

TYCA-Pacific Northwest Report from Alexis Nelson



Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle was the setting for the regional TYCA-Pacific Northwest Conference October 25–26, the perfect scene to match the conference theme—“Piecing It Together: Making, Tinkering, and DIY in Our Colleges.” For the third year, TYCA-PNW and the PN Writing Center Association cosponsored the conference, and this year’s attendance broke our previous record of 125. Gretchen Coulter of Whatcom

Community College served as Program Chair, and Amanda Hill of Cornish made the most hospitable Conference Chair and site host imaginable. Technological innovation worked to embody the conference theme. The chairs hashtagged all sessions (#TYCA or #PNWCA) and designated a theme such as #Technology or #Peer Tutoring or #Tech Writing. This meant that attendees with smart phones didn’t need a copy of the program, thus saving money and trees.

The conference kicked off Friday afternoon with two knowledge cafes, one devoted to social media and writing centers, the other to emerging technologies and expertise. In the process of working through open-ended questions, teachers let their creative juices flow while brainstorming with colleagues. Friday evening afforded two opportunities for drama: the Cornish Playhouse’s production of *Our Town* at the Seattle Center and a studio production of *Failure: A Love Story*. Saturday morning at Seattle Unity Church, keynote speaker Jentery Sayers of the University of Victoria talked about students’ and his work at the Maker Lab in the Humanities; he called for literacies based on trial-and-error experimentation, strategic repositioning, and in situ collaboration over the lone learner models of pedagogy.

The remainder of the conference offered more than 35 sessions and roundtable discussions on topics as diverse as serving L1 Arabic speakers, creating a studio model for composition courses, digital storytelling, moving students more quickly through the developmental curriculum, using a hacking mentality when faced with steam-rolling educational “reform,” creating safe spaces for LGBT students, and preparing students to tutor effectively. Perhaps the biggest theme to emerge from the conference is what area colleges are doing with/for/around the Completion Agenda. Several colleges (Highline in Seattle, Whatcom in Bellingham, SFCC in Spokane) are experimenting with different iterations of the Accelerated Learning Program pioneered by Peter Adams at Community College of Baltimore County.

The sponsoring organizations held separate lunch meetings, and at TYCA’s meeting members elected new members-at-large: Aylen Rounds of Pierce CC and Annalee Kodman of Columbia Basin CC; having vacated that position, Barbara Simmons has moved on to membership cultivation. And that job should become more exciting as the continued partnership with PNWCA flourishes, inviting more people into the organization.

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