

Brian Fallon Receives 2010 NCPTW Maxwell Leadership Award

Dr. Brian Fallon, Director of the Writing Studio at the Fashion Institute of Technology, received the 2010 Ron Maxwell Award for Distinguished Leadership in Promoting the Collaborative Learning Practices of Peer Tutors in Writing. Dr. Leigh Ryan, 2009 recipient, presented the award November 6 in the Sheraton Baltimore City Center Hotel, Baltimore, MD, at the 27th annual National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPTW) joined this year with the 10th conference of the International Writing Centers Association.

The award recognizes a professional within the NCPTW organization for dedication to and leadership in collaborative learning in writing centers, for aiding students in together taking on more responsibility for their learning, and, thus, for promoting the work of peer tutors. Its presentation also denotes extraordinary service to the evolution of the conference organization.

Award recipients are invited to select a quote from work that has inspired them work that has inspired them to the criteria on which the award is based. Fallon quoted Harvey Kail and John Trimbur: “To reorganize the relationship among students is simultaneously to probe the traditional relationships of teaching and learning.” The quote is featured on the award plaque Fallon received.

This conference is unusual in that it puts students in a pre-professional spotlight where they make presentations and network with other tutors. Leaders such as Fallon work behind the scenes to help tutors develop effective presentations and learn interactively from others. One of Fallon’s supporters wrote, “I can think of no one in the recent past who has done more to promote the work of NCPTW and collaborative learning in the teaching of writing than Brian.”

Fallon has been a leader in the organization since he was an undergraduate student. He has continued his contributions of hard work and sharp thinking throughout his graduate career and now into his professional work as an assistant professor. As one supporter wrote, “he has been active in all three capacities we value—undergraduate, graduate, and director. He embodies our collaborative learning ideals and carries them forward. And what a model he is!”

A nominator who has known Fallon since his early days as an undergraduate peer tutor wrote this assessment: “When I first met Brian, I was impressed with his conceptual understanding of collaborative learning and delighted by his enthusiasm and his creative yet practical thinking about NCPTW. He immediately found ways to be useful, and he has helped solve problems for NCPTW ever since, in small ways and large.”

Fallon initiated, constructed, and continues to manage the NCPTW website. He has served several times on the organization’s scholarship committee. At the 2008 conference in Las Vegas held jointly with IWCA, Fallon represented NCPTW and did the heavy lifting that goes with hosting a conference. One of his fellow leaders of that conference wrote that “he demonstrated to me the kind of professional tact and savvy that is necessary to get things done

in a context that privileges collaboration over hierarchy. He is a leader.”

A program chair of the conference this year in Baltimore called Fallon “a highly valued ally. Not only did he serve (again) on the selection committee, but I am consulting with him frequently about other conference matters. He is always willing and eager to help, and he is respectful and informed in his thinking and actions. I could not have taken on this task without Brian's support.”

Fallon is highly regarded in the organization for the work he does helping writing tutors develop as scholars and writers. One of the planners for the Baltimore conference wrote, “I have seen his peer tutors in action at both the Las Vegas and the Mount Holyoke conferences, and they are fully engaged. The proposals from his tutors for this year's conference are outstanding and innovative, such as the rethinking of writing centers through the eyes of design students. Brian represents the best of the present that will help carry NCPTW into the future.”

After Fallon had received the award and the conference had ended, one of the NCPTW board members remembered something Ron Maxwell had said at a conference several years earlier: “He said, in his characteristically mild manner, ‘Brian Fallon, there’s the future of the NCPTW.’ If Ron could have been in Baltimore in November, he would have enjoyed listening to Leigh’s outstanding introduction and seeing all twelve FIT tutors leap to their feet when the award was presented.” Yes, he would have.