Greetings from the Center for Writing Excellence (CWE)! This past semester kept us busy! As I walk through the CWE, I am excited by what feels like increasingly interdisciplinary conversations—conversations among writing assistants and students eager to talk about their work. These conversations matter: they echo our mission in the day-to-day.

Staying with these conversations, I want to talk about how I see them growing from a deeper commitment to academic excellence and scholarly inquiry in the CWE. Toward the end of his Facing the Writing Center: Toward an Identity Politics of One-to-One Mentoring, Harry Denny contends that “We [in writing centers] need to, more directly, infuse our everyday practices with the currency of academic life: intellectual questioning and theorizing of what’s possible” (146). In the CWE, we have taken Denny’s call to action to heart. It reverberates not only in our work with students (as clients), but also in our efforts to articulate the CWE as an organization tapped into recent trends in best practices and theories in writing center studies. The idea of a writing center—its collaborative and peer-driven pedagogy—holds rich possibilities for any college or university campus. In addition to making better writers, we believe such
a pedagogy can shift the very idea of how we (as students, faculty, and staff) think, collaborate, and build ideas through more empathetic understandings of others. After all, this is what writing center work is really all about: listening to ideas and experiences other than our own, all the while fostering an arena for students to develop and grapple with identities and backgrounds. In this issue, you will read about a recent national conference presentation, one in which CWE members critically interrogate core writing center practices to make them more hospitable to diverse students.

What I suggest here is that the CWE envisions a writing center pedagogy as one that might impact students as well as faculty. I read a provocative article titled “Breathing Lessons, or Collaboration Is…,” in which Michele Eodice contends that writing center practitioners could do more to carry the energy of a collaborative pedagogy to departments, offices, and programs beyond themselves. She makes this argument because, for writing center folks, collaboration becomes a practice so ingrained that it can feel so natural and impactful. And we are not perfect. We can always do more to expand our concept of collaboration. This semester, we intended our “Faculty Fridays Open Write” and “Faculty Writing Fellows” Programs to do just this—to instigate a wider sharing of ideas (scholarly and pedagogical) among faculty. As part of this Fellows Program, Assistant Director Andrew Suralski and I met weekly with two faculty from the Department of Languages—Ami Christenson and Kaishan Kong—to address more empathetic ways to work with multilingual students. The result: we now have clearer strategies and communication channels to support international students.

Through the course of the semester, we also found ourselves partnering with additional offices, including the Office for Students with Disabilities (SSD). In this issue, you will also read more about this partnership. In the pages that follow, I hope you might envision the possibilities such efforts might mean not only for the CWE, but also our work with you.

Warmly,
-Jonathan
We all have preconceived notions of failure. For me, failure consists of the red pen marks at the top of my math homework, every incorrect response crossed off. Failure is also disappointing other people, like not working as hard as I could, or not taking one more leap.

Failure is something that is universally understood, but everyone’s looks a little different.

When presented with my first 300-level course (ENGL 397: Writing Center Theory and Practice), the first class that I had ever had to interview for in order to enroll in, and one of the first English classes that I knew would challenge me and my understanding of writing, would make me want to succeed. The class itself is set up brilliantly: the in-class lecture is dedicated to reading theory of writing centers, while the practicum aspect of the class—the part that satisfies our service learning—applies the theory that we learn to a practical setting. In the second week of classes, we were gently nudged into the writing center to observe, and eventually work alongside, veteran writing assistants. Nervous, I had no idea what...
On October 10, 2018, the Center for Writing Excellence flew down to Atlanta, Georgia for the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) conference. This year’s theme was “The Citizen Center” which called for analysis on how writing centers might encourage or be a space for active citizenship.

