work as peer writing consultants at the William L. Adams Writing Center in 419 Reed Hall or in our Library Annex. Peer consultants typically work ten hours per week and earn at least minimum wage. We are actively seeking graduate students to serve as peer writing consultants in our Graduate Writing Center. All TCU students who are interested in applying should email Dr. Steve Sherwood at s.sherwood@tcu.edu. Qualified applicants will be asked to provide a writing sample and at least one faculty recommendation. If we don't have any immediate openings, we will be happy to add qualified applicants to our list of potential future peer writing consultants.

*denotes graduate student status
Start With Heart, and Keep that Logic Flowing

TCU’s community of researchers and writers bade a fond farewell this spring to Dr. Bonnie M. Melhart, Associate Provost for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies and University Programs. The Center for Writing was among the university programs overseen by Melhart beginning in 2004 when she moved to her corner office in Sadler Hall from the College of Science and Engineering. We are grateful for her years of administrative support for our staff and programs, and we will miss her wise counsel and forward-thinking style.

“As the Writing Center’s director, I’ve always appreciated Bonnie’s leadership style,” Director Steve Sherwood says. “From the beginning, she would ask perceptive questions, including what resources we needed and why, and listen carefully to the answers. Whenever she could, she raised our budget to cover supplies or wages for new writing consultants. A straight shooter, she would also tell me when she had no funding to offer. Bonnie encouraged me and her other directors to run our own units, often taking a lighter touch to supervision, but she also left no doubt about who was in charge.”

Melhart’s signature at TCU was her cultivation of the comprehensively tiered research culture so vital to a growing university. Future TCU students and faculty may not know Bonnie Melhart personally, but their lives will be impacted by the decisions she made. Melhart instituted a career development program for grad students that includes assistance with research travel and health insurance, she initiated the publication of TCU Endeavors, a magazine to showcase TCU faculty research, and she set into motion the Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Initiative, which gives TCU some tall bragging rights, but also provides a solid foundation for those who intend to pursue graduate degrees.

We were proud to be a component in Dr. Melhart’s vision for supporting student and faculty research. With her quiet, consistent affirmation across the years, we more than doubled our contact hours with TCU writers, culminating in over 11,000 tutorials in 2017 alone. In addition to our usual tutorials with the typical undergraduate struggling to write the garden-variety term paper, we now work with increasing numbers of graduate students and faculty from the TCU research community, writing for publication or funding. During Melhart’s tenure, we also firmed up our identity as a TCU unit uniquely positioned to support writers in the “hard sciences,” whether through our Graduate Writing Center, our annual Dissertation and Thesis Boot Camps, our Writing Associates embedded in undergraduate courses, or individual assistance navigating the shoals of American Psychological Association or American Medical Association documentation tyles required for publication.

As a young woman, Melhart showed aptitude with English and music, but she ultimately chose a different language: mathematics, particularly the logic inherent in writing proofs. Though she holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in math, her career path was definitively shaped when she chose yet another linguistic path: a second master’s degree in Information and Computer Science at University of California-Irvine in 1988, followed by a Ph.D. from the same institution two years later. It was a moment, she says, when “the nerds in the corner” commanded more respect than the machines they were programming. She recalls a key moment of insight about writing as a graduate student. Whether writing basic assembly language for a machine or using the English language to affect the outcomes of human beings, writing is a profound tool that creates tangible, real-world applications, if “you keep that logic flowing.” Dr. Melhart later brought the concept of “crucial conversations” training to TCU, which enables more productive conflict resolution. “You have to start with heart,” Melhart says. “Because coercion does not work. You have to ask yourself, what do I really want out of this situation?”

