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

Inspirational Student Stories

As I sit down to compile the reps’ reports, I have to smile. The next item on my list is to read through a student’s writing. But, no, it’s not what you think. She’s a former student who has asked me to look through these deep dark passages of her life, and unlike other students who’ve asked me to review their work, hers isn’t about ego or publication. At Christmas, I received a card from her telling me about her classroom. She attempted to give me credit for the creative activities she’s had her young students doing, and that card of compliments brought me to tears.

In the same vein, semesters ago, a student confessed in class why he was researching the idea of tragedy, and his classmates were so attentive to his family story. The primary research he had conducted helped shed light on his family members’ attitudes post-tragedy, and even though another student in the class attempted to discount me and the projects every week, this particular student still came into my office at the end of the semester to thank me for that project.

The one story that side-swiped me was when a student athlete namedropped me in a campus luncheon; I had assumed he didn’t enjoy the class or like me much.

Other student stories that come to mind are lighter and include Mark and Tom and Britni and Chelsea and Mara and Lennie. I “forced” Lennie to research Lady Gaga; Britni, Chelsea, and Mara were my overly responsible premed students in one class who engaged in sarcastic peer pressure; Mark and Tom were part of my early years when I loved discussing George Carlin.

So, this column is for all the students who’ve inspired us, who we’ve inspired, and who give us that push when we need it to keep on at keeping on.
TYCA-Pacific Northwest Report from Travis Margoni

As the academic year ends in the Pacific Northwest, where most of our two-year colleges are on a quarter system that takes us into June, it was a pleasure to devote some time to our favorite student stories over the past month. Members of the TYCA-PNW REC shared memories that sounded familiar and yet so uniquely personal.

I find myself inspired by my students’ stories every day. Just a few hours ago, a student who had returned to academia in her late 30s after struggling with addiction for several years was in my office with tears streaming down her face, ashamed at the difficulty she’s having as she juggles court cases, work, her family, and what she described as an inability to focus or retain course content. All things considered, her work in our first-year composition class has been quite strong. Sometimes, simply assuring a student that she’s doing just fine in our class goes a long way. She’ll get through this. It’s on her face. She has overcome so much already.

Of course, there are the stories we don’t get every day. Our TYCA-PNW Treasurer, Kris Fink from Portland Community College, recalled a student who, having worked hard to meet a submission deadline, missed it and fell out of communication for a week. After he returned, he confessed to having been arrested and worrying, first and foremost, that he wouldn’t get his paper in on time for Kris’s class. I think this is a testament to the dedication students have to earning their degrees and certificates, and the relationships we build with our students over time (the student was repeating Kris’s class).

Kiera Squires, a new Member At Large in our region from Columbia Basin College, told us about the time a student had to miss class for a volunteer event at the Seattle Aquarium. Worried that Kiera wouldn’t believe her reason for missing class, the student had the event headliner—Ted Danson—sign a program: “To Kiera, Love Ted”—to prove she was at a very important charity event. I mean, if Ted Danson is there? Excused!

One of our new publication’s editors, Amy Minervini from Lewis-Clark State College, shared stories of several students who had returned to college after taking a break from academia. One student reflected on how his approach to learning changed thanks to the work done in Amy’s class: “When I first started this class, I was pretty rusty on all of my writing because I didn’t pay attention much back in high school. Now that I’m older, I have picked up on a lot of stuff I never knew.”

These stories of students trying—and trying again—to succeed in college always remind me why we’ve chosen to teach at two-year, open enrollment colleges specifically. We are not gatekeepers in the composition classroom. On the contrary, we work to meet every student’s needs, and we’re at our best when we try to understand the paths that have led our students to our colleges. It’s a privilege to be a part of their stories.