Along for the ride were Director Dr. Jonathan Rylander, Assistant Director Andrew Suralski, Graduate Assistant Directors Logan Frodl and Zachary Peterson, and undergraduate Writing Assistant Maria Lynch. Among the highlights were not only giving our own presentation together, but also getting to listen to some respected names in Writing Center and literacy studies! On Saturday morning, Dr. Rylander, Logan, Zachary, and Maria gave a panel presentation entitled “At the Border of Writing Center ‘Nice’: De-privileging Our Conversational Standard” where we each highlighted how conversational methods can inadvertently perpetuate ableist and racist logics. Zachary attended a Harry Denny talk, who is known for his identity politics scholarship in Writing Centers, while Logan and Maria had the privilege of listening to Jacqueline Jones Royster, a noted African American literacy and critical race studies scholar. Additionally, Dr. Rylander spoke on another panel as well, called “LGBTQ SIG”, which stands for Special Interest Group. He shared some emerging scholarship which sits at the intersection of LGBTQ studies and writing centers while other members of his SIG spoke of advancing safer campus climates.

Overall, everyone had a wonderful time and enjoyed the sunny, Southern weather (meanwhile in Wisconsin, it was raining and even had the threat of snow!) It’s always humbling to learn how other writing centers work and operate, as well as being able to learn from people who care about social justice issues and expanding our ideas of what that looks like. A big THANK YOU to the group who went for being amazing collaborators. I can’t wait to see where we go next!
Graduating Dec. 2018
Taylor Allen is graduating with a degree in Marketing and Austin Holmes is graduating with a degree in Spanish Linguistics and Applied Math.

Conferences
Colleen McCluskey is presenting at the Autism Society of Wisconsin’s 30th Annual Conference; Rachyl Hietpas presented on Postvernacular Dutch in Wisconsin in October at the Ninth Annual Workshop on Immigrant Languages in the Americas at UWEC; Caroline Morris is conducting research with a professor on EDI.

Student Teaching
Christi Berenz is student teaching in the spring in Houston, TX.

Studying Abroad
Nicole Lazo is travelling to Coasta Rica this summer and Carly Patton is studying in Valladolid, Spain.

Campus Leadership
Kyle Eckland is the president of the Gamers’ Guild; Taylor Allen is the president of the American Marketing Association; Becca Mennecke is the Chief Copy Editor at The Spectator; John Paluta is the Prose Editor at NOTA; Courtney Pagel is an AmeriCorps ECLIPSE Writing Assistant

Achievements
“I’m not really a very creative person…” A common sentiment among students of all disciplines but one that is continually proven wrong by their enthusiastic participation and witty writing in the Center for Excellence’s annual signature event: National Day on Writing.

Following an initiative of the National Council of Teachers of English who saw an opportunity to celebrate the variety of writing we all encounter in our everyday lives, the United States Senate passed a resolution to establish the inaugural National Day on Writing in 2009. The CWE of UW-Eau Claire has been participating since 2010.

Following the well-loved traditions of years past, on October 18th, the CWE staff facilitated Two Sentence Horror Stories in front of Davies, Haiku for Cookies in Centennial, and the Collaborative Story and Shakespearean insults in McIntyre Library. This year, there were some brilliant haikus written in Centennial:

“The story is short
I smell like peanut butter
And my dog loves me”

“No event before Halloween would be complete without some Two Sentence Horror Stories. Along with the musical strains of Monster Mash in the air, students passing in front of Davies pulled out all the stops.

“Trick-or-treaters at the door. Only toothbrushes left.”

“I have an 8am exam. It’s already 9:30.”

The Shakespearean insults in McIntyre proved to be another popular spot with students who concocted such insults that would make Shakespeare truly proud. Also in McIntyre, the collaborative story covered the window panes of the CWE’s second, second location on the second floor. Throughout the day, the story grew both in length and in imaginative plot points.

From the various sites on campus, it’s clear that no matter the major or mindset, everyone can flex their creative muscles and produce great writing. Every year, the National Day on Writing creates a space with plenty of positive energy and sugary treats, so everyone can write with their own flair. Be sure to join in the fun with the CWE next fall!

