

In Writing

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Organization for Professional Writing Plants First Seeds

Krisy Force

GVSU officially welcomed its first professional writing organization last April in an attempt to give students the opportunity to apply what they learned in the classroom to the professional field. The concept for the Organization for Professional Writers (OPW) was born when Associate Professors Laurence José and Christopher Toth saw a need for a writing group within the professional emphasis.

“I wanted to provide students with an opportunity to build a professional identity and to establish partnerships with professionals beyond their professors,” José said.

José’s original goal was to create a local student chapter through the national

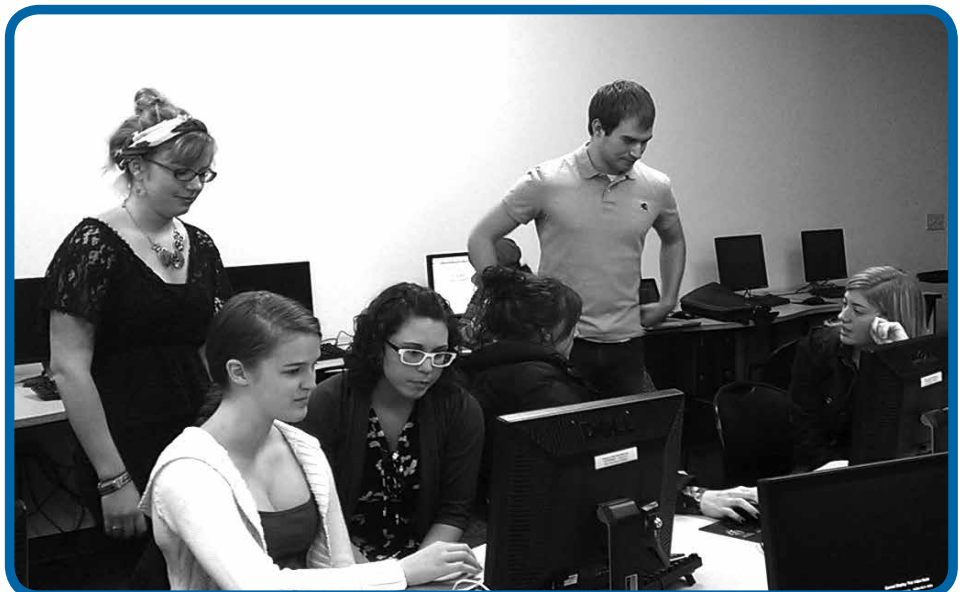
Society for Technical Communicators (STC). José and Toth asked six students to join STC.

“Asking the students to join STC before beginning the student organization on campus gave them the opportunity to have a professional identity,” José said.

The six founding students, including President Matthew Russell, Vice-President Hayley Larson, Secretary Krisy Force, Treasurer Bernadette Kelly, Officer Erin Quackenbush, and Officer Amanda Stevens, decided that creating an organization through GVSU, unaffiliated with STC, would be more beneficial for students on campus.

“We wanted to create an organization that helped us improve our technical skills,

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Accomplished Alum Returns to GVSU for Craft Talk and Reading

Lauren Longo

Listening to writers discuss their work is always a great experience, but it's even more exciting when that writer graduated from GVSU and currently has a book for sale.

On October 18, T Fleischmann visited GVSU for a craft talk and reading. Both events were well attended, and more chairs had to be brought in to accommodate everyone who wanted to hear Fleischmann discuss and read from *Syzygy, Beauty* and two other essays.

"The Writing Department is still pretty young," said Assistant Professor Caitlin Horrocks, "so as the coordinator of Writers Series, it was great to be able to invite someone to campus who is (I think) our first alum to publish a full-length book. It was even better to know I was inviting a seriously talented, accomplished author."

T Fleischmann was one of the first graduates from the Writing Department and has been published in *Fourth Genre*, *Peiades*, *Indiana Review*, *Gulf Coast*, and *The Pinch* and is also a Nonfiction Editor at *DIAGRAM*. In April, *Syzygy, Beauty* was released and contains a series of

poetic essays which reflect on relationships, life, and humanity and speaks to an undefined "you" who Fleischmann explained was a combination of several people from past relationships.

"Within the first few pages of *Syzygy, Beauty*," said Professor Horrocks, "I was realizing just how beautiful, smart and interesting the book was, and how much I

"Learning to take yourself seriously as a writer is one of the most important things you can do," said Fleischmann.

was looking forward to discussing it with current Grand Valley students, and asking Fleischmann questions as a fellow writer."

