

## Christopher Ervin Wins 2015 NCPTW Maxwell Leadership Award

Compiled by Jon Olson from nomination letters and committee comments



Ervin accepts award, Salt Lake City.

Christopher Ervin, Director of Composition at Western Kentucky University, won the 2015 Ron Maxwell Award for Distinguished Leadership in Promoting the Collaborative Learning Practices of Peer Tutors in Writing. He received the award at the 32nd annual National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPTW) November 6 in Salt Lake City.

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.

A selection committee of nine previous award recipients selected Dr. Ervin because of his consistent, diligent, innovative, transformative, fair-minded, and wide-ranging contributions to NCPTW, many of them behind the scenes.

“Chris has been a true leader in NCPTW for years and has been committed to increasing the number and quality of awards available to tutors to attend the conference,” said a member of the selection committee. “He captures the true spirit of NCPTW and invests himself wholly in collaborative learning in the form of peer tutoring through his research and work with students. Chris works tirelessly to ensure the conference organization continues to offer tutors and writing center professionals a meaningful learning experience. He always comes through.”

“Chris has always looked for ways to make the best use of funds available,” said one of Ervin’s nominators. “His work and foresight has strengthened our organization and extended its value to tutors.”

Nominators and committee members also noted the importance of Ervin’s research on writing pedagogy. Of particular value is an extensive ethnographic research project with Coe College peer writing tutors soon to be published.

Ervin received a check from the Maxwell Family and a plaque bearing two quotes that have informed his career. He chose the first quote from the Coe College Writing Center’s handbook *The Enchiridion*: “One of the easiest ways to learn how to write is by talking about the writing: Let the tongue compose meaning.” Coe Writing Center director Bob Marris, now retired, had composed and compiled the original handbook many years ago and then his peer tutors had revised it again and again with Bob’s hands-off guidance. Marris received the 2014 Maxwell Award.

As Ervin conducted his qualitative research at Coe College over the past ten years, Marris became a mentor to him. Ervin said of Marris, “I wanted to honor his influence on how I think about writing centers by choosing a quotation that reflected his philosophy of writing center administration.”

The second quote is from a song lyric: “The bus came by and I got on. That’s when it all began” (Bob Weir, Jerry Garcia, and Bill Kreutzmann, “That’s It for the Other One”). Ervin explained what the lyric has to do with his scholarly work: “For me, the bus was the writing center back in 1992. I got on, and that’s when it all began.”

He got on the writing center bus as an undergraduate peer tutor in the Developmental Studies Writing Lab at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). After several years in that lab, he worked as a graduate assistant in the Writing Center at MTSU for two semesters. Moving on to the University of Louisville for his PhD, he worked in the Writing Center as writing consultant and assistant director for 3 1/2 years. He served as the assistant director of the Writing Centers Research Project for three of those years, directed the Center’s asynchronous online tutoring, and piloted a synchronous online center for Distance Education.

Following his University of Louisville graduation, Dr. Ervin directed the writing center at the University of South Dakota for five years. He moved to Western Kentucky University (WKU) in 2009 to be the Director of Composition. Becoming Director of Composition at WKU meant less direct involvement in a writing center, but, if anything, his activity with writing centers has escalated through his professional service as a member of the NCPTW Steering Committee, as the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) Web Editor, as a member of the IWCA Executive Board, and as a reviewer for both *Writing Center Journal* and *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*.