

LOOKING BACK AT CONFERENCE & LOOKING AHEAD

*Dedicated to
Supporting Learning
Assistance
Professionals*



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A Message from the Editor,

With our next edition, we will begin changing the style of the newsletter, as we look to create a fresh look that is easily navigated by our members. In preparation for future editions, we are asking for the following:

February Theme: Mentors, Leaders, Motivators. Please submit stories about past and current people, books, or events that have transformed your life.

May Theme: A Glimpse into the Crystal Ball. Please submit stories about new research, ideas, and trends that will shape the future of our profession.

August Theme: NCLCA Conferences, Past and Future. Please submit great stories about conferences past, and we will talk about the conference ahead.

- ◇ Please provide pictures and/or chart with all submissions.
- ◇ Tutor Spotlight, Students Success Stories, and Campus Visits will remain a staple of the newsletters.
- ◇ Please send submissions to Martin Golson at golsonm@apsu.edu



From the President's Desk

Peggy P. Mitchell
Assistant Vice President
Academic Support Services
Wilmington University

Hello to all from the President's Desk!

Thank you to everyone who participated in NCLCA's 29th Annual Conference held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It was great to see so many of you there, and I hope you enjoyed the conference and were able to fit in some down-time to enjoy Albuquerque and, especially, the International Balloon Festival. I look forward to seeing you next year at the **30th Annual Conference** in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Vice President and Conference Chair - Jenny Haley - is already hard at work planning for this anniversary conference. You will be hearing more about this conference as the plans unfold.

Your NCLCA Board works hard to find ways to deliver new and relevant support for the learning assistance profession and professional. As you heard in Albuquerque, we are now offering the **Learning Centers of Excellence Program**. This is an exciting new designation you may want to consider for your learning center. Elaine Richardson is our Centers of Excellence Chair and will be glad to answer your questions about this new program, or you can check out the website for more information.

Other exciting events/initiatives include: the 2015 NCLCA Institute is scheduled to be held in Greenville, South Carolina, June 28 – July 1, 2015; NCLCA's webinar and workshop series (WOWs) continue with more sessions beginning in January 2015; the Learning Center Leadership Certification has a new submission process; NCLCA's new affiliate program has guidelines to help you get started to become an affiliate; and *TLAR*, NCLCA's peer-reviewed journal, has just published its fall 2014 issue. For more information, check out NCLCA's website!

Lastly, I want to conclude with some thrilling news. NCLCA has been approved as a member organization in the **Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)**. Along with 41 other higher education organizations, NCLCA will work alongside member practitioners to help create, revise and review CAS standards.

NCLCA is soaring into the future and we are pleased to report that we have a strong tailwind at our back!

I hope each of you has a happy holiday season!

Peg Mitchell
NCLCA President

Tutor Spotlight

Kime Sims
Wesleyan University

Texas



On an average day, Kime Sims is likely to sit alongside a student in developmental English, followed by an international Nepalese student, then a freshman in the honors program, and end her day working with a non-traditional transfer student returning to college after 20 years. Kime's energy and love

for life flow into each session. Students receive positive feedback and leave the session with a better understanding of how to be successful writers.

Texas Wesleyan has recently been selected one of about 30 universities to become certified in the implementation of the AVID for Higher Education (AHE) program. As a result, all tutors in our Academic Success Center have become certified in the Socratic Tutoring Method by an AVID facilitator. Our tutors practice methods of engaging our students throughout the tutoring session and encouraging critical thinking. Kime embraces the Socratic Tutoring Method and feels that it supports her method of tutoring students. She is a leader among our tutors in implementing the strategies that AVID thinks will help students become successful in college.

Once Kime determines how she can assist a student, they partner to work through the assignment. Kime is particularly skilled in tapping into students' creativity to develop ideas for even the most obscure themes. She utilizes every opportunity of the session to engage each student and provide opportunities for learning. As a co-worker and frequent observer of tutorials, Aleksei Barrera notes that "Kime always helps students formulate questions to find their own answers." At the end of the session, she reviews and provides a list of final recommendations and often suggests handouts for grammar and punctuation practice. She prefers working with students throughout the entire process to observe how their writing progresses from one appointment to the next.