What next? We posed that question to Dr. Melhart as she was on her way to attend an evening function for Ranch Management on what was supposed to have been her last work day at TCU. “My husband and I are big Lewis and Clark fans,” she answered, without any hesitation. She then described the travel plans she and her husband are considering, to retrace the famous historical duo’s path, beginning in St. Louis and visiting national parks along the way to the West Coast. “And Antarctica,” she added, with a smile. “I'd like to go to Antarctica.”
The Idea of a Writing Center at TCU

“The most important issue to determine in considering the design for the Writing Center is if the center is to serve all aspects of the university or only a select and more narrow population of students within the university. Obviously the more broad the center’s mission and responsibilities, the more the demands that will be placed upon the center for services and, thus, the more extensive the Writing Center’s programs and facilities must be.”

Dr. Christina Murphy, A Conceptual Proposal for the TCU Writing Center, 1988

Our center was established through the personal generosity of William L. Adams, then-CEO of Union Pacific Railroad.

We have always selected and trained great tutors.

We have always understood that writing is a cool thing to do.

Our center was established through the personal generosity of William L. Adams, then-CEO of Union Pacific Railroad.

Current Director Steve Sherwood is the only original staff member who has been with us 30 years.

Dr. Jeanette Harris, Director 1997-2002

Can you spot the typo that momentarily made us famous? The snippet below appeared The Chronicle of Higher Education on January 25, 1989, when our center was still in its first year. Wait for it... From Writing Newsletter, a publication at Texas Christian University: “A total of 196 consultations for its first six weeks in operation indicates that the TCU Writing Center is off to an exceptionally good start—especially when this figure is compared to the totals for more established writing centers at other universities; Duke University's Writing Center, for example, serves 175 students per semester, while the TCU Writing Center has already exceeded this total in its first sex weeks.” How could anyone outdo them?

By the way, after 30 years, we still routinely provide more tutorials in a semester than many writing centers at much larger universities!
We were early adopters of online tutoring.

When did we start our traditional end-of-semester pizza lunches? Nobody remembers!

We assumed management of the Writing Associates Program in 2009.

Now we are here.

We established the Graduate Writing Center in 2006 and Dissertation Boot Camp in 2012.

And here:

"Maybe in a perfect world, all writers would have their own ready auditor—a teacher, a classmate, a roommate, an editor who would not only listen but draw them out, ask them questions they would not think to ask themselves. A writing center is an institutional response to this need... Writing centers are simply one manifestation—polished and highly visible—of a dialogue about writing that is central to higher education."

--Stephen North, “The Idea of a Writing Center” 1984

True to the original vision, we serve the entire TCU writing community.

And here:
Dr. Steve Sherwood (Director) has had two book chapters accepted for publication later this year, one a 48-page annotated bibliography of key works in the writing center field (for Writing Center Reference Guide, Colorado State UP) and the other a memoir titled “Mentors and Protégés: A Cautionary Tale” (for Do Better, Be Better: How Mentoring Happens, Jefferson Park Press). He also presented a short story to the Texas Association of Creative Writing Teachers Conference, a paper to the International Writing Centers Association Conference, and a memoir to the Conference of College Teachers of English. On May 10, 2018, he spoke to members of the Good Books, Good Friends book club at the Woman’s Club of Fort Worth about novel writing techniques. Having completed his thirtieth year at TCU, Sherwood continues to serve as a board member of the Conference of College Teachers of English and as secretary of the Texas Association of Creative Writing Teachers. In addition to directing the center, Sherwood teaches courses for TCU’s Master of Liberal Arts program on humor, survival, novel writing, creative nonfiction writing, and most recently nature writing. 2018 marks his sixteenth year as director.

Ms. Cynthia Shearer (Assistant Director) organizes Peer Tutor Training and coordinates the Writing Associates Program. Also, Ms. Carithers teaches composition and literature each semester. In Fall 2017, she taught a newly developed Introduction to Fiction course, which focused on Dystopian and Post-Apocalyptic literature, and she will teach a similar course, scheduled for this upcoming fall semester, which focuses on military-themed fiction. Additionally, Ms. Carithers teaches for the MLA program. Most recently, in Fall 2017, she taught a course titled War Stories: A Study Through Literature and Film for the program. In October 2018, Carithers will be presenting at the Northeast Popular/American Culture Association Conference in Worcester, Massachusetts. The paper title is “Hear Their Battle Cries: Female Soldiers in Modern Fiction.”

