

WPA

Writing Program Administration

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The Editors of **WPA** invite contributions that are appropriate to the interests and concerns of those who administer writing programs in American and Canadian colleges and universities. Articles on teaching writing or research in composition are acceptable only if they deal with the relationship of these activities to program administration.

Article length (Flexible), 2,000-4,000 words. Authors should submit two copies and retain a copy for their own files. Material should be suitably documented, using the *MLA Handbook*, although as much reference as possible should be included within the text. Annotated bibliographies accompanying articles are encouraged, as well as any other apparatus which might make material more conceptually and practically valuable to working writing program administrators. Article deadlines: fall and winter issues, March 1; spring issue, September 15. Relevant announcements are also acceptable. Announcement deadlines: fall issue, August 1; winter issue, October 1; spring issue, January 5. Address contributions and editorial correspondence to Kenneth A. Bruffee, Editor, WPA, English Department, Brooklyn College, CUNY, Brooklyn, New York 11210.

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The Council of Writing Program Administrators is a national association of college and university faculty who serve or have served as directors of freshman composition, coordinators of writing labs and workshops, chairs and members of writing-program-related committees, or in similar administrative capacities.

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***WPA* reader survey**

One purpose of WPA is to discover and address issues of interest to writing program administrators. The people who know the issues are writing program administrators themselves. In many cases WPAs are also the people who can best address the issues informatively and cogently. In some cases we should look beyond our training and immediate experience for expertise which we can adapt to help us do the job better.

The following questions are intended to help WPA readers think through their needs as writing program administrators.

What don't you know about doing your job that you wish you did?

What have you finally learned that you wish you had learned earlier?

What would you like to know more about?

Who do you think could tell you more about it?

What are your major administrative problems right now?

What problems do you see coming over the horizon?

How would you characterize your relationship with your department chair?

Dean? President? Board of trustees? Legislature? Faculty at large?

What do you like best about your present program or the way you run it?

What direction would you like your program to take?

What are the major barriers to developing it in that direction?

I would appreciate hearing your answers to these questions and to any other questions you think should have been on the list. When you write, please also indicate what your rank and status are, e.g., tenured, nontenured, tenure-bearing line, one-year contract, part time, so that we can begin getting a better idea of the positions held by writing program administrators.

Ken Bruffee

President's message

Dear Colleagues:

The 1979-80 academic year will prove to be the richest so far in WPAs history. After three years of growth and exploration, we move into a new phase of action.

First, I call your attention to this splendid journal. Thanks to the generous support of Brooklyn College and to the able editorship of Ken Bruffee, WPA shines as our official publication. Next, I point with pride to a grant from the Exxon Education Foundation. Their award will enable us to launch our program in consultant/evaluators, a program that will bring to campuses throughout the country experienced WPAs trained in on-site evaluation. Already, in response to one announcement in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, we have many requests for this service. (If your institution needs an evaluator for its writing program, write to me for an application.)

Third, plans for this year include a strong effort at expanding membership. Although we are pushing toward 400 on our rolls, we need resources that will allow WPA to become self-supporting. To help toward that goal, Richard Sterling of Lehman College has agreed to serve as managing editor and to seek advertisers. But for the next few years, our major source of support will continue to be membership. Another aim for this year is to help plan more regional conferences for WPAs. Please remember to renew your membership and to encourage your counterparts on other campuses to join us.

I want to welcome the newly elected members of the WPA Executive Committee-Maxine Hairston, Don Hirsch, and John Warnock-and thank the outgoing members-Dick Raspa, Don McQuade, and Jim Raymond-for their time and effort in helping the organization to grow and achieve recognition.

One last reminder; Don't forget to attend WPAs session at CCCC on Thursday afternoon, March 13. We'll be dealing there with the efforts to involve senior faculty in teaching writing,

Harvey S. Wiener

The contribution of administrative leadership to academic excellence

Walter Jewell

Many efforts to improve college teaching and learning ignore a basic reality of higher education, namely, the dynamics of the organizational context in which education takes place. These attempts tend to focus on such issues as improving curriculum and pedagogic delivery technique, developing special purpose programs, and meeting the needs of special student groups, particularly the socially or educationally disadvantaged. Often such programs address problems of training and motivating teachers to improve and redesign pedagogic styles. A relatively sophisticated literature on evaluation indicates the relative success of such efforts.

Studies of the relationship between teaching, student needs, and course content sometimes mention organizational context in passing, but generally they assume it as a sort of neutral background to the "real" educational issues. They also tend to assume that the role of the administrator is external to the educative process rather than an inherent part of it.

This paper takes a different tack. While I certainly do not deny the value of examining the relationships between teaching, student needs, and course content, my basic argument is that we are far more likely to improve higher education if, when we design new programs, we pay explicit attention to the dynamics of organizational context, and particularly the crucial role of the administrator as a prime agent shaping the organization of schooling. Good education requires an understanding of, and changes in, the relationship between teaching, student needs, course content, and administrative context.

The problems in trying to determine the nature of that relationship are complex. The literature on administrative roles and issues is vast, but much of it concentrates on narrow managerial issues. Many of these issues are only marginally appropriate to the process of education. In attempting to clarify the relationship of administration to education, therefore, I should like to suggest four key areas in which administrators can play a crucial part in improving education. First, administrators must react to the external environment of the school by optimizing opportunities for the school to serve that environment and minimizing constraints placed by the environment on the school. Second, administrators must function as primary agents of change in implementing improved educational programs. Third, administrators must work to balance the legitimate interests of the many internal constituencies that influence the direction of academic development. And fourth, administrators must find ways to define their role, to themselves as well as to the academic community at large, as educators rather than simply as managers.