Travis Margoni may be reached at tmargoni@yvcc.edu.
TYCA-Southwest Report from Liz Aguilar

Teaching and Learning: A New Battleground

For David and Alberto, my two great students, who inspired my teaching of military students

There are two military students who have been an inspiration to me, and I feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to teach them. Both students signed up for my first-year composition classes during 2016, and both were retired military students. David Weeks had retired from the Air Force after serving 26 years as Security Forces Training Manager, and Alberto Cordew had spent 20 years in the Navy; prior to retiring, his last role in the service was as a Recruit Division Commander. Both students encountered the many challenges of transition from military to civilian life and then another transition to a school environment after working many years. Alberto’s struggles according to him were “the age difference” and “the classroom environment.” He mentioned to me that he “had gone from being a teacher to becoming the student, and [he stated that he] had not played the role of a student in years.” Both of my students had educated and trained thousands of people, military students who were already disciplined, respectful, and goal oriented; the transition from military to civilian life is a much greater challenge for them to endure.

Through each assignment, I witnessed their struggle, responded to their questions, and recognized that they had become college students. They wrote and studied for hours each week, and they knew that they had to overcome a “battle” just like the many battles that they had confronted in their more than fifteen years of service for our country, for all people, for justice, and for themselves.

Both of my students had already been educators in their military environment, and to step into my classroom and to be asked to write without stopping was truly an obstacle for both of them. David mentioned that my Maymester class was “a day which will live in infamy’ ok a little dramatic but taking your class was like going to war, it was all or nothing! The only way I felt I could be successful in an English course was to get in the fight right away.”

Both Alberto and David learned to transition into the role of the student by confiding in other veterans and by seeking help; Alberto learned that he had “not written an essay or formatted a paper in MLA or APA style before. [He] wrote in military jargon using a lot of terms not utilized in the civilian world.” It was a transition for David and Alberto to leave a very rigid and structured environment and walk into a new environment that welcomed conversation and freedom of expression and that challenged the students’ minds in many different ways.

Consequently, David mentioned to me that I had given him “the skills and confidence to move forward and not look back,” and Alberto said that my assigned literature “kept [him] interested in writing and inspired different writing styles.” In May of this year, I was elated to receive the news that David would be graduat-
ing summa cum laude with his bachelor’s degree from Texas A&M University in San Antonio and Alberto would be graduating with his associate degree from San Antonio College. Alberto is currently working on his bachelor’s degree, and he “would like to use [his] degree to help transition veterans that face difficulties transitioning to college. [He also would like to] continue working in higher education to ensure that veterans that endure transition difficulties are guided to a successful path without any hardships. For David, his degree attainment was something more “personal, something [he] needed to do, and it was a way of saying thank you to all who put their faith in [him] and looked after [his] wellbeing.”

_Lis Ann Báez Aguilar may be reached at laguilar@alamo.edu._

**TYCA-West Report from Rob Lively**

One of the great things about teaching in the two-year college is the ability to really get to know our students. They tell us about their lives, their hopes and aspirations, which makes the successes of these students more profound and impactful to us as their instructors.

I met Rachel (not her real name) in an English 101 class. She was a DACA student who was very shy and didn’t say much in the classroom. Her writings, though, were sharp and impactful. She had good voice and clearly had a lot to say. One day after class I asked her why she didn’t talk more in class since her insights were so good in her writings. She told me that she was afraid to talk because of the political situation in the country, and her status as a DACA student made her nervous. I told her she was welcome to talk in the class and that no one was going to think anything of it since no one knew she was a DACA student. This helped alleviate her tension a bit.

She went on to take my English 102 class, and she really seemed to flourish. Whereas previously she had been shy and reserved, she became a class leader. She would often take on leadership roles in class, people sought out her opinion in workshops, and she was accepted into our school’s nursing program. Things were going really well for her.

After class was over, I ran into her a couple of times in the hall and asked how she was doing. She told me she was doing well in nursing, and a short time later, she graduated with her nursing degree.

I didn’t see Rachel again for some time. Then late last year, my mom had some serious health issues, and she ended up spending the better part of a month in the hospital. While I was there looking for a coffee machine, I ran into Rachel. After she had graduated, she had gotten a job in the hospital. She was working as a nurse and learning everything she could. She was also pursuing her B.A. in nursing. She was also working with the hospital to try to help bridge the gaps between new nurses and the hospital environment because the learning curve was sometimes a bit rough on new nurses. It was so impressive to see how this shy student from English 101 went on to be a strong professional in her field.
These types of success stories play out every day across the country. In a two-year college we only see them for a short time, but our students go on to have careers and do important work. I think that sometimes we forget the success stories because we are mired in the grind of grading and administrative and committee work, but there are many students who come from interesting backgrounds and enter our courses unsure of themselves and who go on to be fantastic professionals in their fields.