The Academic Success Center looks forward to the great things Kime Sims will bring in her second semester as a tutor. She is partnering with the Tutor Coordinator in developing new resources to assist students in the writing process. The experience she gains from working in the ASC will help her reach graduation with a double major in education and writing.



NCLCA would like to congratulate the following newly certified learning center professionals:

Jennifer Haley

Learning Center Leadership Certification—Level 4
Ball State University

Elaine Humphrey

Learning Center Leadership Certification—Level 4
Virginia Military Institute

Alexandria Mahon

Learning Center Leadership Certification—Level 2
Winthrop University

Teresa Milligan

Learning Center Leadership Certification—Level 2
Dunwoody College of Technology

Suzanna Ponicsan

Learning Center Leadership Certification—Level 3
Hodges University

LCLC (Learning Center Leadership Certification) provides to individual learning assistance professionals a nationally-recognized credential and set of standards by which to foster their future growth and development. Find out more at nclca.org/certification.htm

New Voices at Conference

Grace Liu

*Center for Academic Program Support (CAPS)
University of New Mexico*

Being able to present at a national conference was not something that I thought I would accomplish during my time as an undergraduate student, so when my boss first asked me to present with him at the annual National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA) conference held in Albuquerque this year, naturally I was very excited. This was months before our presentation date, so the excitement carried me through as I researched for our presentation and put together a slideshow.

But through all the planning and preparing, I never actually imagined what it would be like to present in front of professionals from all over the nation. In fact this thought didn't hit me until the night before, when I couldn't fall asleep because I was paralyzed with the realization of what I would be doing the next morning. Public speaking has never been an issue for me; as a school senator and a previous orientation leader I have had plenty of opportunities to speak in front of hundreds of people at a time. But for some reason, this time was different. I almost questioned myself to death: Will my presentation flow well? Is my topic relevant and useful? Will I be taken seriously since I'm so young and don't even have a degree yet?

Spoiler alert: the presentation ended up going very well. The audience was very interested in the topic and found it helpful. I had several professionals from different schools come up to talk to me after the presentation. They asked great questions about implementing social media into their programs, gave me contact info so that I could share our social media plan with them, and complimented us for the new things they learned from our presentation. I even had a couple of people ask my age and tell me that they were impressed.



Join the **Florida College Learning Center Association**
for the **2nd Annual FCLCA State Conference**
"Collaboration: The Key for Student Success"
April 9-10, 2015
Coconut Creek, Florida

Co-hosted by Broward College, Palm Beach State College,
Florida Atlantic University, and Nova Southeastern University

With Keynote Presentation by Dr. Paul Nolting
National expert on
student success in mathematics 

**FCLCA is open to any postsecondary learning center
professional within the state of Florida.**

Visit www.floridacollegelearning.org for conference information
or to register after November 20th

Can't wait to see you there!

FCLCA, an affiliate of NCLCA, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

For questions, contact FCLCA Vice President, Jennifer Bebergal,
at 561-297-2432 or Bebergal@fau.edu

Iphegenia Kerfoot
University of New Mexico

The conference represented a valuable exchange of ideas for me both in terms of presentations I attended and in terms of the feedback I got during my own presentation. The presentations I attended included interactive components throughout, which I have never seen in such a formal context before. This is exciting, as it encourages me to go ahead and implement best practices research in education and cognitive science by providing more opportunities for active audience participation in an integrated way in my own presentations. I do not have to rely on the persistent but ineffective methodology I see more often in conferences, namely talking solidly for almost the entire session and keeping questions for the end.

The discussion during my own session provided helpful insights into the similarities and differences between our SI program and those at other universities. Attendees were intrigued and enthusiastic about the concept of learning strategists!

Laura Hirrel
Center for Academic Program Support (CAPS)
University of New Mexico

I was thrilled to be afforded the opportunity to attend the NCLCA conference. Since I only recently began working in the writing center at the University of New Mexico, this was my first experience at a learning center conference. Through my attendance at several conference talks and the poster session, I became aware of the diversity that exists in learning centers in terms of the formats offered, available funding, and approaches to student support.