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Dr. Lindsay Dunn initiated an ongoing graduate student writing group, Write Now, to motivate and support graduate students undertaking the challenges of graduate seminar papers, theses, and dissertations. Dunn also taught Art in Africa in Fall 2017 and in Spring 2018, she taught Introduction to Art History, Women in Art, and Picturing Authority and Royalty in Europe, a course offered through TCU’s Master of Liberal Arts program. In Fall 2018, she will teach Introduction to Art History, co-teach Introduction to Women and Gender Studies, and will offer Artists at the Movies through the Master of Liberal Arts program. Dr. Dunn continues to present at academic conferences as she works to prepare article and book manuscripts on the visual rhetoric of Marie-Louise, House of Habsburg-Lorraine and other aristocratic women artists. In March 2018, she presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Eighteenth Century Studies (ASECS).

In early August, graduate students from many academic departments will convene on the opening day of TCU's annual Thesis and Dissertation Boot Camp, sponsored by the Center for Writing and the Graduate Enhancement Modules (GEMS) program of the Office of Graduate Studies and Research. The four-day workshop enables eligible grad students to articulate their personal writing goals for the coming year and share ideas, as well as to snag some seasoned advice from professors and build valuable contacts in a support network. The purpose is to help grad students jump-start their writing, ensuring they have identified strong support networks before the fall semester begins. The 2018 boot camp will be directed by Dr. Steve Sherwood, Director of the Center for Writing, assisted by various professional staff members.

Workshop content will address the perennial questions most grad students face as they juggle academic requirements with the realities and demands of daily life. **Why is writing a dissertation more challenging than ordinary academic writing? How do you make the crucial transition from the early "impostor syndrome" feeling to a triumphal oral defense? Is there a cure for procrastination?**

Rhetorical conventions differ across various disciplines, but Dissertation Boot Camp addresses the traits all programs have in common. Whether in the STEM fields or the humanities, students must be able to set realistic goals and organize their writing, which often requires them to double down on time management and setting both long-term and short-term goals. What are "SMART" goals? **(Answer: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timed.)** And did we mention procrastination?

Last year's camp took place August 7-10 in Reed Hall, conducted by Dr. Steve Sherwood, Director of the Center for Writing and Dr. Carrie Leverenz, Professor and Director of Composition in TCU's Department of English. Dr. Sherwood likens the dissertation process to wilderness survival strategies, reminding participants of the need to "see things as they really are," and to stay calm and focused, gather necessary resources, celebrate the small victories, and keep a sense of humor. It doesn't hurt, says Sherwood, to nurture oneself and significant others during the process and to ultimately enjoy the "hike."

"You're shifting from grad student into something else, switching from a mental space of analysis to creating," Dr. Leverenz advised at the 2017 meeting, reminding participants that dissertations not only serve as a personal benchmark of success; they have a civic function as well. “You are making your research public, and participating in the larger academic discourse. How will your project contribute to knowledge-making in your field?"

As each boot camp concludes, participants are encouraged to stay in touch with organizers and each other, and to consider joining a graduate-level writing group such as Dr. Lindsay Dunn’s Write Now.

**Write Now**, the newly organized graduate student writing group sponsored by the Center for Writing, aims to motivate and support graduate students during the challenging time of manuscript planning, researching, and writing. The group meets every Tuesday afternoon from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. with Dr. Lindsay Dunn in the Center’s conference room, 419-J Reed Hall. TCU graduate students at all stages of their careers and from all disciplines may participate in this writing group. Students who could benefit from the Tuesday afternoon sessions are encouraged to attend. Each meeting begins with a brief check-in and discussion of writing strategies and techniques before participants begin writing for the remainder of the period. Topics range from dissertation and thesis writing strategies to how to pitch and put together conference papers. Dr. Dunn coordinates all meetings and facilitates discussions. If you have questions about joining Write Now, or if you would like to first observe a session, please contact Dr. Dunn at lm.dunn@tcu.edu or (817) 257-6537.
TCU’s Writing Associates Program
Enters 12th Year

Professors interested in participating in the fall 2018 Writing Associates program should contact Ms. Cheryl Carithers by Friday, August 10.

