

VOLUME 6, NO. 1**FALL 2013****cwp****DIRECTOR'S CORNER***By Jason Courtmanche, PhD*

The results of the latest PISA tests came out recently, and as has been the case for ages, US students scored in the middle of the international pack. The usual round of teacher bashing ensued, with the OECD and Arne Duncan at the fore. Not surprisingly, the Common Core State Standards are being hailed by many as the remedy for this “stagnation.”

The merits or demerits of the Common Core aside, Diane Ravitch and a few others have been quick to point out that US students have *always* scored in the middle of the pack on the PISA tests, and that despite successive panics that we were being outpaced by the Soviets, the Japanese, and now the Chinese (no one seems too concerned that we’re being outpaced by Finland, which suggests quite a bit about the nationalist prejudices of our politicians and journalists), and despite successive pedagogical panaceas, nothing much ever seems to change.

I am certainly not one to argue a conservative course of action, but the panic and the panaceas have to be tempered by looking more closely at the data.

As I have written previously, when we look at the PISA results for the US and disaggregate for states and for poverty, we find predictable results. Wealthy states like Connecticut and Massachusetts do really well. Poor states like Mississippi do awful. The same is largely true when we look at schools within states. Students from towns like New Canaan perform as well or better than the smartest students from anywhere in the world. Even Finland. Students from towns like Bridgeport do poorly, but, oddly enough, our poor actually perform slightly better than most of the world’s poor, which is interesting, to say the least.

To me, this suggests good teaching. For all the false or exaggerated claims that a certain number of so-called good teachers in successive years can account for x-number of years of (see p.2)

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER CONT.

By Jason Courtmanche, PhD

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academic progress, we do know in a general, common-sense way that effective teaching benefits students.

Now, in response to these latest PISA results, many politicians and education reformers (particularly the corporate kind) have called out teacher education programs for their inadequacies, and likewise have made recommendations for improving the training of teachers. What do they call for? Elevated standards for program admission, graduate degrees, content areas degrees, and a year or more of apprenticed teaching.

Well, at UConn anyway, the average GPA in the School of Education is around a 3.8. In Connecticut, teachers have been required to attain a Master's degree since 1986. Most schools of education in the state now offer students the chance to earn dual degrees in education and their content area. This happened in response to the 2004 No Child Left Behind Act, and has been in place at UConn since 2007. And the year or more of apprenticed student teaching has been in place in teacher education programs throughout Connecticut since the stone age.

When I look at all the aggregate data presented here, I conclude that what teacher education programs need, at least in Connecticut, is for the corporate reformers and their elected cronies to tackle poverty with sincerity. Invest in prenatal care, family literacy programs, and Head Start and other similar programs. These would make a world of difference for everyone.

The other suggestion that is often floated is to raise teacher pay and/or implement a system of merit pay for high student performance on standardized tests. And while a bigger paycheck would be nice (it's part of what came out of the Education Enhancement Acts of the 1980s), most teachers when surveyed said they would prefer funding for their classes to increased pay. Smaller class sizes, more paras and aides, more and better texts and supplies, and cleaner, better equipped classrooms were vastly preferred to salary increases or merit pay.

Improve the lives of students at home and in the classroom and we will likely see the results we claim to desire.

To learn more about the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), please follow this link to the page on the OECD website: <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>.

AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR SHARES WRITING PROCESS WITH UNDERGRADUATES

By Christiana Pinkston Betts

On Tuesday, October 22, *New York Times* bestselling author Rita Williams-Garcia spoke to a roomful of UConn undergraduate students, graduate students, and local school teachers about how she got her start as a writer, what her writing process is, and what inspired her award-winning book, *One Crazy Summer*.

Williams-Garcia started the talk by explaining that she had always wanted to be known as a "serious writer." She wrote her first novel, which contained thirty-nine chapters, under the pseudonym Rita Highland Williams, when she was in the seventh grade. Williams-Garcia told her captivated audience, "I wanted to be the next Hemingway, and I was motivated to get published so I could earn money to buy 'normal' clothes, not the antiquated hand-me-downs that my mother dressed me in."

Williams-Garcia told listeners that as part of her process she wrote up to 2000 words a night. Her first published story, "Ben-ji Speaks," was published in *Highlights* magazine when she was fourteen and earned her \$150.

She explained to the audience that more so than her other novels, *One Crazy Summer* required research. She was introducing the Black Panther Party to her young adult readers, and she needed to find a way to talk about the politics and about the community service that was important to the Party. At the same time, she did not want it to be too heavy or overtly political. "I had to write it for a child," she said.