I was particularly impressed with the Writing Fellows Program at Western Carolina University that was discussed in one of the talks I attended. I was previously unfamiliar with writing fellows programs. As I listened to the talk, I found myself brainstorming whether it might be possible to establish a similar program in the learning center in which I work.

I enjoyed attending the poster session. It gave me a chance to speak directly with researchers and ask specific questions. I found it useful to learn about the ways in which the learning center at Bergen Community College engages with faculty and includes them as members of committees that plan and lead tutoring sessions.

Overall, I feel that the conference was beneficial to me in that it allowed me to learn more about current learning center research, while at the same time, it allowed me to see potential career opportunities related to the work I do now as a peer tutor and student manager of a writing center.

Save the Date!

National College Learning Center Association

30th Annual Conference

October 5–8, 2015

Hyatt Regency Milwaukee



*Call for Proposals and
Registration Coming
Soon!*

nclca.org

Conference Schedule Summary

Monday, October 5: Pre-Conference Institutes

Tuesday, October 6–Wednesday, October 7: Concurrent and Poster Sessions and Keynote Speakers

Thursday, October 8: Post-Conference Institutes

Spotlight on People

Sam Day

Instructional Specialist—Writing

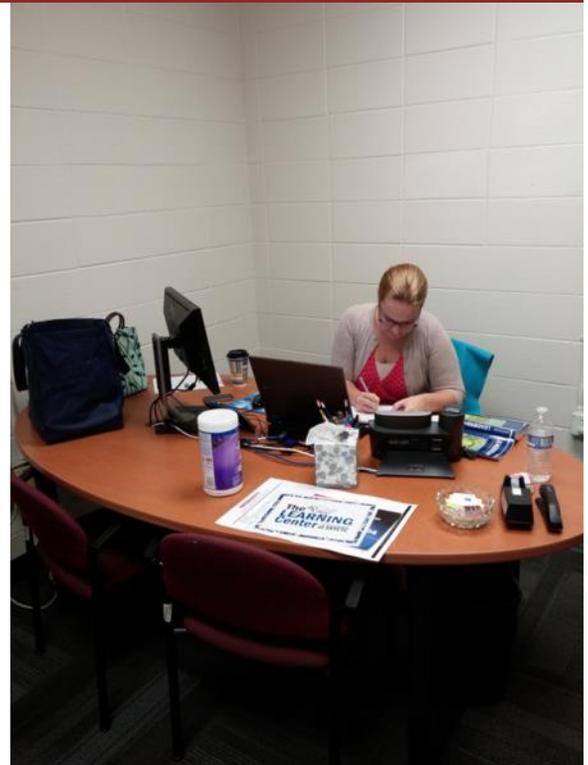
Southcentral Kentucky Community & Technical College

In August 2007, at the beginning of my senior year at Austin Peay State University (APSU) and with the cool-down of several tumultuous months in my personal life, I decided it was time for a change. Throughout most of my time in college, I'd held part-time retail jobs for extra money, but upon learning that APSU's Academic Support Center was hiring peer tutors, I decided to apply and put myself to the test: Was I patient, compassionate, and thorough enough to help others? Did I have enough confidence? Was I smart enough? These questions had come up from time to time throughout my education coursework, and I knew tutoring would provide me with a definitive answer as to whether I was cut out for working in an educational context.

Over the last several years, I've learned that education makes up a part of who I am.

From 2007-2008, I worked to help others improve their writing skills while working for APSU's Academic Support Center, all the while learning to have confidence in my abilities. From 2008-2009, I continued to hone my skills at Western Kentucky University's English department while pursuing a master's degree in English. Now, over seven years later, I'm proud to say that I'm still in education, as an adjunct instructor and the Instructional Specialist for writing center services at Southcentral Kentucky Community & Technical College's The Learning Center (TLC). Also, I'm currently pursuing NCLCA Learning Center Leadership Certification at Level II.