1. Mediating between schools and their environment. Most educators are painfully aware of how little ivy protects the ivory tower from the "outside" world. In

fact, many educators share the realistic expectation that events in the political, economic, and social worlds can critically determine the character of higher education. Our funding depends on outsiders in government or philanthropy; our graduates seek employment in the economy; the social and moral issues that engage our intellect derive from and have impact on the "real" world. We may cherish myths of the cloistered autonomy of schools, but we must recognize the reality of our participation in the total life of our societies.' Administrative role in this area cannot be overemphasized. If academic freedom of discourse is to be maintained in a college or university, it is the administrator who is called on to resist external efforts to constrain life, thought, and discourse within the academy. Conversely, it is the administrator who must educate the public at large to the value of exploring diverse thought and dissenting ideas.'

In a different sense, the academy depends on administration to discover and garner the fruits of opportunity. To maintain the complex financial support that most schools, public and private, require, administrators must have a high degree of technical skill and political sensitivity. If education is to be adequately funded, administrators must be able to meet on their own terms those who decide public policy. We expect, we require, administrators to have these skills.

Today, for example, blizzards of regulations threaten to bury our schools.' These regulations cover such diverse areas as financial reporting; individual rights of due process and information disclosure; labor law; copyright laws; special provisions for minorities, the handicapped, and women; and the breaking strength of stepladders. A sophisticated administration is required to discover, interpret, apply, resist, or attempt to change these regulations. And coping successfully with government regulation is necessary to program improvement. Preventing errors in program design that could endanger program or institutional integrity is a fundamental aspect of the administrative role.

Another administrative role related to public concerns is predicting and measuring new demands made on the college by changing conditions. One example is student demand for new programs. It is a fact of academic life that the modern university is responsive to the expressed needs of students, their families, their friends, and their legislators. Failure to respond to these needs, either by meeting them or by redefining and redirecting them, threatens education by weakening its public support. Faculties have a right to expect administrators to be sensitive to student needs and to guide the institution in a direction which might tend to satisfy them. Another example is the possible enrollment decline in American colleges and universities as a result of a lowered birthrate after World War II. Administrators are expected to recruit competitively to maintain a school's "share of the market." It is the responsibility of administrative officers to perceive demand shifts of this sort and suggest ways to meet them. And it is also the responsibility of administrators to expose and begin the discussion of the philosophical problems in educational theory and practice raised by new educational conditions.

2. Administrators as agents of change. The administrative responsibility to foresee difficulties and begin thinking early about ways to meet them is the second role administrators can play in improving education. But for administrators

to pursue innovations in response to new demands placed on a school by its environment, they must do more than just see trouble coming. They must also persuade other administrators, school support staff, and, above all, the faculty of the desirability and utility of change.' Similarly, to help faculty groups improve their contribution to adapting teaching and learning to new conditions, administrators should perform the key function of liaison and coordination between them.

This liaison role is necessary because naturally enough each group within a large organization tends to view education and the university from its own relatively narrow perspective. Support staff usually have relatively clearly defined goals: admissions, counselling, the student center, housing, whatever. Faculty tend to be wed to a tradition of disciplinary identity and departmental interest. Boards of governors or trustees often limit themselves to global issues and bottom lines. And each of these is, furthermore, a group of people with its own inner tensions and the full panoply of human failings as well as strengths. Sometimes such groups will act in a disinterested way. More often, as most of us know, people tend to act out of personal interest, even though they may rationalize their action in proclamations of high moral tone. Every institution and every group within every institution has its history of personal rivalries, animosities, and grudges, as well as personal loyalties and alliances. All of these forces affect decisions that are ostensibly educational. The administrator's job is to try to loosen these tangles of human relationship and interest enough so that change can occur.

This is what it means to be an "agent of change." As an agent of change, administrators must analyze suggested plans, policies, and programs for their real value to the school, and for their hidden agendas. If programs are to be accepted and widely supported, administrators must map their progress across the normal political and bureaucratic hurdles inherent in any organization. They must marshal the support of diverse groups required to make new programs work. In short, acting as agents of change, administrators have to be good quarterbacks. At the same time, the guidance that administrators give must be unobtrusive and delicate. One administrative bulldozer can bury a program quicker than a thousand faculty shovels.'

Two important tools administrators have to help bring about change are money and recognition. These are tools that must be used with great delicacy and care. Nevertheless, one way to bring about change is to reward financially and with public approval activities and efforts by administrative officers, support staff, and faculty members that tend to move a needed program in a positive direction. Unless the rewards of financial support and appreciation for productive contributions to the institution consistently tell people that their work is worthwhile, the energy of willing innovators will flag and their motivation, morale, and productivity will decline. Reward is the fuel that keeps the fire of energy high and that lowers the likelihood of burnout in teachers, support staff, and administrators alike.

3. The administrator's role in balancing legitimate interests. The issues of motivation and support on the one hand and coordination of effort on the other bring us to our third point: the balancing of interests. Not only do actors in the organizational drama have their own distinct personal characteristics, interests, and

loyalties; they also have their own legitimate organizational needs competing for scarce resources. It may seem a simple matter of superior judgment to balance these demands. In fact, while institutional priorities established at the policy level can determine the relative amount of support individual programs may receive, administrators still have to persuade interest groups that those priorities are legitimate, and that administrative decisions are consistent with priorities that have been established and generally agreed upon. Here again the administrator's leadership is crucial in directing the institution toward proper educational goals, gaining personal commitment to innovation, and maintaining that commitment. Encouraging faculty and staff who design new programs to search effectively for outside funding is an important aspect of this leadership. And once funding is obtained, administrators must help project directors use funds efficiently and effectively, and help them cope with the increased constraints that often accompany outside support.