Williams-Garcia also shared that the protagonists' mother, Cecile, was inspired by strong women in the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. "I was exploring what it meant to be a black woman artist in a movement that was very 'macho.' [Cecile] embodies this womanhood, selfhood, and determination. I wanted to show this woman who was being oppressed from all sides without making her [a victim], because that would take away her power."

Williams-Garcia is the author of numerous books written for children and young adults, and she is the recipient of several awards, including the Newberry Honor Award, the Coretta Scott King Award, and the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction. *One Crazy Summer* was a National Book Award finalist. She will be the keynote speaker at the 2014 Recognition Night.



THE CWP PROVIDES MINI-GRANTS TO TEACHERS WHO ATTENDED THE 2012 SUMMER INSTITUTE

By Mikala Francini

The Connecticut Writing Project-Storrs received a \$20,000 grant from the National Writing Project for Teacher Leadership in the spring of 2012. Ultimately, these funds came from Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which provides funding for the professional development of teachers. The Storrs site used these funds in various ways, but they were principally used to provide \$500 research mini-grants to all the teachers who attended the 2012 Summer Institute.

In years past when there was more funding from the university and federal government, the CWP always budgeted funds to offer mini-grants to teachers. Recently, Stephanie McKenna, Jon Andersen, Rebecca Pilver, and Hannah Magnan each received mini-grants to fund classroom-based research. Their end-of-year reports are available at the following link: <http://cwp.uconn.edu/teachers/minigrants.php>.

In one particular year, Lynda Barrow and Marcy Rudge from Annie Vinton Elementary School in Mansfield combined their grants to start up a publishing center for their students. Their commendable end-of-year report was published in a journal that was a combined effort from the three Connecticut Writing Project sites. It is available here: <http://cwp.uconn.edu/publications/CWP3%202009%20PWR%20Anthology.pdf>.

Since the CWP's summer research is limited to four weeks, the intent behind these mini-grants was to provide the incentive and opportunity to extend that nascent research into full-year projects. Therefore, when the Teacher Leadership funds became available, the CWP attached mini-grant funding to the Aetna Fellowships, while making year-long research a requirement. The provisions stated that the teachers had to use the funds for their own professional development, they had to submit their research as a proposal to a professional conference or journal, and they had to write up a brief end-of-year report for the CWP.

The final reports contain an exciting list of things that the teachers did with their mini-grants. Many teachers bought technology for their classrooms, and one built a library of Latina literature. Several of the teachers decided to resister for various conferences, including the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Convention, International Reading Association (IRA) affiliated conferences, the Assembly for Literature on Adolescents of the NCTE (ALAN) meeting, the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) Conference, and the National Writing Project (NWP) Urban Sites Network Conference.

Additionally, two teachers leveraged their grants to receive additional funding from the College Board and EASTCONN Regional Educational Services Center, respectively. Fortunately, several of the teachers had their proposals to these conferences accepted. You can view or download the final reports here: <http://cwp.uconn.edu/publications/2013%20Teacher-Researcher.pdf>.

"I am comforted daily by the fact that I have experiences like presenting at NCTE and participating in the Connecticut Writing Project under my belt. Even in those moments when I feel like I don't know anything about teaching, I have these experiences to remind me that maybe I actually do know something. I have already thought back often to the valuable lessons I learned at the Summer Institute."

— **JILLIAN BARRY, (SI 13)**



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The Program

Students complete thirty-one (31) credits in total: eight regularly scheduled three-credit courses (24 credits), a one-credit research methods course (1 credit), and one Summer Institute (6 credits) with the Connecticut Writing Project (CWP).

Students admitted receive an Aetna Fellowship from the CWP for the Summer Institute but do not receive a Graduate Assistantship from the English Department. Teachers from high need schools can apply for a fellowship to defray tuition costs.

For more information:

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UConn Hosts Sixth Annual Conference for Secondary School Writing Centers

By Mikala Francini

The sixth annual conference for secondary school writing centers was held on Friday, October 18 in UConn's Student Union Theater. This year, there were 120 attendees, which included 90 students and 30 teachers from schools across the state. Many of these schools were high need schools. Additionally, there were several undergraduate and graduate writing center tutors present who helped to facilitate registration and breakout sessions throughout the event.