Through working in these different college environments over the years, I've learned that I am the patient and compassionate person I once hoped I could be. I always had the confidence and aptitude to help others, but it was through my mentors and tutees that I was able to realize those abilities. Now, with the tutors I employ, I try to help them develop and realize those qualities in themselves as well.



The 
LEARNING
Center at SKYCTC



Campus Visits

Jenny Schultz

University of South Florida

Hello from the INTO USF Tutoring Center at the University of South Florida! INTO USF is a partnership between the University of South Florida and the INTO global education partners. We serve international students coming to the United States to further their knowledge in the English language for personal, professional or academic reasons. Our team of over 40 tutors serves three groups of International students who study at our university. Students within our General English program work with our tutors to improve language skills for conversational English in their daily life. Students within our Academic English program meet with tutors to improve their language in preparation for the next step in their academic careers as students pursuing a degree at an American university. The final group of students we serve is our Pathway students. Students within the Pathway program are both undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in university courses at the University of South Florida. In addition to any language tutoring that Pathway students may need, we also supply content tutoring for all of the courses in which students may require help.

Additionally we provide a Bridge Tutoring program that places a tutor in the classroom with Pathway students in certain courses that tend to be more challenging. Each Bridge tutor each holds a weekly study session to discuss any information that students find interesting or for which they may need further explanation. In addition to our English, content and Bridge tutoring, we also offer test preparation for the IELTS, TOEFL, SAT, ACT, GMAT, and GRE examinations. Our Testing Coordinator offers classes throughout each semester for Pathway students who need to take the GMAT and GRE, but all of our students can schedule individual appointments with one of our tutors in any of the standardized test areas.



The INTO USF Tutoring Center also offers a Math Workshop for students in the upper levels of the Academic English program. The Math Workshop is designed for students who plan to study in the undergraduate Pathway program once they progress from Academic English, although the workshop is open to all students within the upper levels of Academic English. Each semester, students meet twice weekly for 12 weeks in a classroom setting with a tutor who leads lessons focused on math notation in English, math vocabulary, and the foundations of algebra.

In addition to other services, such as our computer lab, free printing services, and quiet study space, our Tutoring Center offers weekly Academic Workshops that focus on the skills needed for success at an American university. Topics within our Academic Workshops include Academic Integrity, Critical Thinking, Time Management and many others. These workshops are open to all INTO USF students and occur twice weekly throughout each semester.

Here at the INTO USF Tutoring Center, we strive to provide students with a holistic approach to their academics and ensure that they develop the tools needed to succeed. With the growing internationalization of our campus, we have been successful in meeting a unique need for international students as well as for the university. For more information about our services, please see <http://www.usf.edu/intousf/resources/index.aspx>.

Centers of Excellence Program

*Dr. Elaine Richardson
Clemson University*

The NCLCA is proud to announce the start of the Centers of Excellence program that was approved at the 2014 NCLCA business meeting. After two years of development, the program now provides a way for outstanding learning centers to be recognized nationally. Inspired by the works of Frank Christ and his list of best practices for learning centers, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, and John Gardner's Foundations of Excellence work, we developed the Centers of Excellence program with seven major categories: Program and Services; Organizational Framework; Academic Integrity and Learning Environment; Funding, Resources and Design; Staff and Professional Development; Promotion and Public Relations; and Assessment and Evaluation. The first applications are being accepted on January 15, 2015.

What is the purpose of the Centers of Excellence program? NCLCA aspired to establish a program that would promote professional standards of excellence for learning centers, recognize the need for flexibility and inclusiveness in meeting these standards, encourage centers to develop, maintain, and assess quality programs and services to enhance student learning, honor the history of established and unique centers, and celebrate the outstanding achievements of centers that meet and exceed these standards.

