News Roundup—Sybil Priebe, Editor, “TYCA to You”

“TYCA to You” readers are in for a mishmash of a treat in this edition: We have keynote speakers, conference summaries, and two reports that focus on nonconference topics. There’s something for everyone, so enjoy!

TYCA-West Report from Stephanie Maenhardt

It’s been another busy year for the TYCA-West region. In October, we met together for our annual regional conference at Glendale Community College in Glendale, Arizona. Centered on the theme of “The Measure of Tomorrow: Assessment through the Lens of Race, Diversity & Inclusion,” this year’s conference featured presentations, workshops, and roundtable discussions that addressed some of the different “diverse assessment practices, projects, activities, lessons, or theories [we] use to help create an inclusive environment in the classroom and on campus.”

In his keynote address, Asao Inoue, professor of English, director of University Writing, and director of the Writing Center at the University of Washington, Tacoma, and Program Chair for CCCC 2018, focused on the necessity of fostering a truly inclusive pedagogy at our schools and in our classrooms. Inoue emphasized the fact that as writing teachers and administrators, we “have a social and ethical obligation to create assessment ecologies that consistently, evenly, and reasonably provide the full range of all opportunities available to everyone,” and he invited us to consider how the writing classroom “do[es] inclusion in ways that tangibly take into account the local diversities of our students.”

While doing “racio-cultural inclusive writing assessment means doing more
than one kind of judgment,” Inoue noted, we must be careful that in our rush to include students we do not either erase or disregard linguistic and cultural differences as non-important. As we consider new ways to assess and brainstorm new purposes for these assessments, it’s important that we also carefully and thoughtfully define new goals for how and why we read student work. The way we assess creates the ways students can fail, as much as the ways they can succeed.

This year’s Conference Program Committee echoed Inoue’s charge, noting that we teach in a “time of uncertainty” where many of us may find it difficult to imagine what tomorrow will look like. Every day seems to bring new challenges—one that we as English, reading, journalism, and creative writing instructors are all too familiar with: dangerous discourse, extreme pathos, faulty logic, fake news.” With such issues looming “like a heavy thundercloud above us all, it becomes clearer how important the work we do is for our students and communities,” but we must never forget to consider who we are leaving out and who we are including.

The presentations and workshops at TYCA-West 2017 offered participants a number of ways to engage with these questions as we strive for a truer inclusivity in the classroom. Whether it was through “using film, comics, or mandalas,” or something else entirely, we were reminded that each of us can “do our part to positively influence the future of our students.”

At the conference, we also introduced Rob Lively, instructor of English at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno, Nevada, as the new TYCA-West national rep to the TYCA Executive Committee. We are thrilled to have Rob join the TYCA-West REC, and he will begin representing TYCA-West at CCCC 2018 in Kansas City, Missouri. We are also hard at work preparing for TYCA-West 2018, where the conference theme will be “The Big Picture: Transfer, Threshold Concepts and the Two Year College.” A CFP will be available soon at http://tycawest.org/, and we’d love to have folks from around the region join us at Salt Lake Community College in Salt Lake City on October 12–13. Please visit our website for more details soon and submit a proposal!

Many thanks to Nathan Cole, Web-tender for TYCA-West, for sharing his summary notes on Asao’s keynote address.

Stephanie Maenhardt may be reached at stephanie.maenhardt@slcc.edu.

**TYCA-Midwest Report from Suzanne Labadie**

The following is the transcript from Julie Schumacher’s keynote address:

I love the topic you’ve chosen, because it’s so thoroughly fundamental to all sorts of academic fields and also to the arts; curiosity and inventiveness are things I think a lot about in relation to my writing process and my work. How can we, when we’re overworked and living by a check-list and hoping simply to get the good grade or to finish the project or to arrive at the meeting on time ... cultivate and maintain
curiosity? In other words: instead of thinking about the things we need to get done and checking them off a list, how can we think creatively about what we’re doing and why, and therefore feel more motivated to approach our various tasks in a different way?