The CWP co-sponsors the writing center conference, and every middle and high school writing center the CWP has established together is run by a Teacher-Consultant of the CWP. Often, the grad students running the collaboration are also CWP Teacher-Consultants, one of which being UConn Graduate student Kathryn Schneider (SI 13), who helped to organize this year's event. She said that she is "very pleased with this year's conference—we've been receiving largely positive feedback from teachers, who were happy with the student-centered nature of it." She explained that the overall goal for the conference was to give local secondary school writing centers the opportunity to meet at UConn in order to share their goals and philosophies as student-directed writing centers. Schneider also noted that an additional goal for this year's conference involved initiation for their partner schools. She noted, "Every year the UConn Writing Center partners with one or two schools and helps them establish a peer-directed Writing Center. This year, we are partnering with Manchester High School and Woodstock Academy. Both of these schools were in attendance for the conference and found it meaningful."

CWP Director Jason Courtmanche and UConn Writing Center Director Tom Deans each gave introductory and welcoming remarks at the start of the conference. These were followed by presentations from high school tutors from Windham High School, Brookfield High School, and the CREC Public Safety Academy in Enfield regarding the work they respectively are doing with their various writing centers. Two breakout sessions were included in the latter portion of the conference's agenda, the first of which allowed schools to gather as groups to talk about their goals for their school's writing center in the upcoming year. The second was a discussion of the philosophies of writing centers, in which students from the various schools worked in mixed groups.

To learn more, go here: <http://writingcenter.uconn.edu/Outreach.php>.

THE CWP WORKS WITH MBA IN NEW HAVEN FOR CCSS PD

By Mikala Francini

This summer, a group of teachers worked with CWP Director Jason Courtmanche, Summer Institute Program Leader Kelly Andrews-Babcock (SI 05), and Teacher-Consultant Steve Staysniak (SI 12) at the Metropolitan Business Academy, which is an interdistrict magnet high school located in New Haven, CT. There they worked on professional development which looked closely at how the Common Core translates to the practices of literacy instruction.

Staysniak, who is a ninth grade teacher at MBA, explained, “all of the work we did we was grounded in the NWP philosophy that had us look at the Common Core as teachers, but also as readers and writers.” He shared that he led two sessions which guided Metro teachers in beginning to synthesize the Common Core reading and writing standards into four reading and writing standards that now serve as the basis of MBA’s conversation regarding standards-based graduation requirements. Professor Courtmanche and Steve Staysniak led a week-long session for English and Social Studies teachers on the writing standards, while Courtmanche and Andrews-Babcock offered two days of August PD on the reading standards with teachers from every content area. Courtmanche also provided examples of student writing from his UConn students, giving teachers at MBA a clearer idea of what the writing of students at MBA should look like at the end of their senior year in order for them to make the jump to college-level writing.

In regards to implementation of the Common Core, Andrews-Babcock said, “It’s going to be hard work, for teachers and kids. As we grow as professionals and revise our teaching and hone our craft to meet the demands of the CCSS, our students will learn to reach the high expectations. They can do it—we just have to teach them how. I am hopeful that our teaching can once again be what it once was—an art. My fear is, in this standardized testing frenzy that we now live in, that the art will be created without paint.”

Looking ahead to the future, Staysniak shared that the CWP has committed to continuing to work with MBA, as it is one of several public high schools in New Haven that is moving towards implementation of mastery learning, while moving beyond traditional letter grades. “Next steps for our work,” according to Staysniak, include “exploring the establishment of a writing center at Metro, connecting Metro and Gateway Community College so that Metro’s senior English doubles as a college credit bearing course, and strengthening the relationship between Metro and the CWP by encouraging more teachers to attend future Summer Institutes.” Andrews-Babcock added, “Jason and I will be developing some PD for both secondary and elementary teachers in the areas of reading and writing revolving around the CCSS. I would like to try to make it as accessible for teachers as possible. Stay tuned.”

In addition, Courtmanche added that he will be working with Steve Straight (SI 90), a professor at Manchester Community College, Kelly Cecchini (SI 02), who teaches at Manchester High School and adjuncts at both MCC and QUCC, and Kim Shaker, who teaches UConn English at East Hartford High School, to transform a senior English courses at Metro to either UConn ECE courses or community college Developmental English courses. Straight, Cecchini, and Shaker’s experiences with these courses will enable MBA to partner more easily with Gateway Community College and UConn. They will be able to use Kelly’s Senior English and Kim’s ECE courses as models. Ideally, every student at Metro will complete senior year with a credit-bearing or a credit-ready English course transferable to UConn or any of the state’s community colleges, though most will likely choose Gateway.