How will my center be recognized? If your center is designated as an NCLCA Center of Excellence, you will receive all of the following:

- A plaque to be displayed in your learning center
- A .jpeg artwork to be included on your digital materials and website
- A congratulatory letter to your institution's president or chancellor
- A press release sample to share with your publications or marketing department
- A listing on the NCLCA website

Applications for the Center of Excellence designation will be accepted for review two times annually, January 15 and June 15. Recipient centers for the year will be recognized at the annual NCLCA conference. For application materials, procedure, and costs, please see the NCLCA website, http://www.nclca.org/lc_excellence.htm. If you have questions, you may also contact Dr. Elaine Richardson, NCLCA Chair for the Centers of Excellence Committee, at erchrds@clemson.edu.

You are Invited to 11th Annual Conference

OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE TUTORING PROFESSION, this year hosted with the
ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TUTORING & LEARNING ASSISTANCE

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**SAN FRANCISCO, CA
MARCH 29—APRIL 1, 2015**

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St. Cloud Technical & Community College's Use of Data

Kerby Plante, Teri Johnson, Lauren Atkinson, Beth Gruebele, and Jillian Mergen
St. Cloud Technical & Community College

Saint Cloud Technical and Community College is located in central Minnesota, about 60 miles northwest of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area. Approximately 6,000 students are enrolled in credit-based courses with an equal number of men and women. The college was founded in 1948 and became a comprehensive community and technical college in 2010. The college has doubled in enrollment in the last ten years and continues to be one of the fastest-growing colleges in the Minnesota State Colleges and University system (MnSCU).

Tutoring services began at the college in 1974 to accommodate students with physical, academic, and economic special needs. The name changed many times, with the current learning center being named in honor of a past employee in 2011. The Mary Stangler Center for Academic Success (CAS) serves students across the college campus in a drop-in location, with a main focus on courses in math, science, and the liberal arts.

Data collection for the CAS began in earnest in 2010 with simply tracking the number of students who were coming through the door. As technology emerged, a system was put in place that allowed the CAS to capture individual student data when they signed in for tutoring. The data capture focused on getting a student ID number and the course the student wanted to work on while in the CAS. From this data capture, the CAS has been able to extrapolate a number of pieces of information that have informed our work and allowed us to justify our budget. This report will discuss the data analysis for this past academic year and how those pieces of data have been applied in the work that is done.

Data Analysis

During academic year 2013-2014, the CAS had 1335 unique users that logged in to receive academic support services. Of those unique users, 31.2% logged in only one time. 38.7% of users logged in 2-9 times, and 30.1% of users logged in 10 or more times. About 1/3 of all the users come to the CAS only one time. This statistic increased 12.2% from the previous year. Ideally, we want to have repeat business and want people to come in multiple times to get academic assistance.

# of times logged in	Fall number (percentage of Fall)	Spring number (percentage of Spring)	Total number (percentage of total)
Logged in 1 time	33.0	28.6	31.2
Logged in 2-9 times	39.0	38.3	38.7
Logged in 10 or more times	28.0	33.1	30.1

For the academic year, students spent a total of 26,276 hours in the CAS. This is an equivalent of 1,094 days or 3 years.

Tutoring Outcomes

In Spring 2012, 10 courses were chosen to be "tracking classes" due to their popularity. These are the courses we focus on when comparing grades from semester to semester: Foundations for College Reading I and II, Foundations for College Writing I and II, Analytical Writing, Foundations for College Mathematics, Intermediate Algebra, College Algebra, General Biology, and General Physics. Foundations for College Reading I and II, Foundations for College Writing I and II, Foundations for College Mathematics, and Intermediate Algebra are all considered developmental courses. These courses are not eligible for college credit and are required for students who test below college level on the placement exam.

The outcomes for the 10 tracking courses show a **20.2%** higher grade and a **47.4%** higher rate of success for those students who came in 11 or more times versus those that never came in at all. Visiting 11 times per semester roughly equates to coming in about once every week and a half. The charts below show the grades and success rates. Please note that the success rate is the percentage of the class that passed. This number takes into account NC's (No Credit), FW's (Failure due to unofficial Withdrawal) and I's (Incomplete).