I have a planner—a paper planner, because I am a technophobe—which is chock-full of to-do lists: get car to shop; meet student; submit essay; supervise thesis; turn in curricular plan. You probably have something similar, whether paper or electronic. But, imagine if, one day, you opened your planner and instead of that sort of list you found the following:

Monday, 12:30—long walk by river
Tuesday, 3:00—mess around with magnets and toothpicks
Wednesday, 2:00—daydream while listening to music
Thursday, 4:30—[you get the idea]

That would be impractical. But the point is: it’s easy to lose interest in what you are doing. It’s easy to forget about curiosity—which is about paying attention, inventively—and to think instead in terms of check-lists and deadlines. Our planners and our daily approach to the things that we need to get done too often squelch curiosity rather than inciting it.

In writing this talk, I began to worry that I would sound like a Montessori teacher, so I did a bit of reading about Montessori education and came across an article about the importance of children’s “work”—which is, of course, play. Play is what adults abandon when they go to college or get a job, and it is the hallmark of curiosity. Having done about seven minutes of research on-line, I am by no means an expert in this field, but I did learn a few interesting things about Montessori education.

First, children’s “work” or play should, according to the Montessori method, be “self-chosen and self-directed”—that is, it should at least in part be guided by what the students want to do, what they’re interested in, what makes them curious.

Second, “play is an activity in which means are more valued than ends.” The focus should be on process, not product. (This is a good thing to remember when one is tackling something large or daunting: my daughter is working on a PhD thesis, and when stress gets the better of her, I remind her that she should think not about reaching the summit of Mt. Everest, but about collecting the appropriate gear and heading for base camp instead.)

Third, there is some sense of structure in the play or work, but the structure is relevant to the student, or to the person engaged. […]

Writers, at least the ones I know, engage in all sorts of mind games in order to remain curious and engaged in their work. Personally, I have learned from experience that my writing does not go well if I approach it with seriousness, if I tell myself that it is important or urgent. I am much better off if I can think about what I am writing as a low-stakes experiment. If I can tell myself that I’m just playing, just messing around.
Basically, I’ve learned that the value is not in knowing the answer, but in asking the questions.

I published my first novel, *The Body Is Water*, when I was in my early thirties. I wrote the book over a period of five to six years, having no idea whether it would ever see the light of day, or whether anyone would read it. But at last I sold it to a small press—Soho Press—and thought, *Yes, I have figured this out. I have the answer key in hand; I’m on my way.*

So, I set about, very seriously, to write my second novel. I spent another five to six years on it, most of which was utter torment. The book, still unfinished, languishes in a cardboard box in my closet; I come across it every now and then, behind the umbrellas.

With that failure tucked securely behind me, I decided that, as a person who no longer had anything to lose, I would try to write a novel for children. My own kids were young at the time, and I was reading the books that they were reading, and so, why the heck not? Plot was always hard for me, but maybe I could plot out a children’s book to teach myself how to manage plot and structure. Would it work? Maybe not. But I decided to re-read *Charlotte’s Web* a dozen times and then I sat down and, as a simple low-stakes experiment, I plotted and wrote a novel for children, finishing the 200-page book in about six months.

After that novel—*Grass Angel*—was published, I thought, aha, NOW I have unlocked the magic door, now I hold the key, etc.—and I will get serious and write serious novels for children because that is what I was meant to do . . . and the next book I wrote for younger readers was much more laborious, and I don’t think as good.

So: time after time, when I approached a project sure of what I was doing, and certain of the seriousness of my endeavor, I struggled or failed. But when I was able to approach a project with curiosity, valuing process over product and understanding that the questions in my mind were more valuable than the answers—that is, whenever I was able to maintain an attitude of experimentation—the writing was more enjoyable and more productive.

“I wonder if this might work?” is, for me, a much better starting place than “This is the way it will have to be.” My novel *Dear Committee Members* began in exactly this way.

*Suzanne Labadie may be reached at smlabadie@oaklandcc.edu.*

**TYCA-Southeast Report from Susan Slavicz**

Our conference occurs in the spring; however, because of Hurricane Irma, I was unable to complete the fall article, so here are some reflections on this question: Is the essay the only genre you teach in your first-year writing course (first-term)?