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR!

STEPHANIE MCKENNA (SI 05)

has been named Wethersfield, CT’s Teacher of the Year!

DIANE AYER (SI 06)

has been named Lebanon, CT’s Teacher of the Year!

AMANDA LISTER (SI 08)

has been named Manchester, CT’s co-Teacher of the Year!

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? CHECKING UP ON TEACHER-CONSULTANTS

By Mikala Francini

VICTORIA NORDLUND (SI 93) is currently teaching at Rockville High School in Vernon, where she is also the English department head. She also teaches during



the summers in Neag's Teacher Certification Program for College Graduates. Vicky provides her students with an abundance of opportunities for sharing

their work through both small and large scale publishing. She currently has a former student in college who is the process of getting a novel published, and several of her students produce blog entries which are published in the Vernon Patch. Nordlund is an esteemed poet herself; she was a New England Association of Teachers of English poet of the year finalist in 2008 for her poem "Winter Beach." Despite her many successes with getting both herself and her students published in various venues, Nordlund emphasizes the importance of showcasing student work other than in print. Specifically, she provides her students with chances to use performance as a means of sharing their work, as she runs a poetry slam and a murder mystery scenario in which her students write and perform original plays.

On her teaching philosophy, Nordlund says she seeks to "create a community or team" in the classroom, while providing students with the chance to enact the tools and skills they learn in her class activities. In this way, she is providing her students with "real world nuts and bolts" to best prepare them for their careers ahead.

JILLIAN BARRY (SI 13) has just begun her career in education this fall. She is teaching at Rocky Hill High School, and despite the inevitably overwhelming atmosphere that a new job presents, Barry still has her wits about her. On her eighth day of teaching she joked, "I haven't changed the world yet. My current most exciting accomplishments include getting an impressive four hours of sleep a night, building muscle mass by carrying a classroom in a bag up and down the stairs, and remembering my own name at the end of every day. I have memorized at least 46 different education related acronyms and 127 student names, made myself at home in four different classrooms, and asked 378 questions of various colleagues in the last two weeks. I am agonizing over the wording of emails to parents and trying to teach my students to advocate for themselves. I have never had so many to-do lists and to-don't lists, and today lists and tomorrow lists."



Though modest, Barry offers some important insight for new teachers to take advantage of. She confirms that nothing can truly prepare teachers for the reality of being in their own classrooms until they actually get there, and stresses the importance of teachers taking the time to do personal reading and writing to ensure their own growth and benefit. Admirably, she considers her greatest accomplishment in teaching so far to be her efforts to stand by every lesson she plans, to go into the classroom every day with a smile, and to teach her students everything she has learned so far in her own career. Barry also intends to explore the possibility of starting a writing center or group at Rocky Hill High, and is enthusiastic about ensuring that students have the opportunity to write and publish creative work.

GILLIAN ZIEGER (SI 13) is in her eighth year teaching English at Woodstock Academy, where she currently teaches a writing workshop to sophomores and an Early College Experience course to seniors. She is also working on establishing a writing center at the high school, which is a project she began this summer at the Summer Institute with graduate student and fellow TC Kate Schneider. Zieger reports that she is "enjoying teaching poetry this semester using the many great activities and techniques [she] gained from [her] colleagues this summer."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? CHECKING UP ON TEACHER-CONSULTANTS

(CONT.)

By Mikala Francini

KRISTINA REARDON (SI 13) is currently working as a graduate assistant director in the UConn Writing Center in Storrs while pursuing her PhD in Comparative Literature from the Literatures, Cultures and Languages Department. Aside from writing creatively and pursuing her own scholarship, Reardon's work in translation is flourishing. Her English translation of a short story that UConn professor Odette Casamayor-Cisneros originally wrote in Spanish was just published in *Confluencia*. Additionally, her co-translations of three poems written by Slovenian survivors of the Dachau concentration camp during World War II is forthcoming in a volume from Camden House Press in Germany, and three of her co-translations of contemporary Slovenian fiction are also forthcoming in the academic journal *Slovene Studies*.



KERRI BROWN (SI 13) is settling into a new job in Sandwich, MA as a 12th grade English and Creative Writing Teacher, after having done quite a bit of moving around. She shared that working at Sandwich High School has been an experience different from her previous work in a school district where teachers were not valued as experts in their fields. In Sandwich, she is looked to for advice and is expected to provide support for the community (as she thinks it should be)!