TCU’s Writing Associates Program is now entering its twelfth year of serving faculty and students in undergraduate courses that emphasize writing. At the requests of professors we assign Writing Associates to classes in all disciplines, depending on available staff. This collaboration ensures that professors and students get focused attention from us.

Assistant Director Cheryl Carithers, who coordinates the program, says, “Our goal is to increase the number of courses and disciplines for which we provide support.” We determine writing associate placement according to timeliness of faculty requests and available staff.

Writing Associates, who also serve as peer writing consultants for the Center for Writing, receive extensive training from us and mentoring from the professors with whom they work. Writing Associates meet with students from their assigned classes during their regular tutoring hours, and familiarize other staff with course requirements in advance of student visits. Associates also have the opportunity to observe experienced professors as they incorporate writing into the class.

Center Director Steve Sherwood says, “This program demonstrates TCU’s ongoing commitment to ensuring that our students have upper-level writing experiences that enhance their ability to think critically and to lead, in whatever discipline or professional path they have chosen.” Originally funded by a 2006 Vision in Action grant, this program has had a sustained impact on TCU undergrads over the last decade.

Contact:
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Phone: 817-257-6534

Director’s Notes

When TCU’s new writing center opened its doors on August 1, 1988, its success was uncertain. Would students and faculty members embrace the need for improved writing skills across campus and our, at the time, somewhat experimental approach to delivering instruction? As one of the six original staff members and with a three-month-old son to support, I took to heart the administration’s caveats that we should hope for the best but update our résumés. I figured I would put in a couple of years at TCU and then move on.

Well, thirty years later the center is still here, and so am I.

Why did I stay? The answer is complex, but I suppose it mostly relates to the center’s mission, to help members of the TCU community become better writers, which I still wholeheartedly believe in. Dr. Christina Murphy, the center’s first director, had designed a place where writers of any level or any discipline could receive support and feedback from tutors equipped with empathy, writing expertise, good listening skills, and the kind of “intellectual and social agility” to intuit fellow writers’ strengths and weaknesses and devise ways to bolster the strengths and ameliorate the weaknesses. In her initial proposal for the center, she emphasized the need to prevent the center’s becoming known as a site for remediation but also saw great value in hiring and training peer writing tutors. After all, she said, students not only learn a great deal about writing from tutoring but also tend to “blossom in other ways,” including self-confidence, responsibility, and interpersonal skills—all of which would transfer to their future professions.

Besides the mission, I also stayed for the chance to work with Murphy and the center’s second director, Dr. Jeanette Harris, two giants in the writing center field. Together, Murphy and I edited the St. Martin’s Sourcebook for Writing Tutors, now in its fourth edition. From Murphy and Harris I learned much of what I now know about academic writing and running a writing center.

I became the center’s third director in 2002. Murphy once estimated the center would serve 3-5% of TCU’s total student population, and average about 1,800 tutorials each year. Nowadays, though, about 20% of TCU’s total student population uses the center’s services each year, and in 2017 we provided 11,140 tutorials to writers in 51 disciplines. Since 1988, the center has employed over 200 peer writing consultants from a variety of majors. As Murphy suggested, many continue to apply what they learned as tutors to careers in business, law, dentistry, medicine, and teaching. One peer consultant, Robyn Ross, now writes for Texas Monthly. Another, Spencer Baum, has published seven novels. A number of TCU writing center alums now direct writing centers or similar units for other institutions of higher learning. Thanks to the support of the TCU community, it’s safe to say that the center has exceeded Murphy’s expectations and has, for the most part, succeeded. On September 4, the center will celebrate its 30th anniversary, from 2:30 p.m. - 4 p.m. in the BLUU ballroom.

Please join us.

–Dr. Steve Sherwood