**Meg Matheny (Jefferson Community and Technical College):**

The major assignments for my first-term writing students are all essays. I do think the essay genre is still relevant for this stage since it helps students get their
thoughts organized, reach a main point (thesis), and incorporate source material, all skills they will need in other college classes and the workplace. Occasionally I offer an extra credit letter to the editor assignment in which they use their organization and thesis skills to write a letter on a topic of interest to a real audience. Sometimes one or two of these letters are actually published in the local paper, which is a thrill for both the students and me!

In my second-semester course I’m moving away from the essay-only approach to include a multigenre research project I learned about at last year’s TYCA-SE conference. This is the first time I’ve tried it, but I am looking forward to seeing how it turns out.

Lisa Shaw (Miami Dade College):

The essay used to be the only genre I taught, but I have since added variations. First, because we have no college prep department to speak of, we’ve noticed a serious decline in students’ reading comprehension skills to the point that many of them are unable to write an essay in response to a reading in an anthology. I have just begun teaching summarizing, having students read an essay or other document and preparing a summary. Secondly, I included narrative writing in ENC 1101 a couple of years ago . . . not necessarily a standard essay but some form of storytelling. Students become more engaged when they are telling a personal story just as when they are reading one, and somehow become more invested in the writing process.

Susan Slavicz (Florida State College at Jacksonville):

The learning outcomes and outline for our ENC 1101 (first-semester composition) course emphasizes writing essays, both personal and researched. In casual discussions with other faculty, I have heard them refer to assignments such as résumés and business letters, but most seem to rely on the essay—not necessarily the five-paragraph essay but nevertheless what we would consider an academic paper. I have experimented with assignments such as letters to the editors or résumés, and through one FIPSE grant, I had students create documents for success in college which they then shared with high school students. Oddly enough, I have returned to the more traditional academic assignments—primarily because I found grading the experimental papers not only difficult and time-consuming. I will be interested to discuss Meg’s multigenre assignment at our next conference!

Susan Slavicz may be reached at sslavicz@fscj.edu.
I’d like to begin by thanking the people who worked so hard to make this conference a success. Conference planning is no small feat—especially when it’s all done in your “spare” time. Thank you to Local Arrangements Chair Kim McFetridge, Program Chair Jerry Kavanagh, and Registration Chair Alison Randall.

TYCA does important work. We meet, we listen, we write, and we speak—all to advocate for our students and for our profession.

Last year, when I had the privilege to talk with you at your Hartford conference, I talked about how dual enrollment, student debt, and the “Redesign of America’s Community Colleges” impact us and our students.

I’d like to report that those issues have been resolved, but it isn’t true.

On my campus and across the country, we still have students accumulating debt and starting down guided pathways. As faculty, we’ve been clearing the clutter out of our curriculum, sending early alerts, and some of us have been acting as “partners” so that high school teachers, who don’t have the credentials to teach college courses, can teach and award credit to students as young as twelve for first-year composition.

In addition to these continuing issues, the other elephant in any room where English and writing faculty gather is the continuing over-reliance on part-time, contingent, or adjunct faculty. Fair pay and fair treatment remain unresolved for many of the hard-working folks who, according to a 2014 American Association of University Professors study, are teaching 76.4 percent of college courses.

The life of adjuncts seems not to have improved since 2014: If you subscribe to the WPA listserv, in the past month, you’ve read heart-wrenching posts in response to the Guardian article “Facing Poverty, Academics Turn to Sex Work and Sleeping in Cars.” I urge all of you to advocate for equity for our colleagues who do this challenging work without the benefits that accrue to those of us with full-time teaching contracts.

If you are here at this conference as one of that teaching force of 76.4 percent—presenting and attending—you deserve thanks and gratitude for your commitment to your students and your professionalism.

If there is good news in this story, it is that through our national network, TYCA’s members share research and information. TYCA’s recent research published in our journal include articles on placement reform and dual enrollment. The purpose of research and publication is to help faculty understand how these issues are playing out nationally, providing context, and, where appropriate, making recommendations. They are also designed to help faculty make arguments for improved teaching and learning conditions on their own campus.

Let me give you an example of how research ideas get generated.