Outside support often makes balancing internal needs against each other an easier job. Still, administrators are often given the responsibility of depriving one legitimate interest of support in order to enhance the activities of another. No one ever enjoys robbing Peter to pay Paul. Yet the importance of administrative work in the pursuit of innovation and academic excellence is never clearer than when a decision of this sort must be made. Suddenly, the "neutral background" of administration becomes all too distressing foreground in the eyes of everyone. Here most of all, administrators can contribute to improving education by keeping firmly in mind the supremacy of educational over operational or managerial goals. In the crunch, administrators play their role as educators best when they allot money to programs in which students learn most and learn best.

4. Defining the role of administrator-as-educator. I have emphasized the need to focus continually on educational decisions and issues, and the need for administrators to define themselves as educational leaders rather than organizational managers. There is nothing new in this plea. Nonetheless, improved teaching and learning in the context of large, complex institutions operating in a confusing system of educational decision making requires that the call be raised again, and again, and again.

The history of American education at all levels is a history of people seeking to be upwardly mobile. An educational career in teaching and educational administration is a favored goal of many people trying to improve their lot in life. It is an appropriate and worthy goal, and massive expansion of higher education in this country, creating many new administrative positions, has made it increasingly accessible. But to be employed as a teacher and administrator is not the same thing as being a teacher and administrator. To do that, one must define one's role in terms of service to education rather than in terms of rewards emanating from position. Teachers and administrators must meet this test and must encourage their colleagues to meet this test if the quality of education is to improve.

To date, we have dramatically improved quantity. The challenge of quality remains unmet. That challenge will be met, however, by people working for constructive change. It will be met when all elements of the educational system cooperate for improvement. We cannot depend on structures, we must depend on people. University administrators have a particularly important role to play in collaboration with other actors in the rapidly changing educational drama.

Notes

1. Baldrige, J. Victor. *Power and Conflict in the University: Research in the Sociology of Complex Organizations*. New York, Wiley, 1971.
2. Cohen, M.D. and March, J.G. *Leadership and Ambiguity: The American College President*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974; Baldrige, J. Victor; Curtis, David tl.; Ecker, George; and Riley, Gary L. *Policy Making and Effective Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1977; Millet, John D. *New Structures of Campus Power*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1978.
3. Perhaps the proper function of enlightened management is better discovered in the literature of management rather than the literature of education.
4. Ashby, Eric. *Adapting Universities to a Technological Society*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1974; Rourke, Francis and Glenn Brooks. *The Managerial Revolution in Higher Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1966; Rudolph, Frederick. *Curriculum*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1977.
5. Metzger, Walter. *Academic Freedom in the Age of the University*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1955.
6. Kaplin, William A. *The Law of Higher Education: Legal Implications of Administrative Decision Making*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1978.
7. There is an extensive literature on change which may be adapted to particular situations. Organizational theory, role theory, and a wide body of experiential narrative now inform our understanding of innovation strategy.
8. For a helpful outline of the administrator's role as an agent of change, see Walker, Donald E. *The Effective Administrator*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1979.

Training writing lab tutors

Jennie Skerl

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute has recently established a voluntary, drop-in writing lab which has had a very successful first year as measured by attendance and student evaluations. Because there is no required writing course at our institution and because attendance at the lab is totally voluntary, we emphasize one-to-one tutoring. Tutors teach by asking students to write and by giving feedback through a dialogue about the student's writing. With the emphasis on one-to-one tutoring, such a lab is only as good as its tutors, who must be trained in effective tutoring techniques. These are some of the basic instructions I give to my tutors, which I believe are essential to good tutoring in any kind of writing lab.

First of all, tutors are told that they are the writing lab and that their performance makes the lab a success or a failure. I encourage them to make suggestions, generate new materials, establish personal relationships with their tutees. In other words, they are encouraged to do more than punch in and punch out. Working with students on a one-to-one basis means personal involvement.

Secondly, I stress the importance of details like being on time and keeping accurate and thorough records. The lab's very survival depends on these mundane matters. A lackadaisically run lab does not inspire confidence, and records of attendance and students' progress are crucial to renewal, funding, and good public relations.

Third, before they can begin to work with students, tutors have to understand who and what the lab is for. Our voluntary, drop-in lab is open to all students, undergraduate or graduate, who want help with their writing or a writing-related problem. Tutors must be flexible enough to respond to whoever comes in for whatever reason. We do not turn anyone away. Some students want to come in regularly for a course in writing improvement; some want help on a particular assignment; some want a quick answer for a minor point of grammar; some want tips on resumes and letters of application. We also work with students with special needs, such as foreign students and those working on theses. Often we become informal academic advisers and personal counselors. For those in serious trouble, we act as a referral center. I regard the writing lab as a legitimate resource for all of these needs. Although we emphasize writing instruction, the one-to-one tutoring situation creates the opportunity for other kinds of interaction. Consequently, the writing lab is one of the few academic offerings on campus in which the student is treated as a whole person.

Once the tutors are aware of the basic ground rules discussed above, they are ready to begin tutoring. Again, I emphasize some seemingly trivial details because they are important to the success of a tutoring program. Tutors must keep an eye out for students hesitantly approaching the lab, go forward to greet them, and

begin introductions. Tutors should always try to seat the student *beside* them, to avoid distancing and formality. Sitting side by side is also the only effective way two people can work on a piece of writing. The tutor should begin the interview by asking questions about why the student has come to the lab and by giving positive encouragement about what the student can accomplish there.