Outside of the classroom, she is taking a graduate course in Creative Non-Fiction and hopes to work towards a Master's in English. Of this she said, "The fall is always such a hectic time for teachers to keep up with every day things ... I'm so happy to have a space designated each week to my own writing (and revising)."

Reflecting back on her experience with the Summer Institute, Brown added: "My work this summer very much prepared me for my new job. I don't think I'd be as prepared to teach voice, style, and technique in student writing had I not spent so much time working on my own writing at the Summer Institute."

"My work this summer very much prepared me for my new job. I don't think I'd be as prepared to teach voice, style, and technique in student writing had I not spent so much time working on my own writing at the Summer Institute." — **KERRI BROWN**, SI (13)

SARAH KING (SI 12) has taken on a new high school English teaching position at The Master's School in West Simsbury.



This is her first teaching contract after several years of serving long and short term substitute teaching positions around the state, and after caring for elderly parents and children. "This is an exciting time," King shared, "since this is the first classroom that is my own! I have waited a long time to settle into my classroom and it is a wonderful fit!"

She teaches American Literature, Narrative and Non-fiction, Composition, and a Writer's Studio elective. "While I enjoy all of my classes, I am having the most fun sharing what I learned at the SI with my Writer's Studio. It is a pleasure to experience my students' passion for writing on a daily basis working on their submissions for the Connecticut Student Writers contest in January 2014." King actually wrote her mini-grant proposal on Writing Centers with a focus on how to set one up at her school. She met with Roberta McGuire from Saint Paul's Catholic High School in Bristol to discuss and research the SPCHS Writing Program and establish goals for a proposed Writing Center at The Master's School.

"Having continued contact with the CWP is a tremendous support system that anchors my goals as an English / Writing Teacher. The friends I have met through the SI provide a wonderful network of professionals who love what they do while sharing their success as well as survival stories." — **SARAH KING**, (SI 12)

ELLEN DEVINE (SI 12) has become the new English Department Head at Choate Rosemary Hall in Wallingford, CT.

ETHAN WARNER PRESENTED AT THE NCTE ANNUAL CONVENTION

By Mikala Francini

This fall, Ethan Warner (SI 12) presented at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Convention. Warner is an English teacher and Theatre Director at O.H. Platt High School. His NCTE presentation was entitled "Self-Scripted: Using the Writing Process and Theatre to Explore Identity in the 21st Century," and it derived from research he began at the Connecticut Writing Project's Summer Institute. He continued this research throughout the following school year with the help of a mini-grant from the CWP, and led a group of students through a writing process while using skills he had learned during the CWP's Summer Institute. Warner shared that this experience formed the basis of the research that he presented at the NCTE Conference this past November, and provided some insight into his thinking process which surrounded his findings:

While conducting my literature review, what struck me was the degree to which New Literacies are constantly changing and developing. My students view Facebook as antiquated and are quickly growing bored with Twitter. It would appear that as soon as we catch up to a new mode of communication the technology and the users move on. How, I then wondered, could we adequately prepare students to compose in the new literacies of the 21st century if we don't even know what those formats may be? The answer I found was in what all new literacies had in common: they were multimodal (meaning that effective use of them required a combination of words, images, and potentially even audio) and they had the ability to be interactive between the writer and audience. It occurred to me then that these two criteria are not limited to New Literacies. Theatre, which has existed for over 2,000 years, has always been multimodal and certainly has the potential to be interactive.

The multimodal and interactive play his students wrote included visual artwork, music, movement, spoken word, and audience engagement and interaction. For his work, Warner won the Bob Costas Award for the Teaching of Writing from the College Board, and his students also won an award for Theatrical Excellence from the Connecticut Drama Association.

CONNECTICUT STUDENT WRITERS MAGAZINE

2014 CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Published Writers and Honorable Mentions will be encouraged to attend a Student Recognition Night at UConn's Jorgensen Auditorium on Tuesday, May 13, 2014.

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Questions regarding submissions? Please contact:

Marcy Rudge: rudgems@mansfieldct.org | Ethan Warner: ethan.warner@meridenk12.org



UCONN'S NEAG SCHOOL OF EDUCATION KEEPS GOOD COMPANY: TWO CWP TEACHER-CONSULTANTS PURSUE GRADUATE DEGREES IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

By Mikala Francini

Ricki Ginsberg (SI 09) and **Katy Parkin** (SI 13) are both currently enrolled as graduate students in Neag's Curriculum and Instruction Department. Ginsberg is in pursuit of her PhD, while Parkin is pursuing a Sixth Year degree.