In the last year, through officer visits to regional conferences, we’ve learned that the traditional five-course teaching load in two-year colleges has been creeping...
up in some areas of the country—to six and even seven courses each term. Class size has also been increasing for FYC and developmental courses.

TYCA has asked our friends and colleagues in CCCC to develop a joint research project that looks at the impact of class size and faculty workload on student success. Our hope is to compile evidence that you can use to make arguments in the face of this kind of pressure.

Subscribing to our terrific quarterly journal, *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, published continuously since 1974, is essential if you want to keep current in the field. . . . We also have a TYCA listserv (to join, please email tyca-listserv@googlegroups.com), a forum for disseminating information and connecting with colleagues around the nation should you need a quick response to a question or pressing issue.

Another project being explored by Jeff Andelora, the current TYCA national Chair, is the possibility of a first national TYCA conference—he’s thinking the Wednesday before CCCC. We have never had a national TYCA event, a large room filled with faculty from across TYCA’s seven regions, and it’s time.

In addition to research projects and conferences, TYCA is committed to recognizing great teaching and service. One such award is the Diana Hacker Outstanding Programs in English that honors two-year college faculty and their colleges for exemplary programs that effectively address the challenges of teaching and learning. […] And finally, I’d like to close with something about the work we do: we’ve been in the news. Some of you may have seen this, but in an August *NYT* editorial, Gail Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community College, debunks the romantic myth that the majority of today’s college students live on campus and spend their days attending classes, studying out on the lawn thinking about life’s big questions, and then going back to the dorm to get ready for the party that night.

While that’s the case for some, Mellow reminds us that many of our community college students cannot afford to go to college full-time and don’t live on campus.

In fact, many are single parents, working full-time jobs, and living in food-insecure households. Mellow writes that two-year colleges in particular serve the majority of our nation’s low-income and first-generation students—and that of the $41 billion dollars in charitable giving to higher ed last year, very little went where it was needed most.

Mellow’s point was to pressure “elected officials, business leaders and philanthropists to increase support for routinely underfunded community colleges.”

Of course, everyone in this room just got a lecture that you don’t need. You know and work with these students every day. You know that in the face of overwhelming odds, many of our most fragile students make heroic efforts to get to our classes and do their work. […] After the conference, take this positive energy, smart ideas, and renewal back to our students and colleagues: look them in the eye to let them know that we
see them, we care about them and their success, that what they’re doing is worth it—and we’re all better for it. Thank you.

*Leigh Jonaitis may be reached at ljonaitis@bergen.edu.*

**TYCA-Pacific Coast Report from Sravani Banerjee**

The California community colleges are grappling with a number of legislations and initiatives such as Guided Pathways, AB–705, and the California Promise Program, among others that impact student preparation, student placement, and student acceleration.

Guided Pathways reform is a student-centered initiative that plans to increase the number of students earning community college credentials, while closing equity gaps. Guided Pathways provides a framework for integrating California-based initiatives such as SSSP (Student Success and Support Program), Equity, Basic Skills Transformation, the Strong Workforce Program, and California College Promise and other support services in ways that make it easier for students to get the help they need during every step of their community college experience. The aim is to provide students with clear, educationally coherent program maps that include specific course sequences, progress milestones, and program learning outcomes. These maps are aligned to knowledge and skills required by four-year institutions and the labor market, thus ensuring that students can continue their studies and advance in their careers. It is a highly structured approach to student success that provides all students with a set of clear course-taking patterns that promotes better enrollment decisions and prepares students for future success.