All of these practices are good psychology for a voluntary lab. Students are often hesitant about coming in and revealing "weaknesses" or "problems." The tutor must give positive encouragement right away and establish an informal atmosphere so that an effective tutoring session can take place. Furthermore, first impressions are important since a tutor may not have an entire semester to "get through" to the student as in a traditional classroom setting. Strangely enough, however, these simple steps toward establishing a personal relationship are often difficult for tutors to perform. Some tutors may be uneasy about initiating conversations with strangers, projecting enthusiasm continually, or asking students to sit in a certain place instead of wherever natural inclination leads them. (Given the opportunity to choose, students will often sit across from the tutor in the teacher-learner position we've all been trained to assume.)

Actual tutoring begins with a piece of the student's writing, so the tutor must generate a writing sample if the student has not brought one along, which is not uncommon. The tutor's first job is to make students aware that they will improve their writing only by writing, and that they must devote some time to the process. Students who intended to drop in for five minutes must be persuaded to stay longer, to write something, and to return with more examples of their own writing. Students should be encouraged to attend repeatedly if they really want to work on writing.

Once the tutor and student have a writing sample, a dialogue can begin. The tutor should always begin by commenting about what students have done well because, as we all know, discussing people's writing is very close to examining their sense of self. People are very defensive about criticism of their writing and are more ready to see their flaws after they have been reassured about their successes. There is always something to praise even if the tutor is reduced to saying something like, "You've chosen a good topic" or "I can see you put a lot of work into this."

Immediately after praising the student's effort, the tutor should ask some questions. After all, if students voluntarily come to a lab with their work, they must have something in mind. Tutors should let themselves be guided by their students at the beginning because in this way tutors will tend to answer the questions uppermost in students' minds, allay false fears, and begin a learning dialogue in which the students are actively involved. When tutors follow this routine, the timid are reassured, and the tough-minded-you can depend on it--speak up and demand tough criticism.

Again, these simple preliminaries toward establishing a working relationship are also often difficult to put into practice. Our own schooling has trained us as teachers to look at student writing with a critical eye, searching for errors. We must train ourselves to look for strengths first and to let students voice their concerns before we impose ours on them. We must train our tutors to do so, too.

I help my tutors shift from a negative to a positive approach by encouraging them to begin a discussion of a student's writing by considering what the student

wants to say and how to say it most effectively. Discussion of an instructor's requirements will also enter in here. Students should be asked to make corrections and revisions right there in the lab, the tutor allowing them to work alone and to return for further comment. Tutors should refrain from making corrections on students' papers: students should write everything themselves. Our lab is intended to be a place where students spend time actively working and learning. Again, it is often difficult to keep this process going, but this learning situation is the ultimate goal of the tutoring process.

After discussing what students want to say, tutors should select the most important problems to work on and discuss and revise them one at a time. Giving students too much criticism at once is counterproductive: students are often mentally paralyzed by excessive negative criticism; they are unable to distinguish between major and minor errors when bombarded with a list of "everything that's wrong"; and, from a practical point of view, a person is capable of analyzing and correcting errors only one at a time, not all at once. One of the most important teaching tasks that a lab tutor performs is selecting the most important areas for revision in a student paper and guiding the student through the revisions sequentially. I help my tutors to determine what to discuss with students by stressing the primary importance of critical thinking, that is, the organization and development of ideas. This means that prewriting and composing should be dealt with before looking at details of style and grammar, even for students who have serious difficulties with the latter. I also remind my tutors to maintain the dialogue approach when advising the students on major revisions. All revisions should be discussed, and students should do all the actual rewriting. Through questions and discussion the tutor should help students formulate their own ideas rather than adopt the tutor's opinions.

My emphasis on teaching writing through writing and dialogue leads to a secondary role for texts and other instructional materials. I encourage my tutors to familiarize themselves with the lab's materials so that they can use them appropriately, but I also stress that books and exercises are less important than a dialogue about students' writing. I ask my tutors to use prepared texts to keep students occupied while waiting or to reinforce a point made in the context of a student's work. I further encourage them to make readings and exercises a part of the dialogue by always discussing such work with students after it is done.

Three problem areas are typical of this type of tutoring service. One is getting students to spend enough time at the lab to benefit in any perceptible way. Voluntary drop-ins expect quick results and find it difficult to give the lab much of their time. There is no easy solution to this problem except to continue to be as positive, encouraging, and productive as possible while students are in the lab. Students will respond to positive experiences and rewards, like better grades, which often do result from writing lab tutoring.

A second problem is that students coming to the lab because of poor performance in class may be hostile. Tutors can be valuable counselors to these hostile students by deflecting their hostility and channelling their emotions into productive work. Since the source of students' anger is seldom the lab or the tutor, most tutors should find it relatively easy to remain calm and discuss the students' feelings in a detached manner. Most students will eventually agree that they have to

satisfy their instructors regardless of how they feel about them, and can feel ready to get down to work once they accept the idea that extra help in the lab just may do the trick. Under no circumstances should a tutor criticize a teacher or allow the student to create a rivalry between the lab and the classroom teacher. After all, a lab exists not to compete with teachers, but to help students perform better in the classroom. Students should always realize that they alone are responsible for understanding the nature of an assignment and for the quality of the work they turn in. Although the lab can help, the lab cannot guarantee a specific grade. It is best to state these facts very clearly to a student who is having problems with a particular course.

A third common problem is the tendency of passive or manipulative students to try to get a tutor to do their assignments for them. If the tutor insists on dialogue, practice, and comment as described above, the passive learner will be forced to think and write actively. Sometimes tutors need inhuman patience to avoid telling a student what to do or seizing a pen to make corrections themselves. Sometimes the tutor must simply stop and tell students that they have to continue on their own. Of course, there is a thin line between helping and taking over, but once tutors are aware that the line is there, they should be prepared to back off.

