Michael Strelow LARC Proposal and personal statement (567 words)

The project's state of evolution: I have followed David Craig into the Columbia estuary—various parts—for the past two summers. One article (creative nonfiction) came out of the combination of summer experiences. We visited the East Sand Island Caspian tern project and participated in chick roundup, banding and blood drawing (for DNA records). We traveled up river to Rice Island (dredge spoilings and former home of the tern colony) and surveyed the Tongue Point area. I was the rookie while David was an old hand in matters of data collection, scientific methodologies, and David had written a large number of scientific articles on this particular tern population as well as other articles about terns and other species elsewhere in the world. In my estuary article—accepted for spring 2011 by Oregon Quarterly magazine, circulation over 100,000, I included photos (still waiting for acceptance on those) as part of the article. My particular interest in the relationship between humans and nature is documented elsewhere too. My College Colloquium topic has been (three times) “The Wild and The Tame,” using readings in nature writing from fiction to creative nonfiction to poetry and essay. My novel, The Greening of Ben Brown (2005, finalist for the Ken Kesey Award of Oregon Literary Arts) was a fictional account of a small town in the throes of an ecological disaster—legal, political, social maneuverings. My professional interest in nature writing of all kinds includes published poetry in magazines that include: Bellingham Review, Willowspring, Northwest Review, Midwest Poetry Review, Kansas Quarterly, Hubbub, Sou’wester, Pudding, and an anthology, Generation to Generation (Papier Mache Press 1998). Most of my poetry is informed by the relationship of humans to nature (or the unnatural). I am a past member of ISLE (ASLE formerly)—Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment. David and I talked last year about a way to include more students (he had a Murdock grant to include two students at a beginning level the summer of 2010). The LARC project would allow us to engage students in our ongoing projects at the professional level. Two of the students are English majors (Gunnar and Sarah), both writers and each interested in different aspects of what I am doing. The third student is double major in biology and studio art interested in photography and drawing, as well as possible avenues for publication of her work in magazines—as I do.

Methods for engaging in collaborative work: David (see his application for specifics) will be our scientific guide. We plan to work with the students on conceiving projects—different for each of the three), seeking out and sending queries to magazine editors, reading/viewing successful examples of work they’d like to do, learning together how and where to look in the Columbia estuary for essential paradox (the daily salt and fresh mix of waters, for example) and interesting contentions among the resident animals and humans (see general application for particulars here). We would meet regularly (as per the grant specifications), travel together to experience the estuary by land (Astoria) and by boat, E. Sand Island up river to Rice Island and by air. Then we would draft our projects, meet to discuss and critique drafts of our work, project improvements and through various drafts work toward final projects. We would meet again to present final projects to each other.