AB 705 was signed by the governor on October 13, 2017, and will take effect on January 1, 2018; however, the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office will support a phased-in implementation keeping colleges informed about training and technical assistance availability. Under this legislation, a college is required to maximize the probability that a student will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in English and math within a one-year timeframe. The goal of AB 705 is to ensure that students are not placed into remedial courses that may delay or deter their educational progress unless evidence suggests they are highly unlikely to succeed in the college-level course. Multiple measures such as high school coursework, high school grades, and high school grade point average, or guided placement, including self-placement for students, may be used. With the passage of AB 705, there is even greater emphasis on acceleration options. Several colleges have implemented major changes, including deactivating the traditional developmental English sequence; offering corequisite learning communities combining first-year composition with a two-unit support course; and shifting toward integrating reading, writing, and grammar into one course. There will be renewed emphasis on using multiple measures for placement. Some colleges are considering the possibility of including a writing sample as part of the placement process.
The California Promise Program enables a specific number of campuses of the California State University (CSU) to establish pledge programs for entering first-time students who are both interested and able to complete baccalaureate degrees in four years. This program is limited to California residents. The San Jose Promise is built upon three core elements: College Readiness Programs, College Promise Scholarships, and College Pathways Partnerships. In conjunction with the launch, San Jose City College and Evergreen Valley College announced a significant expansion of College Promise scholarships that, when leveraged with other sources of financial aid, will ensure up to two years of free community college for approximately 500 qualifying students in 2017–18. The scholarships will be focused on low-income, first-generation, and historically underrepresented students and will cover full tuition and fees, textbooks, transportation, and summer bridge program costs. In preparation for the Summer Bridge Program at Evergreen Valley College, faculty and counselors are collaborating to offer a developmental English class with a counseling component including embedded tutors/supplemental instructors (SIs) associated with the course and available for tutoring outside of the classroom. The program will offer integrated course material and co-curricular activities such as tours, field trips to four-year colleges, and transfer workshops.

Sravani Banerjee may be reached at Sravani.banerjee@evc.edu.

TYCA-Pacific Northwest Report from Teresa Thonney

“Resist/Persist: Teaching and Tutoring College Writers for Justice, Safety, and Progress” was the theme for the TYCA-Pacific Northwest conference, held in collaboration with the Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association October 13–14, 2017. Nearly 200 composition instructors, writing center directors, tutors, and students gathered on the campus of University of Washington, Tacoma, in downtown Tacoma on the Puget Sound.

In Friday’s preconference workshop, Christie Toth, from University of Utah’s Department of Writing & Rhetoric Studies, asked participants to think about how instructors and tutors on two-year college campuses can be teacher-scholar-activists. She invited us to share examples of activism on our campuses and discuss strategies for supporting such work. Participants were also invited to contribute to Teacher-Scholar-Activist, a webspace where writing faculty and students share their experiences with local activism (https://teacher-scholar-activist.org/). Following the workshop, we gathered for an opening reception at the nearby Washington State History Museum.

Saturday’s program featured more than 40 sessions, many of them focused on issues of language, race, oppression, and social justice. Session titles included Enabling Vulnerable Students to Resist and Persist; First-Year Writing Students Reflect on Language and Identity; Creating Learning Experiences for Anti-Oppression; Recognizing and Responding to Institutional Racism at the Writing Center; En-
vironmental Ethics Is the Perfect Theme for Teaching Social Justice Disguised as Argument; Discussions of Race, Sexuality, and Identity in the College Composition Classroom; and Practical Classroom Activities to Foster Political Discourse. In these and other sessions, presenters shared strategies for teaching and tutoring in the current political climate.

In Saturday’s keynote address, Toth examined the history and future direction of teacher-scholar-activism in the two-year college, celebrating the efforts of such TYCA leaders as Jeff Andelora, Patrick Sullivan, and Carolyn Calhoun-Dillahunt, who have been vocal proponents of an expanded vision for English faculty professional identity.

Many thanks to Conference Cochairs Rebecca Disrud and Travis Margoni, Conference Cochairs and Local Arrangements Chair Jacob Martens, and Program Chair Sandra Gruberg for planning and hosting a conference that challenged us to consider ways to resist and persist.

Teresa Thonney may be reached at tthonney@columbiabason.edu.

TYCA-Southwest Report from Erin O’Neill Armendarez

TYCA-SW’s annual conference took place October 16–19, 2017, at the Embassy Suites John Q. Hammons Conference Center in Loveland, Colorado. The conference theme was “convergence.” The conference was co-hosted by Aims Community College and Colorado Mountain College. Cochairs Rebecca Sailor and Erin Beaver did an impressive job of conference planning and recruiting. Approximately 150 attendees from Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming were present. Over 60 presenters offered a broad range of high-quality sessions.