Grade	Grade Points
A	4
B	3
C	2
D	1
F	0
NC, W, I, P*	Is not counted for grade
FW, FN**	0

*NC- No Credit, W-Withdraw, I-Incomplete, P-Passing

**FW-Failure due to unofficial withdraw, FN-Failure due to non-attendance

Course Name	Average Grade		% Differ- ence	Success Rate*		% Differ- ence
	CAS	NO CAS		CAS	NO CAS	
Foundations for College Mathematics*	-	-	-	70.2	60.1	15.5
Intermediate Algebra	2.66	2.33	13.2	79.1	50.6	43.9
College Algebra	2.46	2.12	14.8	69.8	58.1	18.3
General Biology	3.03	3.02	.33	88.1	77.6	12.7
General Physics	3.23	2.63	20.5	83.3	57.7	36.3
Foundations for College Reading I	2.29	1.42	46.9	65.6	45.5	36.1
Foundations for College Writing I	2.70	1.41	62.8	67.4	33.3	67.8
Foundations for College Reading II	2.57	1.92	30.0	77.5	49.4	44.3
Foundations for College Writing II	2.75	1.93	35.0	76.6	49.4	43.2
Analytical Writing	2.73	2.39	13.3	79.8	66.1	18.8
For Tracking Classes**	2.68	2.36	12.7	74.95	52.0	36.16

*When calculated the average grade for the tracking classes, course credit was taken into account.

**Foundations for College Mathematics grade cannot be determined because the majority of students received a P, which does not bear credit.

# of times logged in	Grade (weighted with Credit hours)	% difference from never logged in	Success rate	% difference from never logged in
Never logged in to the CAS	2.36		52.0	
Logged in 1-5 times	2.52	6.6	78.6	40.7
Logged in 6-10 times	2.63	10.8	75.6	37.0
Logged in 11 or more times	2.89	20.2	84.3	47.4

This academic year, no one who came in 11+ times earned an "F" (does not count NC) or an FW.

Subjects

A new sign-in system implemented in January 2012 allows an individual to select their specific course instead of randomly choosing a topic. It made the system more efficient and allowed for better reporting of data. The chart below shows the top courses for which students came to the CAS during the 2013-2014 semesters.

Subject	FALL 2013		SPRING 2014	
	Count	% of Total	Count	% of Total
Foundations for College Mathematics	360	3.2	454	5.0
Intermediate Algebra	1135	9.9	412	4.5
College Algebra	1158	10.1	1049	11.5
General Biology	593	5.2	198	2.2
General Physics	712	6.2	338	3.7
Foundations for College Reading I	1536	13.5	344	3.8
Foundations for College Writing I	975	8.5	334	3.7
Foundations for College Reading II	1173	10.3	811	8.9
Foundations for College Writing II	785	6.9	336	3.8
Analytical Writing	404	3.5	483	5.3

*All these courses are among the top 10 signed-in courses except that in Spring 2014 General Biology was ranked 17th. Introduction to Statistics was in the top 10 instead, with 342 (3.7%) logins.

One limitation that still exists is that students may choose only one course at sign-in, yet they may work more than one subject. Similarly, although students choose a course, we currently have no way to track whether they receive tutoring while in the CAS.

Applications of Data

These data have been used in a variety of venues across the campus.

- Admissions uses this information on campus tours as a way to promote the CAS to prospective students.
- The data analysis information has been used in reporting for Perkins grants as well as for college accreditation information.
- The data application has allowed the CAS to make further inroads with our technical programs on campus. Faculty in these programs are beginning to see the value of the center and are referring students to the location more than in the past.
- Funding for the center has begun to stabilize since only anecdotal data were available. Now the value of the CAS is demonstrated in data that assure administration that funds are being spent appropriately.
- Staffing efficiency has also been positively impacted. We know better which areas need more and fewer tutors.
- We have also used this information in our training packet to earn our CRLA certification.

With budgets for higher education being as threadbare as they are, being able to prove your worth is more than valuable. Luckily there is a staff person in the CAS who loves statistics, so gathering these data and running the numbers have been written into that person's job description. Not every location will have that luxury; however, by taking the time to look at data, you can mine a number of pieces that can be used to your advantage. It is no longer good enough to say you make a difference. Now you need to prove it.