These are the preliminary instructions my tutors receive based on my own years of experience as a tutor, teacher, and lab director. My methods are based on a belief that people learn to write by writing, getting feedback, and revising. An effective tutor facilitates this learning process and adds one very powerful ingredient: personal attention. Similarly, people learn to tutor by doing it. Once tutors receive some basic orientation, they become expert only by practicing under supervision and by imitating experienced tutors. The positive response that the new writing lab at RPI has received has shown that this kind of tutoring can be effective and make an impact in a very short time.

Large-scale testing

Editor's note. The following two articles, by Edward M. White and by Alice Brekke, are the first pair of articles in a series that WPA hopes to publish on the large-scale testing of writing. In each pair, one article will discuss a system-wide test from the perspective of the system as a whole, and will be written, when possible, by the system's current or past director of testing. The other article in each pair will explore the effects and implications of system-wide testing at a local campus within the system and will be written by a current or past writing program administrator at that campus. WPA is most grateful to these enormously busy people for undertaking to explore this issue with us.

I. The California State University English Placement Test (EPT): Purpose and potential

Edward M. White

The California State University English Placement Test (EPT), whatever its character, certainly had the right parentage. It was developed at the request of the writing program administrators from the nineteen campuses of this huge system (approximately one-third of a million students overall and nearly thirty thousand entering freshmen each year). Although students are supposedly "selected" from the top third of the high school graduating class, a combination of admissions exceptions and uncertain preparation for regular students led, in 1974, to a call by English chairs and composition coordinators for a system-wide test that could lead to some placement of lower-division students in different levels of freshman English.

The argument for a system-wide test, rather than local devices, depended upon the recent experiment in testing sponsored by the English faculties of the system; the English Equivalency Examination (EEE). (See the *Journal of Basic Writing*,¹ Spring/Summer 1978, 18-38, for a description of this credit-by-examination program.) The EEE had shown that state funding could be gained for responsible large-scale testing without loss of faculty control. With experience and knowledge of sophisticated testing (both multiple choice and essay) came an awareness of the cost and complexity involved; again, system-wide testing offered the possibility for the scope and quality of testing that was needed.

It took almost two years before that call for a test led to the creation of a test development committee. But by the time that faculty committee began meeting in the fall of 1976, it was facing a tight deadline; its product was to be required of all

entering freshmen the following year. Happily, the Educational Testing Service had been awarded a contract as test consultant firm and gave the EPT top priority as well as substantial developmental funding. The committee worked feverishly and the new test was developed and administered to entering freshmen in 1477; it has since become a regular part of the state university program, with over fifty thousand tests now administered.

System-wide administration of the test has tried to refrain from intruding into matters individual campuses can do best, such as counseling students into appropriate curricula and developing courses and programs. But we have been moderately successful at gaining state funding for local initiative in these areas and at resisting pressures to take such misguided actions as establishing a state-wide cutting score. The principal advantage of so large-scale an operation has been to gain the resources to put together a creative and effective new examination, using the best knowledge and experience of CSUC faculty.

The Test Development Committee tried to take advantage of the opportunity to produce a new test and to introduce some new concepts into large-scale English testing. For example, the EPT includes a forty-five-minute essay portion (whose statistical importance is starting to emerge with startling clarity from follow-up studies). The committee was able to discard the usage- and error-hunting orientation of traditional "objective" English tests for multiple-choice portions on reading, sentence construction, and logic and organization that view the student as writer rather than editor. The deep suspicion most of us have felt at the effect of error-hunting usage tests on racial minorities led the committee to avoid trivialities or nonsignificant dialect issues and to focus on matters of real consequence to writing. (Again, follow-up studies show the EPT distributes minorities in a markedly different, and apparently far more normal, way than the College Board Test of Standard Written English, the most widely used placement test based on usage.)

Each campus in the system uses the test results in a different way-which is appropriate for a system that prides itself on differences in purpose and function. Most use the total score, derived from the four sections of the test, to identify a level below which some sort of remedial/developmental work is recommended or required. Smaller campuses seem to have an easier time requiring such work, though a few large campuses are beginning to do so. Only a few campuses seem to be setting up old-style "bonehead" classes, and even these are breaking tradition by giving these classes to their most experienced and qualified faculty. Some campuses are using the test results, and the new funding for law-scoring students, to establish or improve tutorial support in classes or learning centers. The Dominguez Hills campus, for example, does not group students by test score, as most of the rest do, but requires additional tutorial work for low-scoring students who remain in regular freshman composition classes.

While no one with a sense of history could claim that this renewed attention to weak student writers is unprecedented, or wholly free from economic motivation, some facets of what is happening do represent new professional developments. At least for the present, many of those teaching the remedial/developmental courses seem to share high morale and a sense of important mission. Some serious research is going on, as part of the national effort to discover new knowledge

about writing instruction. There are indications that promotion and tenure committees are taking note of professional activity in this area as work that counts, it is, of course, too early to say whether these developments are permanent changes in departmental policy and goals, or a temporary response to the social and economic pressures of the times.

The EPT has made some important contributions to English teaching statewide. One technical advantage it offers is to establish base line data for research, for relations with schools, for campus graduation requirements, and for funding. The EPT data led directly to new enrichment formulas for "remedial" instruction from the state. Two campuses in the system (San Bernardino and Fresno) have received major grants from NEH to teach writing across the curriculum and, while the link to the EPT is unclear, there have been suggestions that the existence of the test has helped both programs.