Rob Lively may be reached at rob_lively@sbcglobal.net.

TYCA-Midwest Report from Alan Hutchison

It seems like the most memorable students are the most challenging students. One semester I taught an evening American literature class in a women’s prison. During a break from discussing the assigned Modernist poetry, one of the women got in my face and said, “You take drugs, don’t you? I know you take drugs. I don’t see how you get what you get out of these poems without drugs. I take LSD, that’s my drug of choice. You take drugs!”

Rarely do we hear about those students who responded positively to what we did in class, took things to heart and actually changed as a result of our interactions.

One of my colleagues, Lynn LaGrone, shared this student story:

A few years ago, while teaching a first-year writing class at a small liberal arts college in Des Moines, I required students to research an iconic figure to see what makes/made this person important to society and their influence for the future.

Two twists to this: first, I heavy-handedly assigned the figure to each student based on a wacky survey asking about college majors and preferences in entertainment, philanthropy, sports, music, etc., as well as their dislikes in those areas.

Twist two—I wanted students to actually research someone they had little to no prior knowledge about. Hence, the mystery person to discover from scratch.

One student, a young woman from St. Louis, was a computer major with an interest in graphic design along with a life-long love of art. Based on that, I assigned her the architect/artist/designer Maya Lin. Throughout the project, this student was immersed—going beyond the required research process paper, annotated bib, works cited assignment and short biography essay. She checked books out from nearby libraries along with films on the Vietnam Memorial and other Lin projects. For the required slideshow presentation, she included numerous photos and artifacts regarding Lin’s process for creating artwork and architecture.

The student’s enthusiasm was contagious. Others in the class were equally excited in researching their figures, and our presentation sessions were lively and engaging. While I rarely received any pushback with this assignment, I had never had this result: my student admired Maya Lin so much, she changed her major to graphic design/art. She hoped to utilize her love of art and sculpture to work with diverse groups in public service.
Happy to say that for the past two years, she’s answered the call as a graphic designer and strategic planner for a city mission in Missouri—combining her art with serving others. Bravo!

Sometimes it takes a while to find out one’s impact on a student. Des Moines Area Community College has a semester abroad program where DMACC students go to London and take classes with a DMACC professor. I was that faculty member in the fall of 2001. There were seventeen students (three of whom had never been out of Iowa), and we arrived in London three days before the 9/11 attack. In the aftermath, I dealt with unnerved students and panicked parents. Slowly, we were able to focus on classes and travel on weekends. No one went home. In the beginning, the three students who had never been out of Iowa hung close to me and wanted to go wherever I went. It took a while to wean them and give them confidence.

About six years later, I received a wedding invitation from Chad, one of the London students who had never been out of Iowa. I went to the wedding, and at the reception Chad came up to me and told me I had changed his life. After London, he went on to the University of Iowa, graduated with a degree in business, and moved to Texas, where he met his wife. He told me none of that would have happened had he not had the experience studying with me in London.

It was a surreal experience being out of the country during a major event that happened at home. I’m happy that out of that awful time period, as small as it was, something very positive occurred. And for the record, I don’t do drugs to interpret poetry.

Alan Hutchison may be reached at ajhutchison@dmacc.edu.

TYCA-Southeast Report from Laura Hammons

When I asked TYCA-SE colleagues their “favorite student story,” they responded by saying that they had a lot of dear and wonderful students and many stories. Several said that what they love most about their students was hearing about who they are now. They delighted in telling stories about students who were eager learners (and even some reluctant ones) who had left community college and who now have solid, good-paying jobs with growing families. Others said that their favorite student stories revolved around watching students’ eyes light up when they “get” what is being taught.