Students and professors attended the event to hear about the writing process that led to *Syzygy, Beauty* and Fleischmann's advice for fellow writers, which included being honest and allowing oneself to be flawed on the page. No one is perfect and the narrator in an essay should reflect that fact.

"Fleischmann was a compelling speaker loaded with great advice on how to

write honestly and to revise, and how to approach graduate school and succeed as an independent writer," said Nikki Fisher.

Fleischmann explained that writing classes at GVSU were a space to explore and fail, and it's important not to let other's critiques be discouraging.

"Learning to take yourself seriously as a writer is one of the most important things you can do," said Fleischmann. Fleischman elaborated that making writing a part of your life everyday is the first step to taking yourself seriously.

Fleischmann desires to write in a way that is true to life, because real life does not always have a cohesive arc and our emotional selves

don't develop that way.

"I only want to write about what feels true to me," said Fleischmann, when asked about the responsibility a nonfiction author has to the truth. "As writers, we know when we're crossing those lines."

"I think T had good advice for current students," said Professor Horrocks, "and I feel like I learned something new about the lyric essay through T's passion for the form."

OPW

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build our portfolios outside of class, and learn more about the industry," Russell said.

Larson added that by forming the organization through GVSU, the members would now have access to many resources on campus and have the opportunity to give back to the GVSU community.

The organization is currently working to recruit members, but the idea of a professional organization can seem daunting to some students. Therefore, the officers are

trying to promote a new definition for "professionalism."

"We have a professional writing emphasis that is not equivalent to 'stuffy' or 'boring'. Professional writing is always changing and adapting to the environment," Larson said. "Through this organization, we hope to see a glimpse of all of these opportunities available for professional writers."

Students do not have to be professional writing majors to join. José added that writing today is multimodal, and that students from all disciplines need the ability to convey what they want to say to their audiences. OPW can offer students

some of the tools they will need in the professional world.

Although OPW is just planting its seeds in the GVSU community, OPW members have already hosted a panel of speakers from the writing industry, taught an introduction to InDesign workshop, and held an internship night. The members are already discussing events for the winter semester as well as recruiting new members.

"I hope more students will recognize this opportunity to improve as professional writers and become a part of the organization," Russell said.

Fleischmann on Fleischmann

Jarrett Weber

“A shotgun wedding without a shotgun and a shotgun wedding without a bride are still two excuses for two people to stand beside each other.”

This line is an example of the many thought-provoking ones from *Syzygy, Beauty*. It’s one of the many lines that make the essay stand out and show the audience that writing in creative nonfiction about past experiences can make masterful pieces that can be interpreted in multiple ways.

Syzygy, Beauty opens the audience to an experience that can’t be dreamed, imagined, or fabricated. The best part of the experience, however, is that the book comes from one of GVSU’s own—T Fleischmann.

The book is about a character, who throughout is referred to in first person, telling the story of his or her relationship with another character, who is referred to as “you”. The book touches on male and female gender issues, criticism of modern art, the author’s fascination with carpentry, and comparisons to Gnosticism.

I had the opportunity to interview GVSU Alum T Fleischmann, discussing this recent publication, *Syzygy, Beauty*. Fleischmann has a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) from the University of Iowa in creative nonfiction. The nonfiction piece gives the audience the opportunity to follow a character through stimulating relationships and experiences. During the interview, Fleischmann discussed time at GVSU and the University of Iowa, the publication process, and most importantly the objectives, inspiration, and the possible outlooks of the book.

Fleischmann briefly explained how everything studied at the two universities played into the adoption of the essay. When talking about the University of Iowa, Fleischmann admitted, “My Masters’ thesis became part of what the essay (*Syzygy, Beauty*) is now.”

Experiences from the MFA program affected the drafting of the essay. However, Fleischmann mentioned that a lot of the

book was written after graduate school during a hitchhiking trip around the United States.

Throughout the book, Fleischmann mixes three influential relationships, which make the piece come to life. Fleischmann explained this when talking about character development.

“The essay is a collection of the three relationships I have had in my life. They are meant to be seen as one cohesive story.”

Throughout the piece, Fleischmann uses repetition, personal experiences, and vision to weave the essay into one collective story. The book can be seen as an adventure that the main character embarks on with “you”.

“Yes, the main character is referring to me. The use of ‘you’ is for interpretation

and analysis by the reader,” stated Fleischmann about the use of first and second person in his essay.