The most important benefit of the statewide test has been to deliver to each campus a reliable set of reading and writing scores for students. Since the English faculties "own" the test, most of the casual local placement tests have become unnecessary, and the instructional time usually lost in placement has been restored. Some campuses use a local form of the EPT essay as a staff-graded entry exam into freshmen composition for "remedial" students, thus adding a "mastery learning" component to "remedial" instruction that makes good sense. Other campuses have developed mini-courses geared to sections of the test. As long as the test stays current (contractually, 25 percent of the EPT is to be new at each administration) and the faculties feel it to be appropriate and faculty controlled, the writing program administrators will continue to find creative ways to use the information provided by the test.

No one should imagine that so large a program in so large a system could be developed either painlessly or without continuing problems. Funding, which appeared to be the greatest difficulty, has turned out not to be much of a problem. Once the program was launched, the California legislature, despite Proposition 13, came through with the required money. However, campus clerical workers in testing and admissions offices, who needed to create or adapt notification systems, resisted the added workload. This bureaucratic problem, a kind of brute office inertia, will apparently take years to solve; until these systems work smoothly, inefficiencies of various kinds bedevil the program. Linked to this problem is a real difficulty in timing: to achieve reliable essay scores and test security, statewide test dates and controlled grading sessions are necessary; but each campus requires test information at a different time. These and other bureaucratic headaches will be dealt with as the program matures, but they still diminish its effect, particularly on some campuses where a weak English department has little influence.

Finally, the widespread participation in testing on the part of English faculty and writing program administrators has had a generally salutary result. Testing, as many of us have learned to our sorrow, can be a very powerful tool; to gain control over testing and the data it produces is to gain substantial new power, available for use in many ways. The implications of this power for staffing and funding of writing programs are just becoming clear. But some uses of this power are obvious.

Training programs for inexperienced teachers, whether traditional graduate

students or newly designated colleagues from history or physical education departments, gain new strength from informed evaluation components. Thus, an informed discussion of essay testing requires considerable attention to such matters as the design of writing assignments, the ability to clarify quality distinctions for students, the need to notice and reward what students have done well, and the desirability of checking individual judgments against those of one's colleagues. There are even some tendencies toward that most sensible, and most threatening of traditional innovations, staff grading of final examinations.

For better or for worse, probably for better, each of our campuses is now required to certify the writing proficiency of its graduates. While, in general, campus-wide committees have been developing and overseeing these certification programs, it is the writing program administrator who usually sees to it that the plan is carried out. Again, knowledge of and control over testing has led to important curricular developments in writing at the upper-division level, with important benefits to both the university and the English department. Several campuses now require advanced composition classes, either in the English department or in other divisions of the university, usually under campus committee control and writing program administrator direction. On all campuses, the renewed emphasis on writing as necessary for the B.A. has moved English departments, with their real or reputed expertness in the area, back toward the center of the curriculum; this emphasis is also a healthy force in opposition to the new vocationalism. The degree of real expertness the writing program administrator can bring to these graduation certification issues will certainly influence the effectiveness and liberal values of the upper-division writing program.

The CSUC English Placement Test, despite some inefficiencies, has thus brought reliable new information and potential new power to writing program administrators in the California State University system. Some similar programs have been developed or proposed in other states and systems, e.g., New Jersey and Wisconsin. Success of such testing programs must depend on the degree of real control and felt ownership by English faculties in general and writing program administrators in particular. When successful, such programs offer important advantages to the institutions, their faculties, and their students.

Note

1. An article now in the final states of preparation will give details of these findings. The article contains score distributions showing that the asserted high correlation of usage and writing scores does not hold for racial-ethnic minorities.

II. The impact of testing on one California university campus: What the EPT has done to us and for us

Alice Brekke

When I was elected composition coordinator for the English Department at California State University, Long Beach, in January of 1977, little did I know what the position involved. The job description read;

The Composition Coordinator of the English Department supervises the composition program. He counsels students regarding composition requirements, administers and evaluates examinations for credit in composition, meets with the Composition Committee to help formulate policy relating to composition, works with the Chairman and the Assistant Chairman in the selection and assignment of part-time faculty in the composition program, coordinates the Teaching Master of Arts Candidate Program, assists the Test Office and state-wide directors for the English Placement Test in pretesting new examinations, and acts as the spokesman for the English Department on all matters of composition.

These were mere words. I had no real sense of what the job entailed at all. Very quickly, however, the words became responsibilities and the responsibilities grew. To perform these tasks, I was released from one of my four scheduled classes.

My duties as composition coordinator encompass a large and diverse program of composition courses. During the fall semester of 1979 we offered four sections of English 001, Basic Skills; sixty-one sections of English 1017, Freshman Composition; six sections of English 101, Composition (Research Writing); twelve sections of English 300, Advanced Composition; ten sections of English 303, Communication for Accounting and Finance Majors; two sections of English 310, Applied Composition (a course for teacher candidates); and eleven sections of English 317, Technical Writing. During the 1979-80 academic year we hope to add courses at the upper division and graduate levels to make possible special certificate programs in technical writing and the teaching of composition. In addition, the English Department will decide this year whether to recommend that the university requirement in composition be doubled; at the present time only one semester of Freshman Composition is required for graduation.

Placement in this program is governed by the English Placement Test (EPT), a California State University and Colleges placement test designed to provide placement information for entering freshmen in the appropriate composition course. The first EPT was administered in August of 1977. Anticipating the EPT and recognizing the need for remediation for many of our students, the English Department had developed a pilot Basic Skills Program, English 001, that began

in the fall of 1976. Class size averaged twenty rather than the twenty-five for Freshmen Composition. The course was offered on a credit/no credit basis, and course credit, not graduation credit, was given. Because special funding was not provided for this remedial program, we were able to offer only four sections each semester. Thus, when the first EPT results were available to us in 1977, we had limited space in Basic Skills for students identified by the test as needing special help in composition. Those students who could not or would not enroll in Basic Skills enrolled in Freshman Composition.