Two preconference workshops allowed participants to explore topics of interest. Doug Hesse, Amy Braziller, and Shawna Van, experienced administrators from three Colorado campuses, offered a workshop entitled “Landing an English Teaching Job at a Community College: What You Need to Know.” Participants, who were encouraged to bring CVs and cover letters, learned about campus hiring and decision-making processes and had the opportunity to ask questions. The second workshop, entitled “Personas and Possibilities,” was conducted by award-winning poet Lisa Zimmerman from the University of Northern Colorado. Participants learned how to write in a voice different from their own and to tell someone else’s story in part through the exploration of model poems.

The conference began with a speech from Reyna Grande, who entered the United States as an undocumented immigrant at the age of two and was able to gain confidence through her mentors. Most famous for her memoir The Distance between Us, which describes her experience as a Mexican immigrant, Grande is an award-winning author. Her memories of the teachers and mentors who encour-
aged her writing brought home the importance of engaged, empathic instructors, and her speech was truly inspirational.

Friday’s luncheon keynote speaker was Dr. Doug Hesse, former President of NCTE, coauthor of four books, and executive director of the Writing Program at the University of Denver. His speech, named “Divergent Writing?,” played with the conference theme to address the disparities between academic ideals commonly taught in first-year writing classrooms and the larger TL;DR (too long; didn’t read) culture of angry tweets and inflammatory propaganda. Hesse encouraged participants to engage students in analyzing and writing flawed rhetoric so that they would better understand how it operates and why it is written.

The conference ended on Saturday with another fine luncheon keynote, this one from Terry Doyle, author of Learning Centered Teaching: Putting the Research into Practice (2011) and The New Science of Learning: How to Learn in Harmony with Your Brain (2013). Doyle, professor emeritus from Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan, introduced recent research on learning and encouraged instructors to adopt teaching strategies toward a “learner-centered approach,” which helps students become more successful learners.

The TYCA-SW Loveland conference provided numerous opportunities for participants to share ideas and to learn from top-notch experts with fresh, new ideas to enrich teaching, scholarship, and creative work. Much deserved kudos go to Rebecca Sailor and Erin Beaver for their exceptional work as Conference Cochairs.

Erin O’Neill Armendarez may be reached at eoneill@nmsu.edu.
Call for Papers for 2018–19 TYCA Regional Conferences

The TYCA regional associations invite proposals for their 2018 conferences. The conference dates, themes, contact persons, and deadlines are listed below. For specific information, please contact the program chair listed or visit the website.

TYCA Midwest
“Educators on the Edge”
October 11–13, 2018
Embassy Suites, Indianapolis Downtown
Indianapolis, IN
For additional information, go to http://www.tycamidwest.org.

TYCA Northeast
“English at the Crossroads: Power and Possibilities”
October 11–13, 2018
LaGuardia Community College
Long Island City, NY
Contacts: Demetrios Kapetanakos, dkapetanakos@lagcc.cuny.edu
Margot Edlin, medlin@qcc.cuny.edu
Proposal Deadline: June 1
For additional information, go to http://www.tycanortheast.org.

TYCA Pacific Coast/ECCTYC
Next meeting is scheduled for October 2019.
For additional information, go to http://www.ecctyc.org.

TYCA Pacific Northwest
Next meeting is scheduled for April/May 2019.
For additional information, go to http://www.tyca-pnw.org.

TYCA Southeast
Next meeting is scheduled for February 2019.
For additional information, go to http://www.tycase.org.

TYCA Southwest
“Connect – Collaborate – Innovate: The Tides of Change”
October 25–27, 2018
San Luis Resort
Galveston, TX
Contact(s): Leigh Ann Moore, lmoore@alvincollege.edu
Thomas Parker: tparker@alvincollege.edu
For additional information, go to http://tycaw.org.

TYCA West
“The Big Picture: Transfer, Threshold Concepts, and the Two-Year College”
October 12–13, 2018
Salt Lake Community College
Salt Lake City, UT
Contacts: Anne Canavan, anne.canavan@slcc.edu
Ann Fillmore, ann.fillmore@slcc.edu
Stephanie Maenhardt, stephanie.maenhardt@slcc.edu
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Leslie Seawright

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