Ginsberg speaks highly of her current experience as both a student and a TA in the program, and she has praised the independent learning style that this opportunity offers her. She remarked, "When I was teaching high school, I was surrounded by students from the beginning to the end of the school day, but here, much of the reading and learning is independent. I like being able to personalize my studies to my interests, and I have found my professors to be extremely flexible, allowing students to pursue their passions."

On her experience with teaching at the high school level, **Ginsberg** admitted to missing her colleagues, students, and the connections she was able to make with young people. Two teachers from her former high school have since asked her to come back to talk with their students, and she plans to always stay somehow connected with the high school environment.



However, she does not miss the politics that are involved with working in a public school, and feels confident in her decision to pursue a doctoral degree due to her work with great groups of pre-service teachers.

After spending the past twenty years teaching first and second grade, **Parkin** enrolled in her first course towards her Sixth Year degree at UConn last fall. She was offered and accepted a year-long graduate assistantship in the Curriculum and Instruction Department. She hopes to obtain her Remedial Reading certification and then to become a reading consultant.



Before being accepted to the Summer Institute in 2013, **Parkin** made the decision to enroll in her classes full-time during the fall, and to take a year off from the classroom. "I'm free of shoe-tying, runny noses, school building politics, and unattainable parent expectations. I am on my way to bigger and brighter things that I can't wait to experience. The intellectual stimulation that I remember so fondly experiencing while earning my Master's degree will be mine again, but with even more knowledge and expertise in which to couch my new learning. Besides becoming even more expert in my field, I look forward to being a mom, a teaching assistant, a graduate student, a wife, a homemaker, and above all, happy."

"Having the opportunity to write for four weeks this summer at the CWP Summer Institute was a dream come true. I wrote lots of poetry, flash fiction, and even started writing a teaching memoir. I finally had the chance to just sit in a quiet room and reflect on the past 20 years, which proved to be quite therapeutic. The experience allowed me to prepare for this new life I now lead, and love."

– **KATY PARKIN**, (SI 13)

JASON COURTMANCHE LEADS WORKSHOP ON INTERDISCIPLINARY ACADEMIC WRITING

By Mikala Francini

On September 27, 2013, CWP Director Jason Courtmanche led a workshop on teaching writing at UConn, as a requirement of the Institute for Teaching and Learning Teaching Scholar Award he won last year. Teachers who win this award are expected to conduct at least one workshop a year for their particular group of people to be an interesting challenge came from a wide variety of departments of science and statistics, an instructor from the two Freshman English instructors who work related learning community. Courtmanche said throughout the workshop while trying to juggle the diversity of backgrounds that each participant came from, and evidently emerged successful the opportunity the workshop provided to talk suggested that similar workshops could be co-taught by someone from the English department and someone from another department, such as the sciences. Courtmanche will be conducting another workshop in the spring.



colleagues, and Courtmanche found this challenge to work with. The teachers in attendance across UConn's campus, including professors International Teaching Assistant Program, and with ELL students and students in a science—that he “tried to address all their concerns” the diversity of backgrounds that each participant expressed gratitude for about student writing, and another participant

suggested that similar workshops could be co-taught by someone from the English department and someone from another department, such as the sciences. Courtmanche will be conducting another workshop in the spring.

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CWP DIRECTOR TEACHES SUCCESSFUL NEW PRE-TEACHING SECONDARY ENGLISH COURSE FOR UCONN UNDERGRADUATES

By Mikala Francini

CWP Director Jason Courtmanche is in his second year of teaching a one-credit undergraduate course at UConn called Pre-Teaching Secondary English. This course is designed to help prepare undergraduates for a career in Secondary English Education. Each First Year Experience course includes a student mentor in addition to the students enrolled in the course itself. Past and current students of this course describe it as being discussion-based, an “open forum,” and an exploration of their personal opinions concerning recent legislation and trends in teaching pedagogy.