For the past couple of years, I have been a volunteer creative writing teacher to inmates who are veterans. Nothing I have ever done in my various careers comes close to the satisfaction of teaching these men. They devour words and ideas. When given a chance to write, they dazzle the reader. In groups, they shock each other with their insights and confessions and later walk out of the classroom and back to their unit. No one has ever broken a trust from that tiny space. They stay in the unit behind those miles of fences and razor wire after I leave that place in my ag-
ing Toyota. I have never left without guilt for my freedom. Gratitude follows, but there is still guilt.

After a year with the vets, I started teaching Comp I and II on the women’s side of the prison. When I got there, I found out from my students that all the female inmates are not allowed pen and paper unless they are in a class of some sort. I told the warden what the women had said, looked her directly in eyes, and asked, “This can’t be true, right?” It was and still is true. It is beyond comprehension.

The veterans’ unit had a tiny library full of paperback westerns and some religious books, but thanks to the trust of prison officials, I have been able to take in carloads of books, even hardbacks. With the help of my colleagues in Mississippi, TYCA-SE, and NCTE, the vets have a new library stocked with 2,500–3,000 books, many of them reference books. The men call the World Book encyclopedias “our Google.”

For nearly two years people across America have mailed me books based on my Facebook posts. Lovely people in my area have used my carport as a drop-off spot for boxes and boxes of books. A local church allowed me to take any books I wanted from their giant rummage sale, and I got lots of gardening books and novels. The men have written stacks of thank-you letters to the donors and to me about these books. For them, the books are a sign that the public does not hate them and that they are not forgotten behind the miles of fences and wire. My Vietnam vets are especially appreciative because they have been abandoned so many times.

The women, even those without paper and pen, have better library access, and one of my students is a librarian, so she helps the others. I still provide books to them but must have 10 copies of the same book because no one can be left out. Providing paper for them is fun. I always take in stacks to distribute and I give out pens like candy canes. I hope the wardens don’t read any TETYC literature, but, ultimately, I don’t care.

Laura Hammons may be reached at ldhammons@hindscc.edu.

**TYCA-Northeast Report from Leigh Jonaitis**

I hope that the following stories, as well as the ones from the other regional TYCAs, can remind us to keep talking to students and continuing to make a difference in their lives.

From Reginald Chee-atow from Hudson County Community College in Jersey City, NJ:

Marie Louise was enrolled in my Developmental Reading and Writing level 2 class. As usual, I assigned a writing task on the first day. This is a personal essay to get them to write as much as possible and so give me a benchmark on the writing ability of each student. An outline is provided with some suggested topics: write about your home community, early schooling, people who have influenced you most in life, or something you wished you had never done in the past.

Marie took a long time to get started, but when she did, I noticed tears flowing down her cheeks. I took her outside the classroom and inquired if she was ill.
From Dr. Elisa Roberson, Howard Community College in Columbia, MD:

Steven is an exceptional writer, thinker, and student as he is voracious in his desire to learn more, more, more! His teachers have referred to him as a student who “maintains the drive and focus of a lifetime learner; demonstrates a can-do attitude and positive spirit; creatively engages with all levels of his work; is an eager learner who has joyfully sent notes of ‘thanks’ to teachers for creating such insightful exams; and one who actively thinks about his assignments and how they can best challenge him.” One faculty member said, “In my 19 years of teaching at HCC, I’ve rarely seen Steve’s equal in intellect, passion, and ability,” and I second that glowing statement myself. Steven’s commitment to academic scholarship is evidenced in his own original writings, and it has earned him the privileged position of attending a university in the UK this fall.

Steven serves as a peer leader to ESL College Composition students, is in the Dragon Leadership Program, the Kind Gestures Club and the Mixed Martial Arts Club; he writes for the HCC Times and writes poems and prose for The Muse, the college’s literary arts magazine. Most remarkably though, his writing shows remarkable skill, a depth of perception, and sensitivity well beyond his age. Steven is remarkable as a student and person. I count myself lucky to be a part of his writing journey since we will all be able to one day boast, “I knew him way back when at HCC … and he got there from here!”

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

TYCA-Pacific Coast Report from Sravani Banerjee

Faculty from across California shared some memorable anecdotes related to their students.