Although faculty teaching Freshman Composition were informed about the English Placement Test, they at first seemed oblivious to it, unconcerned, unaffected. No doubt there were several reasons for their lack of response. Mass testing of writing and reading skills was new to the campus and to the university system. No one knew for sure what the test scores meant. Test scores were not available for all students because not all entering freshmen enrolled in Freshman Composition had taken the test, nor were test results available at the beginning of the semester. How long the administration of the test would be funded by the state legislature was also unknown. Finally, although money for remediation had been requested by the board of trustees, the governor had cut funds for any special remediation from the state budget, and the English Department was wisely unwilling to sacrifice large numbers of literature courses to add Basic Skills courses. Thus, for the first semester following the implementation of the EPT, there were few perceptible changes in the composition program.

Within the year, however, changes began to occur, first in the freshman composition part of the program. In an effort to provide a statement of scope and sequence for all faculty teaching the course, the composition committee revised the outdated course description. Once the course revision was completed, the composition committee drew up a Grading Standards Statement for all students in Freshman Composition and for their instructors. For many years we have all heard horror stories from students, some of them justified, about the unreliability of grading. We had, in fact, conducted an investigation during the previous school year asking instructors to evaluate several student papers. The results of the study were disappointing—standards varied widely; evaluations were not reliable.

A common, agreed-upon Course description for Freshman Composition and a Grading Standards Statement did not, however, suffice. On an experimental basis in the spring of 1978, the English Department agreed to give a common end-of-semester objective and essay test to all students enrolled in Freshman Composition. Two members of the department and I designed the forty-five-minute objective test. We followed the format of the English Placement Test and included items on sentence structure and logic and organization. To keep some of our colleagues happy, we added a section on mechanics and usage. The composition committee designed the forty-five-minute essay examination following prescribed test development procedures. We wrote twenty possible topics, chose six for pretesting at a local community college, and following the reading of all pretest papers, selected two topics for the test [one was needed for classes that met on Monday-Wednesday-Friday and one for Tuesday-Thursday classes]. During the final week of the semester, the test was given. The objective tests were scored through the Test Office. The essays were scored holistically by a group of twenty

faculty who agreed to be trained in holistic scoring and to read papers at a Saturday session. Each essay was read by two readers and scored on a 1-6 scale. Of all papers read, only 4 percent required a third reading because of a 2-point or more difference between the scores of the first two readers. The two scores were added to give a total score. If a third reading was needed, that score was doubled. The mean for individual classes ranged from 6.6 to 8.8. The mean for all Freshman English classes was 7.6. Faculty were given a score interpretation chart that converted the numbers to letter grades. These grades were used by faculty as final examination grades.

Since the early days of indifference, the impact of the English Placement Test on the English Department at Long Beach has grown considerably. This experiment in using a common examination for students in Freshman Composition, for example, has been, for the most part, accepted by the faculty. We have now, in fact, voted to adopt a permanent policy calling for an end-of-semester essay examination. More and more faculty are analyzing EPT scores to determine specific deficiencies of their students. Writing assignments given during the semester are more carefully constructed than before and use the detailed instructions of the EPT essay format. In short, the EPT and the residual effects of the test have helped instructors who were trained in literature, not composition, to do a better job of helping students develop writing skills.

Another thing that continues to grow because of the EPT is my job as composition coordinator, and because of these added responsibilities, the dean of the School of Humanities has doubled my assigned time as composition coordinator. One of my new tasks is to interpret test scores for students requesting interpretation. During the past year alone I talked with more than 3537 students about their test scores. In addition, I coordinate the pretesting of new objective and essay test questions for further tests. I serve on the six-member state test development committee. I am the liaison officer for the EPT on our campus, a position which requires that I speak to various campus groups about the test and prepare information handouts for faculty and students.

That the English Placement Test has focused campus attention on the needs of entering freshmen is obvious. It has also prepared us for the Graduation Writing Proficiency Examination, mandated in 1976 by the Board of Trustees of the California State University and Colleges, which became effective in the fall of 1979.

At the beginning of the fall, 1979, semester, first-semester juniors took the Graduation Writing Proficiency Examination [GWPE]. This test was designed by faculty representing the entire university, not just faculty from the English Department. I serve as chair of the Test Development Committee. The test consists of a sixty-item objective test, a twenty-minute writing task, and a forty-minute writing task. It is a criterion-referenced test, not norm-referenced, and students who want to earn a baccalaureate degree must pass the test before graduation. Students who fail it have several ways to improve their writing skills before retaking it: they may enroll in composition courses offered at nearby community colleges, in their own departments, or in the English Department; they may get tutorial help available through student organizations, the Learning Assistance Center, or the Writing Center.

During the 1960s our campus had a writing clinic staffed by full-time and part-

time faculty that provided extensive tutorial help for students with writing problems, but when the state legislature cut off funds for remediation, the clinic was closed. Now that state funding for remediation has become available once more, we have reactivated the Writing Center. The director of the center, a member of the English Department faculty, is helped by graduate assistant tutors. Available in the center are many self-help, self-paced individualized learning materials. As word about the center has spread across campus, faculty have begun to refer students for help and students themselves have sought assistance.

Since the advent of the new California State University and Colleges test programs, many changes have occurred on the Long Beach campus. Evident in the English Department is the growing support for the status of teaching writing and for the contributions of testing. Evident in other departments is increased attention to writing. From all administrative levels, including the president's office, has come recognition of the place of writing in the university curriculum.

That these have been exciting and challenging times on our campus should be evident. How long the excitement will continue is uncertain, but that the challenge to improve literacy will remain seems apparent.