(continued on page 6)
The work that the CWE does with Languages department is an essential component of the services that are offered to writers across campus. For students in Spanish composition courses, having peer support available from the CWE while writing can make a huge difference, especially as they are developing as writers in a second language. Spanish Writing Assistants are students who have successfully completed Spanish composition courses themselves at UW-Eau Claire, which means that they have experience with the courses as well as strategies and resources to help other students succeed. Spanish tutors are able to offer two main types of assistance to writers: peer review workshops during classes as well as individual sessions with writers.

During my first few months as a new Writing Assistant at the CWE, I have had the opportunity to become involved with both of these experiences. While visiting Spanish classrooms for peer review workshops, Writing Assistants are able to serve as an additional resource for answering students’ questions as they are working on their compositions during class. Additionally, Spanish students have the opportunity to schedule a regular 45-minute session with a Spanish Writing Assistant in either CWE location to work on their compositions. During these sessions, students have time to discuss their writing in-depth and receive feedback from the Writing Assistant. Many of the discussions about Spanish compositions involve grammatical issues, but Writing Assistants also help with all aspects of the writing process, including organization, ideas, and flow. Dr. Anne Hlas of the Spanish department said, “The Spanish writing tutors are truly an asset to the Writing Center. They tailor feedback differently based on each individual student and the students’ prior knowledge, affective factors, and personalities. In addition, to be a Spanish writing tutor, one must have sophisticated knowledge of feedback strategies, language proficiency in Spanish/English, and awareness of students’ needs. These are truly exceptional students.”

The services that Spanish Writing Assistants provide are frequently utilized by the Spanish department and Spanish writers, allowing students to receive individual support from a peer tutor in order to continue to grow as writers. I truly enjoy being a Spanish Writing Assistant and look forward to continuing to work with both the CWE and the Spanish department in the years to come.

Spotlight: Spanish Collaboration
by Alyssa Huelsbeck
Each semester, we reach out to CWE alumni. In this issue, Lindsey Fenner tells us what she’s been working on since her time at UWEC.

Since graduating in 2014 with an M.A. in Literature and Textual Analysis, I have found myself ending up not quite where I thought I would be, but exactly where I ought to be.

My experience as a Graduate Assistant Director at the Center for Writing Excellence was transformative. Although my initial graduate focus was proletarian literature, working as a Writing Assistant shifted my interest to writing pedagogy, especially working-class writing as a collaborative and community-based process. My graduate thesis didn’t come with any firm conclusions on how to achieve what I called “the praxis of writing for the working class,” but I have come to realize that is exactly what I have been working towards the past few years.

For several years after graduation, I taught writing as an adjunct instructor at a now defunct for-profit career college. This experience was the exact opposite of everything I believed in about writing and education. Because of that (and the need for a job with benefits), I left higher education to work for the public library system in Minneapolis.

I quickly got involved in my union local, AFSCME Local 2822, becoming the editor of my local’s monthly newsletter, The New Voice. Although I do much of the routine writing myself, my joy is working with other union members as they craft articles. I am so proud of these worker writers and their bravery in sharing stories of workplace struggles. And I am proud that the publication of this small newsletter has helped bring about real change at worksites for workers and communities.

As a member of my union’s contract bargaining team this past summer, I also discovered that writing language for a collective bargaining agreement was perhaps the ultimate exercise in collaborative writing. Working as a group, how could we make sure the language matched our intended impact? And what did we do when the employer offered their own changes to the contract language?

Most recently, I have been doing more with my small neighborhood newspaper, The Alley. My Minneapolis neighborhood, Phillips, is diverse and poor, but with a whole lot of fight. The Alley is a newspaper with fundamental beliefs in citizen journalism and speaking truth to power. I’ve been working to support The Alley in a time of transition, with a vision that is rooted in community-based collaborative writing.

I have learned that writing can bring about real change in the world. As my thesis subject, Minnesota writer and activist Meridel Le Sueur, wrote in the 1930s: “Today something is happening. The word as a tool is going back to the people. The best of our writers are saying that writing is no use unless it is a tool, a tool of defense as well as creation, a tool against barbarism, against hunger and want.” Working at the CWE taught me how to use that tool.