Jody Millward from Santa Barbara City College shared a humorous anecdote:

I had a student from out-of-district in my class who was making a typical freshman mistake—too much partying. He was missing classes and was not quite engaged when he did show up. He turned in his first essay, and at a required
conference we discussed his thesis and how a thesis functioned. Soon after, he stopped coming and failed the class. He enrolled in my class the next semester. In our mandatory first conference, I brought up thesis and asked him if he had ever discussed purpose/function of thesis. He said, “No. This is my second time in this course and my last teacher didn’t teach us anything.” I said, “You never saw a handout like this one?” He said, “No, but it looks like it’ll help me.” I said, “I was your last teacher.” He said, “Oh no! Not you again!” I said, “Me again. Do you think you’ll be able to come to class and do the work this semester?” He did so, and passed with a B.

Sean Stratton from Chaffey College shared an excerpt from his book Islands on the Fringe: A Year of Micronesian Waves and Wanderers:

Teana, the bristle-browed secretary of the Language and Literature Division, watches me pick at my lunch of breadfruit, Spam, and steamed rice. Finally, exasperated by the way I gather the pink cubes of Spam into a corner of rejection upon my place, she lashes me with a glare of rebuke.

“Why you not eat? Dat good food!”

“I don’t like Spam,” I tell her. Despondent after a month of cafeteria cuisine, I think the entire menu deserves a boycott, but I keep the full extent of my food-funk quiet.

“Dat why you so skinny?” Teana scolds. “Why you no like Spam?”

Lunchtime chatter quiets around us. Students peer intently from a nearby table, curious about the guy who “no like Spam.”

“I generally try to avoid heavily-processed foods, especially meats,” I explain.

“Heavily processed foods?”

“Sure. Back in Los Angeles, lots of health-conscious people avoid processed foods like hot dogs and Spam.”

“Who avoid Spam?” Teana asks, incredulous.

“Lots of people, especially in the movie industry. Celebrities, actors…”

The words “movie” and “actor” bring a tinge of excitement to Teana’s voice and lessen the hostility of her glance.

“Movies!” she exclaims. “I love actors. You see dat movie Titanic? I love dat actor.”

“You mean Leonardo DiCaprio?”

“Yeah! Leonardo DiCaprio. . . he avoid Spam?” Teana inquires.

“Maybe,” I say. “I’m not sure.”

“Why you not sure?”

“Well, I don’t know him personally.”

“How come you not know him?” Teana persists. “Don’t he come from same place as you?”

“Actually, he does come from Los Angeles,” I say, unpacking the trivia from a dusty corner of my mind. “I think he has a place in Hollywood.”

“So how come you not know him? You both from same village!” The rebuke returns, this time motivated by more than displeasure over my avoidance of Spam. The idea that I could dwell in the same geographic region as Leonardo DiCaprio and not know him personally strikes Teana as indicative of some deep flaw in my character.
“How can you live in same village as someone and not know him?” Teana scolds. “I know everyone from my village! I know everyone in dis part of da island!”

I ponder the range of possible responses, searching for a diplomatic way of informing Teana that the “village” of Los Angeles, in its greater metropolitan area, contains over ten million inhabitants, most of whom know only a tiny fraction of the total population. Finally, I limit my defense to a simple answer. “Los Angeles is a pretty big village,” I say, shrugging apologetically.

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

---

Nell Ann Pickett Service Award Call for Nominations:

This award is granted each year to an outstanding teacher whose vision and voice have had a major impact on two-year college professionalism and whose teaching exemplifies such outstanding personal qualities as creativity, sensitivity, and leadership. The award, presented at the annual CCCC Awards Ceremony, consists of a plaque from NCTE and free registration to that year’s CCCC Convention. Candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Major impact on two-year college professionalism.
- Service qualifications: Positive contributions to professional leadership with a clearly national reach and an inclusive vision demonstrated in such activities as mentoring, publication, or work uniting the goals and efforts of organizations and groups that promote two-year colleges.
- Teaching qualifications: Past or present excellence in teaching, which exemplifies such outstanding personal qualities as creativity, sensitivity, and leadership.