Notes on contributors

Alice Brekke teaches at California State University, Long Beach, where she has been Composition Coordinator since 1977. Her Ph.D. in English education is from the University of Minnesota. In the fall of 1978, she designed and conducted the first faculty retraining program in composition for the university. As director of the South Basin Writing Project, she conducted the summer, 1979, workshop. She serves on the English Placement Test Development Committee for the California State University and Colleges. She has read papers on teaching composition and testing writing skills at the Southland Council of Teachers of English, the California Association of Teachers of English, and the English Council of CSUC.

Walter Jewell is secretary of the University of New Haven, where he also serves as professor of sociology. He has been executive assistant to the president and chairman of the Department of Sociology. In 1976-77 he was an American Council on Education Fellow in Academic Administration, and has been visiting faculty fellow at Yale. He took his bachelor's degree in history and his doctorate in the sociology of education at Harvard. His article in this issue of WPA was presented in another form at the conference on Improving University Teaching in London, July, 1979.

Jennie Skerl is the creator and director of the Writing Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. The center's program includes faculty consultation, research, and graduate student training, as well as a tutoring service for all RPI students. Before coming to RPI, Professor Skerl was chair of the freshman writing program, Writing Center Director, and humanities division coordinator at Utica College of Syracuse University. She has a Ph.D. in English from Kent State University, has taught both literature and writing, and has several publications in both areas. She presented a paper on writing labs and faculty education at CCCC.¹ in 1979.

Edward M. White is professor of English at California State College, San Bernardino and coordinator of English testing programs for the California State University and Colleges. His graduate degrees are from Harvard; he taught there and at Wellesley before becoming English chair at CSCSB in 1966. His publications include scholarly articles on Jane Austen and Thackeray, two freshman composition texts for W.W. Norton (*The Writer's Control of Tone*, 1970, and *The Pop Culture Tradition*, 1972), many articles, monographs, and speeches on

testing (most particularly Comparison and Contrast, b vols., 1973-1978), a large number of reviews, and one piece of fiction. He was a member of the executive committee of CCCC, 1975-78, NOTE-sponsored speaker in 1977, and a member of the MLA committee on teaching, 1977-79,

Announcements

Announcement due dates

Please note that the due dates for announcements in WPA have been changed. Announcements for the fall issue can now be received as late as August 1; for the winter issue, October 1; and for the spring issue, January 5.

Address correction

The subscription form at the back of each issue of WPA now has a section for address correction. Please check the mailing label on your copy of this issue. If it is incorrect in any way, fill out the address correction form, giving the correct address, and send it to Kenneth A. Bruffee, Editor, WPA, English Department, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, New York 11210.

Correspondence

On the principle that to serve a growing professional field, a journal must represent and respond to the changing needs of its readers, WPA invites correspondence, to be published as space permits. Our first "Reader Survey" (see p. 8 of this issue) is devoted to the same principle. We hope to be able to announce the results of that survey in next winter's issue of WPA.

New editors

We announce with pleasure that the WPA Executive Committee, at its December meeting in San Francisco, appointed three new members to the WPA editorial board. They are Maxine Hairston, University of Texas, Austin; Richard Marius, Harvard University; and William Woods, Wichita State University. We welcome them. They replace four whose terms expired at the end of 1979: Winifred Horner, Erika Lindemann, Ellen Nold, and Joseph Trimmer. We regret losing these retiring members of the board, and thank them for their hard work and encouragement at a crucial moment in the development of WPA and its new journal. We hope they will allow us to call upon their valuable experience and expertise from time to time in the years ahead.

The Executive Committee appointed three new editorial board members to replace four this year in order to make the turnover of referees a more regular procedure. From now on, three members will be replaced each year after a three-year term.

Seminar for WPAs

The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education will offer a seminar in Administering Writing Programs this summer, as part of its Language in Education Program: Teaching of Writing Specialization. The seminar will be team-taught by Kevin Lyons of the school's Educational Leadership Program and by Donald McQuade of Queens College, CUNY, former Director of Freshman English there and a founding member of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The 18-member Teaching of Writing Specialization Advisory Committee includes Morton Botel, Peter Conn, Allan Glatthorn, Shirley Heath, Dell Hymes, and Nessa Wolfson.

Also offered in the Teaching of Writing Specialization Program are courses on such topics as strategies for organizational change, supervision, and improvement of instruction; ethnography and education; social and historical perspectives on literacy; modern theories of rhetoric; the composing process; teaching composition in secondary and postsecondary institutions; and economic and financial aspects of higher education.

For information, write Norma B. Kahn, Specialization Director, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania, 3700 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

Wyoming conference

Two members of the WPA Executive Committee, Maxine Hairston and Elaine Maimon, will be consultants at the 1980 Wyoming Conference on Freshman and Sophomore English, Laramie, July 7-11. John Warnock, Director of Freshman English at the University of Wyoming, is also a member of the WPA Executive Committee. Other consultants at the conference include Elizabeth Cowan, Janet Emig, William Irmscher, James Kinneavy, Elizabeth McPherson, Louise Rosenblatt, and Ross Winterowd. Address inquiries to David Roberts, Conference Director, English Department, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming 82071.

Call for papers

WPA will request a special session at MLA again next year. The topic of the session will be selecting, training, and integrating part-time faculty. The same topic will be addressed at the 1981 CCCC convention. Send papers or proposals to Harvey S. Wiener, President, WPA, English Department, La Guardia Community College, CUNY, Long Island City, New York 11101.

Teaching Writing: Methods, Materials, and Measurement is published once a year by the English Department, University of Delaware, and is refereed by the University of Delaware faculty. It invites submission of manuscripts on the topics announced in its title. Send manuscripts and inquiries to George Miller, Editor, Teaching Writing, English Department, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware 19711.

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