Fleischman uses these devices in remarkable ways throughout the piece. They truly attract the reader’s interest into the challenging piece. But the use of the pronouns helps lead the audience into the even bigger scope of the piece—the meaning.

Syzygy, Beauty allows the readers to make their own interpretation of Fleischmann’s experiences. Readers can use this piece to gain a deeper understanding of themselves or use the essay to envision Fleischmann’s mind, reliving experiences and discovering how Fleischmann came upon them.



Student Reading Series Revamped

Elizabeth Morse

This past year, the Student Reading Series (SRS)—a student run organization that sponsors events where students can perform their work—has undergone extensive changes since the previous years with the intention of increasing professionalism.

The SRS is organized by students Jim Hinkson, Heather Bulliss, and Sara Warren and advised by Assistant Professor Oindrila Mukherjee. In the past, students who were encouraged to read their work often came with unpolished pieces and were not well prepared. By old SRS standards, this approach was okay. However, this year, the SRS staff supplied dates and themes for events to secure readers, as well as give them enough notice to prepare their pieces in advance. This approach proved more professional and offered a more organized vibe.

The SRS coordinators have also put more emphasis on public relations for the organization. Through Facebook promotion, they have drawn more traffic to the organization. They have also partnered with other organizations to help promote the benefits of participation. For example,

Cohesion—a satirical based magazine—has worked with SRS in hosting public events, such as weekly public poetry readings. Posting performances on YouTube, designing t-shirts, and getting an official approval to be a student organization

“We’ve even begun sending a ‘Code of Conduct’ e-mail to readers prior to the event, just to make sure we’re all on the same page,” explained Bulliss.

through STUEY are all steps that the SRS has taken towards enhancing public relations. Thus far, the changes have paid off.

“We’ve even begun sending a ‘Code of Conduct’ e-mail to readers prior to the

event, just to make sure we’re all on the same page,” explained Bulliss.

On September 28, the SRS hosted their first event of the year, “You Are What You Read.” The event represented a spoof of “You Are What You Eat,” for which readers could perform pieces inspired by their favorite writer or something that they believed to be a proper representation of themselves as a writer. Performances included a poem inspired by Anne Sexton, a western short story (actually read in an accent), and a horror/suspense short story. Though a relatively small turnout, the event enabled the SRS staff to work on any problems and to better organize future events.

The second event, “The Witching Hour,” was held on October 27th. A turnout of nearly 50 viewers—one of the largest turnouts for the SRS—gave the staff the boost of confidence they worked so hard to attain.

“The event featured a vast array of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. The writers were engaging, well prepared, and brimming with talent. We could not have even dreamed of anything better.

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OPW Hosts First Events

Krisy Force

GVSU’s first professional writing organization, the Organization for Professional Writers (OPW), has been working hard to establish a presence in the GVSU community. OPW has been planning, hosting, and recruiting members since its establishment in April to help students connect knowledge from the classroom to the professional world.

The organization hosted its first event, a panel of professionals with writing-related jobs, on September 26. The panel included technical writers, publishers, and professors from the Grand Rapids area including: Chris Longstreet from Choice Hotels International, Kate Puisis and Robyn Gordon from JR Automation

Technologies, Leah Mastee from Kriegal Publications, and Affiliate Professor Dauvan Mulally.

The guests discussed the various opportunities that were available in the writing field, as well as the skills students should have to be prepared. They also commented that writing, in any field, is a learn-as-you-go process, and students must not be afraid to ask questions. The event doubled as an informational session for students interested in joining OPW.

“The first event went well. Everyone who attended really enjoyed hearing from local professional writers, and the fact that they represented different areas of the industry made it a valuable experience for students who are looking for internships or are about to start looking for jobs,” said President Matthew Russell.

Vice President, Hayley Larson, added that events like the panel allow students to see what other professionals in the field are doing and show them what is available.

To keep the organization’s overall goal of connecting classroom work to the professional world, OPW put on an InDesign workshop on November 7. The officers introduced the program to attendees and then spent the remainder of the time helping students with projects they had for other classes.

Film major, May Duarte, commented, “No matter what major you have, there is always a club or organization that needs a flyer. This [workshop] was InDesign 101, but it can really change your entire project [by having these skills].”