When They Ask for Help with Reading (I suggest we begin with “thinking”)

Cora M. Dzubak, Ph.D.

Penn State—York

Article for the Practitioner’s Corner

During each spring semester I teach a course in educational psychology. Inevitably there are students who say that the text is “boring” and that they cannot remember what they read. Sometimes I ask them what they were thinking about while they were reading, and someone will generally respond, “I was reading, but not really thinking.” Therein lies the problem. They are prospective teachers, and one of my goals for these education majors is that they read, understand, and retain the information that is in the text. Someday they are going to need to apply that information in their own classrooms!

In order to activate a deeper level of thought while they read, students can be taught some metacognitive strategies that will allow them to increase their awareness of what their brain is doing as they read. Once they learn to control their focus and to sustain attention, they can begin to monitor their comprehension. This prepares them to think at a higher level of cognition. Just “reading the words on a page” is not sufficient for retention. Students must concentrate enough to allow themselves to connect ideas, to understand concepts, and to associate what they are reading with what they already know. That is what metacognition is all about: consciously monitoring one’s thinking, and therefore one’s learning. That might require some practice, but once they master the process of using effective reading strategies, their comprehension and retention will increase.

Many of us teach students a reading strategy such as SQ4R (Skim, Question, Read, Recite, Rite and Review) or something similar. Regardless of the specific system, students benefit from being encouraged to think actively about what they are reading, what they are learning, and what connections they can make with what is already in memory. Consciously making associations and connections enables the brain to more effectively organize and store what is being learned. Once stored, the more frequently information is retrieved from memory, the stronger the memory becomes. It is the process of making connections that prepares the student to make accurate inferences and predictions about the material. Encouraging students to engage actively in their reading can be done by demonstrating the usefulness of a strategy such as writing comments or questions in the margins, or in a notebook, or even just using Post-it Notes to mark sections of text.

As students learn what reading strategies work best for them, they can actively reflect on what they read, what they did while reading, and what they recall. As their ability to use self regulation strategies improves, they will become more effective at recognizing what they know, and what they do not know. Reading, comprehension, and storing the information requires a combination of familiarity with reading strategies, effective application of those strategies, and monitoring the results. As with most types of learning, being able to personalize the information by making it meaningful to oneself will enhance the process of reading. Finally, writing a short summary in one’s own words will strengthen what has just been learned. Textbook reading is often a challenge, but it can certainly be done more effectively by consciously monitoring and regulating one’s thinking.

What the Conference Meant to Me

Kathleen Volk
Carroll University

My first encounter with NCLCA's annual fall conference was in Reno in 2012. I remember getting settled at the Peppermill and making my way to the welcome reception. Admittedly, I was nervous. I was presenting for the first time at this conference and knew no one. My fears were allayed, however, because I felt welcomed not only by NCLCA leaders but by my fellow attendees. Since then, I have presented at the 2013 and 2014 conferences and have participated in the 2014 Summer Institute.

Most of the time, learning center professionals' attention is focused inward on our support programs and staff. By and large, we are not living out of suitcases or brokering deals like so many businesspeople. The chances for networking sometimes seem few and far between, but NCLCA provides an encouraging, engaging environment for the sharing of ideas with talented colleagues.

The conference is a channel for innovation and best practice in our field. Regardless of whether attendees are brand-new to learning centers or are veterans, the variety in session topics attests to the richness of the roles we play in higher education. Tutor training, assessment, and center management will always remain hot topics. NCLCA also serves as a proving ground for presentations about pilot programs and specialized support.

Outside of sessions, NCLCA feels more like a family reunion than a conference. Attendees connect and re-connect based on geographic area, institution type, presentation content, and pure happenstance at breakfast or lunch. Rest assured, the conference is abuzz with conversation not only about the work that we do but who we are. My best advice to future conference participants is to make friends and have fun in the lovely hosting city.

I am grateful for my experiences with NCLCA and hope to see you all in Milwaukee in 2015!

**Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition of the newsletter
&
To the editorial staff: Karen Agee, Jon Mladic, and Ericka Ragland**