Any person may nominate a service award candidate who meets the qualifications by sending an application of not more than two double-spaced typed pages and a copy of the candidate’s current vita. The selection committee may request other supporting materials.

The 2020 award committee will select the winner from nominations submitted electronically, no later than November 15, 2019, to tyca@ncte.org.
Students ask the right questions. Help them find the best answers.

Do your students know how to find trustworthy research materials and navigate campus resources? Turn students into capable thinkers, researchers, and writers with these new MLA guides.

MLA Guide to Undergraduate Research in Literature
By Elizabeth Brookbank and H. Faye Christenberry
Paper $16.00
$12.80 with code TETYC20

MLA Guide to Digital Literacy
By Ellen C. Carillo
Paper $16.00
$12.80 with code TETYC20

Members save 30% on all titles.
mla.org/books
ANDREA LUNSFORD

Andrea Lunsford knows student writing.

One of the nation’s foremost experts in the field of composition and rhetoric, Andrea Lunsford knows how to help students channel their energy, experience, and budding media savvy into creating effective writing.

**Everyday Writer, Eighth Edition**  
(with or without exercises)  
Andrea Lunsford

*The Everyday Writer* invites students to think rhetorically, communicate ethically, listen respectfully, experiment with language, and adopt openness as a habit of mind necessary for democracy. The new edition introduces chapters on college expectations and on language and identity as well as substantial new advice for reading and interrogating sources, seeking common ground with opponents, using varieties of English, and being open to new approaches in common academic genres.

**Other Lunsford Handbooks:**

| The St. Martin’s Handbook 8e with 2016 MLA Update |
| Easy Writer 7e (with or without exercises) |

**Also from Andrea Lunsford**

**Everything’s An Argument, Eighth Edition**

Andrea A. Lunsford  John J. Ruszkiewicz  Keith Walters

AVAILABLE WITH OR WITHOUT READINGS

Given today’s contentious political climate, a solid foundation in rhetorical listening skills teaches students to communicate effectively and ethically. Streamlined and current, *Everything’s an Argument* helps students understand and analyze the arguments around them and raise their own unique voices in response.

To learn more, visit: [macmillanlearning.com/TETYCSep2019](http://macmillanlearning.com/TETYCSep2019)
HACKER HANDBOOKS
Diana Hacker • Nancy Sommers

More than 12 million students have trusted Hacker handbooks for straight answers to questions about writing. That’s an entire generation of college writers gaining confidence, building skills, and succeeding with a tool designed for quick access. For a new generation, Hacker Handbooks provide the reliable and comprehensive instruction—a clear advantage over the hit-or-miss information found on the internet.

NEW
The Bedford Handbook, Eleventh Edition
Diana Hacker  Nancy Sommers

This reimagined edition takes a fresh “essentials” approach to writing, research, style, and grammar. Students will quickly find answers in the book’s direct explanations and step-by-step instruction. They’ll get practice and guidance with exercises, how-to guides, model papers, and class-tested examples. All this in a book that’s easier to use and more affordable than ever.

Other Hacker Handbooks:
A Pocket Style Manual 8e | A Pocket Style Manual, APA Version 8e | A Writer’s Reference 9e | A Canadian Writer’s Reference 9e | Rules for Writers 9e

NEW RHETORIC

The Writer’s Loop
A Guide to College Writing,
First Edition
Lauren Ingraham  Jeanne Bohannon

TheWriter’s Loop presents a refreshing, practical approach to writing, based on the habits of strong writers, who pause often, reflect, and loop backwards and forwards as they work toward a final draft. With integrated videos, relatable examples, clear explanations, and a consistent, scaffolded learning framework, each brief chapter engages writers through reflection and practices that support the most common types of academic writing, including essays, arguments, and research projects.

To learn more, visit: macmillanlearning.com/TETYCSept2019
Bedford/St. Martin’s is as passionately committed to the English discipline as ever. How do we demonstrate that commitment? We put writers first and that shows in the products we create to serve the English community; the customer service we provide to instructors and students; and our dedication to sponsoring events that serve our students and instructors.

Ask about our expanding series of student companions for handbooks, readers, and rhetorics!

To learn more, visit: macmillanlearning.com/TETYCSext2019