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Graphic Novels: Illustration of History

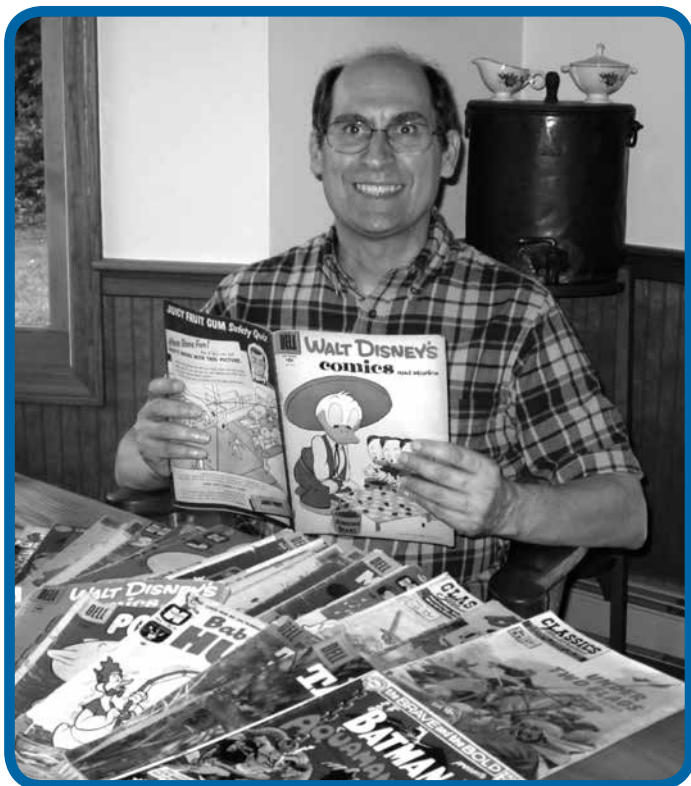
Therese Stastny

For many people, reading comic books is a personal experience because it is a hobby that begins at a young age and continues throughout adolescence and even well into adulthood. Affiliate Professor Rick Iadonisi grew up reading comics and graphic novels. He became particularly intrigued by the relationship between graphic novels and history during graduate school while taking an autobiography course. One of the required course readings was *Maus*, a well-known graphic novel that depicts the events of World War II and the Holocaust using mice as the main characters. This form of representing historical events inspired him to publish his book, *Graphic History: Essays on Graphic Novels and/as History*. This collection of essays analyzes various examples of graphic novels that depict history and how they do justice to specific historical events.

In September of 2010, Iadonisi sent a call for proposals on essays that make these connections. He asked that responders send him 75-200 word abstracts of possible essays. He was looking for some insight into the historical aspect as well

as the graphic novel itself. Many of the submissions he received were from graduate students and new college faculty members within the United States, though some submissions were received from Canada and even Australia. He corresponded with the authors of the submissions during this selection process and narrowed them to 13 essays that would be included in his book in addition to his own essay.

When describing the editing process that went into these essays, Iadonisi said with a laugh, “It was an interesting experience because you expect that academics will be good writers. Sadly that’s not often the case.” He helped the authors define a clear focal point and collaboratively edited the content with



them via e-mail.

During the editing, Iadonisi began working on his own contribution to the

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Writing Beyond the Classroom

Abigail Dykstra

For writing students preparing for the transition into the professional world, the future can be full of questions. Writing for Life, a series organized by Assistant Professors Caitlin Horrocks, Laurence José, and Christopher Toth, offers opportunities for writers to seek answers. The series presents four nights for students to gain information that is applicable to their future outside of GVSU. Though writing majors and minors receive useful information about writing in the classroom, it often isn’t tailored to a student’s specific needs and questions.

“Writing for Life is an extension service for students beyond the classroom,” stated Toth. “It will help students think about the

transition into the professional world of writing.”

The first event in the Writing for Life series, Graduate School Night, took place on October 8. The event focused on graduate school programs for writing majors and minors. It gave students a chance to work through what the application process involves and receive answers about graduate school.

Kate Willis, editor-in-chief of *fishbladder*, attended the event and found the information offered was applicable to her writing career. “They passed out this massive list of graduate schools that offer creative writing programs, and I found that to be a great resource that I could reference quickly for important information,” said Willis.

Erin Cole also deemed the night helpful. “Any writing major should definitely

attend. It can offer valuable information that’s useful to writing careers,” said Cole.

Writing for Life offers two sessions focusing on preparation for a writing career. Résumé Night took place on November 12 and provided students with the opportunity to gain refresher information about the job search and workshop their résumés.

On January 23, the Writing Department will offer Career Night, a chance for students to gain insight about prospective careers related to the major, as well as obtain useful strategies for marketing their skills in the professional world.