Courtmanche’s discussion-based course revolves around weekly readings on different subjects, which the students must respond to in writing, blog-style. The course is also complemented by events such as documentary screenings and a field trip to the Mark Twain House and Museum. A core component of the course is that the students conduct two interviews, one with a senior or MA student in one of Neag’s teacher education programs and one with a veteran teacher affiliated with the Connecticut Writing Project or UConn’s Early College Experience. One past student of this course, Emma Czaplinski, explained how the course helped to prepare her to apply to Neag: “This course was my first introduction to a lot of issues concerning the political side of teaching, which meant learning about the Common Core, why No Child Left Behind failed, and issues facing the average classroom unique to this generation. I was able to use a lot of these things I learned in my [Neag application] interview, including many creative teaching methods that we mentioned.”

Kaitlin Murphy, who took the course in the fall of 2012 as a sophomore, expressed her enjoyment of the class’ unit on ELL students, which consequently made her more interested in teaching English Language Learner students herself. In addition, she shared that she enjoyed the chapters she read for the class from Diane Ravitch’s *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*.

Murphy had a positive experience with the course: “I felt more prepared for the essay and [Neag] interview than most other Neag applicants. I watched many of my peers frantically searching the Internet to learn about current issues in education. I had just spent a semester learning about these issues in Professor Courtmanche’s course so I was not panicking as much during the application process.” Murphy also added that many of the issues covered in this course were, in fact, brought up during her Neag interview.

Another of the students accepted into Neag, Kristina DiGiuseppe commented on how the course differs from other education-related experiences many undergraduates interested in teaching often pursue. She remarked that the course gave “us a look into what happens behind-the-scenes,” and she referred the Common Core as an example. She explained, “Neag is extremely competitive, with only 15 spots available in our cohort, and it was nice to be able to talk to others who were going through the same process as you and compare experiences. I know I learned about different programs through those in our course that I wouldn’t have heard about otherwise.”

Of her experience as this year’s student mentor in the course, Rachel Wice noted that she does extra readings outside of her regular coursework in order to arrange activities such as field trips, but said she finds this to be very rewarding. She said, “I feel as if I am getting more out of the experience ... because everything I do for this course can be applied back to my own personal growth.”

Wice also explained how helpful the interviews she conducted during the course were due to the reassurance she received from individuals already working in education, as they provided information surrounding questions she had about teaching and the Neag application process.

Importantly, Courtmanche’s course provides a sense of camaraderie on the Storrs campus for first year students interested in pursuing Secondary English Education. A student currently enrolled in this course, Kimberly Hunt, admitted that for her it is “really nice to be in a class with other pre-teaching majors” because she has not yet been in many classes with people who share her major, since she has not yet applied to Neag. Hunt is one of two students enrolled in the course at this time who are interested in elementary education rather than secondary, but she shared that she feels that the class still applies to her. She explained, “At first I was wary to take on another class that wouldn’t necessarily even apply to me, but I figured in the end I had nothing to lose, and that at the core teaching is teaching.”

When the course ran for the first time last year, there were fourteen students enrolled consisting of half freshmen and half sophomores. Almost all of these sophomores later got accepted Neag, as did the course’s student mentor. This year, there are thirteen students in the class, almost all of which are freshmen who are future teachers that will be certainly be benefitted by this course. Courtmanche said he is hopeful the current sophomores will experience a similar degree of success.

ACCOMPLISHED NOVELIST WALLY LAMB VISITS STORRS By Mikala Francini

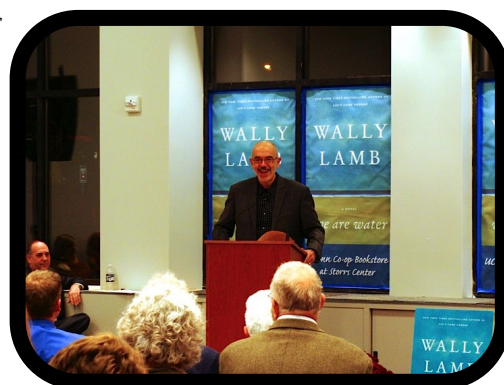
The new UConn Bookstore in Storrs Center hosted a reading by Wally Lamb on Monday, October 21st at 7:00pm. The bookstore building is still under construction, but the floors, walls, and ceilings sufficed to house an enthusiastic audience. Wally Lamb is the best-selling novelist of several novels, including *She's Come Undone* and *I Know This Much is True*, which have been selected for Oprah Winfrey's book club and were *New York Times* Best Sellers. He came to the Storrs campus on this occasion to discuss his newest novel, entitled *We Are Water*, and to give a brief reading and synopsis of the work. Formerly, Lamb was a high school English teacher and the director of the UConn Creative Writing Program, and he is a long-time friend of the Connecticut Writing Project. As a high school teacher, he was on the first reading committee for *Connecticut Student Writers* magazine in 1988.