The final event is Publishing Night, taking place on February 27, 2013. Here, students will gain insight into the publish-

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Hazel McClure: Gatekeeper to the World of Writing Research

Marie Orttenburger

Hazel McClure always knew that writing would be a part of her life, but she couldn't have predicted where it would bring her. As the Liaison Librarian to the Writing, English, and Environmental Studies Departments, McClure has combined her passion for writing and research in helping students and faculty at GVSU.

After growing up in Mesick, MI, McClure studied at Central Michigan University, where she acquired a degree in Sociology and English with an emphasis in Creative Writing. Once she obtained her undergraduate degree, McClure moved to Moraga, CA to acquire her MFA in Poetry at St. Mary's College of California. During her studies at CMU and St. Mary's, she earned her living in public and university libraries.

McClure had published some poetry and taught writing after earning her degrees, but she realized that she wanted to pursue a career in the library sciences. So she moved to New York to obtain her MLS at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

McClure said of her work in libraries, "I love that I'm helping people, and that I get to interact with people, but I also get to interact with ideas."

In 2009, McClure accepted a job as the Liaison Librarian for Public Administration and Social Work at GVSU. McClure loved her work in the library, but missed working with writing and literature. So when the position to be the Liaison Librarian for the Writing, English, and Environmental Studies Departments opened up this past year, she was eager to take the job.

Now, McClure works with both faculty and students in these departments to focus their research and acquaint them with the resources that are available to them in the library. Individuals can schedule consultations with McClure to find out how to narrow their focus in their search for resources, and acquire the information



they need for their projects and papers.

But McClure emphasized that seeking help in the library is not limited to students with research projects; creative writers can also benefit from her services.

"So much information gets incorporated into our creative writing that isn't research, but that's information that we gather as we go through life, as we read, as we hear NPR stories," said McClure.

She is constantly searching for ways that she can help people get in touch with that information and what kinds of resources she can provide to foster inspiration for creative writers.

In addition to her consultations with

faculty and students, McClure builds collections of materials in the library to fill the holes in the library's spectrum of information. Faculty and students can make requests for the library to expand its collection through McClure, if they notice that an area of their interest is lacking in the library. Some of the ways McClure has expanded the library's inventory include building a collection of poetry chapbooks and adding to the collection of drama scripts.

McClure says she feels lucky to work

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SRS

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After only our second event, we're already searching for new (larger) locations for our future events," Bulliss enthusiastically stated.

Participating in events can have other benefits such as publications and involvement with other writing organizations. *Cobesion* offered a place in its upcoming publication to the winning performer of "The Witching Hour," who was voted on by attendees.

The events were also a learning experience. Participants were able to interact with fellow writers as well as sharpen their public speaking skills. The events served as a means for building leadership skills, challenging an artist's creativity, and enhancing professional skills such as time management, deadlines, and other responsibilities.

"Not only are the events great opportunities to practice reading, they are fun and entertaining," stated Warren.

Warren also mentioned some personal advantages participating in the SRS staff. "I am meeting other talented writers, working closely with professor Mukherjee who I would otherwise never had the pleasure of learning from, and helping to bring writers—majors and minors alike—together. I have been able to explore my creativity with flyer design, to act professionally in front of a group of my peers, and to hold myself accountable for timelines and responsibilities."

"Collaborations," held on November 30 was the last event for the semester. Writers paired with musicians, and each couple prepared a collaborative performance together. The staff's responsibility was to partner interested writers with a musician, while the rest was up to the performers.

OPW EVENT

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The workshop also challenged those who attended to create a flyer for OPW's internship night, which took place December 5. The event provided students with information about writing internships available during the summer. Students were also able to hear more from professional writers who are working in the industry.

Next semester, the organization is planning to invite more professionals to talk about the industry, as well as go to conferences sponsored by the Society for Technical Communicators (STC). They are also looking for non-profit organizations that would like the services and skills OPW members have to offer.

FOR LIFE

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ing world, resources, and submission guidelines.

"Sessions on publishing and résumés are brand new in response to student requests. Some majors and minors might be getting information on publishing in their classes, but others might not. This event is a way for students to ask questions of Writing faculty and learn from each other's questions and experiences," said Horrocks.

Writing for Life will help students with the transition from classroom writing to a career in the professional world. With four nights tailored to the individual needs of the student, the Writing for Life series is a great resource for those about to embark on a writing career.

COMICS

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book. In Spring 2012, a piece that he had submitted on the subject of history in graphic novels was published in the *International Journal of Comic Arts*. His essay examined the reflection of the politics of Ronald Reagan in Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, set in 1986. Iadonisi revised this piece and added it to the collection of essays to be published in his book.

Graphic History: Essays on Graphic Novels and/ss History was published in October 2012 and includes analytical essays on graphic novels such as *The Dark Knight Returns*, *Persepolis*, *Maus*, *In the Shadow of No Towers*, *From Hell*, *Jimmy Corrigan*, *The League of Extraordinary Gentleman*, and more.

MCCLURE

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with the faculty and students in the Writing Department.

"There's something really exciting about people who are interested in doing that, seeing the world and communicating about the world in the intense way writers do," said McClure.

Ultimately, her goal is to inform students and faculty of the variety of information that is available to them and how to go about obtaining it, even when they think there is nothing.

If you want to schedule an appointment with Hazel McClure, email her at mccclureh@gvsu.edu or call her at (616)331-3077.

Winter Semester 2013 SRS Events

- Annual Senior Reading Night
- Roses are Read
- Comedy Night
- School's Out

InWriting

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FMCWMA Consultants Takes on Chicago

Jessie Miller

During the first weekend in November, ten writing consultants from GVSU's Fred Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors (FMCWMA) traveled by train to the Windy City of Chicago, IL to present at the *National Conference on Peer Tutors in Writing (NCPTW)*. While the consultants did do some sightseeing (they visited the Bean, toured the Field Museum, and ate at Gino's East), they were hard at work on their presentations.

In Chicago, the consultants—Rachel Amity, Katie Crabtree, Heather Gemmen, Erica Jones, Hollie McDonald, Jessie Miller, Marie Orttenburger, Lindsay Stoyka, Molly Waite, and Anna Worm—had the option to either conduct a panel discussion, present at an hour-long session, or create a poster presentation. When they weren't presenting, they attended writing center-specific presentations to learn new techniques from other writing centers so they could share that new knowledge with the rest of the consultants at FMCWMA.

"Even when we weren't at a presentation, we still had interesting conversations about writing center pedagogy, which shows how enthusiastic we were," said Orttenburger.

Patrick Johnson, Assistant Director at FMCWMA, accompanied the consultants to the conference and collaborated with Waite and Orttenburger on a poster presentation regarding the FMCWMA event called Night Against Procrastination (NAP), held for the first time on March 15, 2012. For the event, FMCWMA extended its hours through the night, from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., while also staffing consultants to help students who were working on papers. At *NCPTW*, consultants from other universities took interest in NAP and expressed their desire to host a similar event.

"Seeing the interest other writing centers expressed gave me the confidence to make a presentation of my own and present it at *NCPTW* next year," said Orttenburger.



Amity, who presented her year-long research entitled "Talking the Talk: Linguistic Face Theory in the Writing Center," received the Registration & Grub Travel Grant, an award for \$110 to be put toward the conference expenses. Next year, Johnson will be a member of the Travel Grant Committee where he will help determine the recipients of the Travel Grants.

"I am routinely amazed and impressed at the quality of our staff and how well they represent Grand Valley," said Johnson. "Every presentation I saw was top tier and the consultants conducted themselves professionally and maturely. I couldn't be more proud."

Each year, GVSU writing consultants have the opportunity to attend writing center conferences to encourage professional development and to stimulate writing discourse within the center. Since 2004, FMCWMA consultants have attended and presented at *NCPTW*, the *Michigan Writing Center Association (MWCA)* conference, as well as the *East Central Writing Centers Association (ECWCA)* conference.

Next fall, FMCWMA will co-host the 2013 *MWCA* conference alongside

the GVSU Libraries. The slogan for this event is "Creative Collaborations," as FMCWMA and the GVSU Libraries will welcome attendees to visit the new collaborative space called The Knowledge Market in the new Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons.

"One of my goals [in attending *NCPTW*] was to watch how *NCPTW* approached organizing events and presenters...so we could learn the best practices for when Grand Valley hosts *MWCA* in 2013," said Johnson.

Currently, FMCWMA employs 64 consultants, which is the largest amount of employees the center has ever had. This year also marks a significant increase in the amount of students coming to the center. Within the first month of school, the center had already conducted 981 consultations, an increase from 617 consultations completed during the same time frame in 2011.

To account for this influx of students, the consultants will put the strategies and tools they have learned from the conference to good use in the FMCWMA.