At the start of the event, Justin Lamb was introduced and read three of his spoken-word poems. As evidenced by his name, Justin is Wally Lamb's son. Justin is a 2012 New Orleans Slam Poetry contest winner and was runner up in 2013. He has also just released a CD entitled, *However it Turns Out it's Perfect*.

After Justin came Zack Lamothe, the author of the novel *Connecticut Lore: Strange, Off Kilter and Full of Surprise*. Lamothe spoke of his life and how he came to write. He explained that both of his parents were academics who taught him to appreciate nature, culture, and literature. He eventually gained an interest in going to haunted houses all around Connecticut in his spare time, and this is what helped lead to the aforementioned novel. He read two excerpts from his new book, one of which was a "vampire" story about a family that believed their sons, who had died of tuberculosis, were coming back as vampires to kill more of the family members.

UConn English Professor Bruce Cohen then introduced Wally Lamb. Lamb told the audience how his newest novel, *We Are Water* is about family tragedy, racism, visual artists, whether the creative process is equivalent to madness, and more. He shared that there are eight different voices, both male and female, in the book. Lamb also discussed the two main inspirations for this novel, and shared that they were based on an event and someone from his childhood. The major event in this new novel is a devastating flood, which Lamb based on an actual flood that took place in his childhood that he vividly recalls.

His reading lasted about half an hour, and depicted a scene from the flood involving haunting familial loss. After the reading, he shared that the following day he was to begin a 40-city book tour.



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JUNE 30 - JULY 25, 2014

Every year since 1982, the CWP has invited outstanding teachers from all disciplines and levels of instruction to participate in a four-week Invitational Summer Institute at the Storrs campus. The Summer Institute provides teachers with the opportunity to join a research inquiry group, share their expertise, and compile an original writing portfolio of their own.

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Required Application Materials: a one-page letter addressing your teaching philosophy and an area of interest for research, a resume, and two recommendations (preferably one from a Teacher-Consultant).

For more information visit <http://cwp.uconn.edu/teachers/summerinst.php>

Email: cwp@uconn.edu | Jason Courtmanche, Director at jason.courtmanche@uconn.edu.

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NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT

AETNA 24TH ANNUAL WRITING PRIZE AWARD CEREMONY OCT. 24, 2013

By Lynn Bloom

At this joyous event, funded primarily by an endowment from the Aetna Foundation, prize winners read from their works. Seven teachers received Connecticut Writing Project Teacher-Consultant Writing Awards, and eighteen awards went to students in UConn's writing programs—Freshman English, upper class Writing in the Disciplines, and English Graduate Critical essays, for papers ranging from "The Significance of Nuclear Proliferation: A Case Study of North Korea" to "The Obscure Social Acceptance of Facebook."

Faculty keynoter Shareen Hertel, Associate Professor of Political Science and Human Rights, spoke on "Writing for Your Life: The Aetna Awards as a Catalyst for Professionalization." Her engaging power point presentation discussed the aims and operations of UConn's "W" (writing intensive) course program "to understand the relationship between the students' own thinking and writing in ways that will help them continue to develop throughout their lives and careers after graduation." As a consequence, Hertel's students write not only to fulfill W courses' requirement of fifteen pages of revised writing, but to develop professional skills of peer review and presentations at professional conferences. She also highlighted four Writing in the Disciplines winners, whose Aetna awards helped them obtain admission to graduate school, jobs, and an internship. Included below are the CWP's results of the evening. You can download the magazine here: <http://cwp.uconn.edu/publications/writings.php>



POETRY

First Place

Victoria Nordlund (SI 93), "La Sagrada Familia"

Honorable Mentions

David Polochanin (SI 99), "Something I Should Say About Why I Stopped Listening to Country Music" & "Out Running"

Victoria Nordlund (SI 93), "Before Detox"

PROSE FICTION

First Place

Kerri Brown (SI 13), "Cutting Stars"

Honorable Mentions

Denise Abercrombie (SI 07), "Snow Angels"

Kerri Brown (SI 13), "Red Riding Hood"

Kristina Reardon (SI 13), "The Anatomy of Sound"

PROSE NONFICTION

First Place

Bernie Schreiber (SI 11), "The Blink of an Eye"

Honorable Mention

Kristina Reardon (SI 13), "Matilda in Ljubljana"