



Writing Program Administration

Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators
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The Politics of Peer Tutoring

Harvey Kail and John Trimbur

Over the past ten years or so, peer tutoring has worked its way up from the margins of academic life, from the realm of academic support services and soft money, to claim an integral position in many, if not most, writing programs. (1) Collaborative learning and peer tutoring are now recognized as innovative contributions not only to the writing abilities but more broadly to the liberal education of undergraduates. Exemplary peer tutoring programs such as Kenneth A. Bruffee's Brooklyn Plan and Tori Haring-Smith's Writing Fellows at Brown University have become models in the field, with an identity, a coherent rationale, and a capacity for replication.

Thus the question to be asked about peer tutoring is no longer why such programs are necessary, but how tutoring can best contribute to the development of writing abilities and the intellectual life of undergraduates. Indeed, peer tutoring has reached the point where distinct models are vying for influence to disseminate their sense of purpose and possibility. What follows is our attempt to sort peer tutoring programs under two broad headings: the writing center model such as Bruffee's Brooklyn Plan and the curriculum-based model such as Haring-Smith's Writing Fellows Program. We propose to discuss these two models of peer tutoring in terms of their administrative structures and, more significantly, to analyze their underlying educational ideologies, the political assumptions which are often hidden in educational programs by the very process of institutionalization. We want to talk, that is, about the way peer tutoring programs constitute the educational consciousness of peer tutors and tutees. We will argue that while the curriculum-based model may be administratively more efficient, the writing center model offers an educational setting in which collaboration among peers can help students reach a critical understanding and redefinition of themselves as learners.

Two Models: Writing Center and Curriculum-Based

First, let's characterize the two models as organizational strategies. The writing center model such as Bruffee's Brooklyn Plan is organized as a voluntary association where students who want to improve their writing

drop in or make an appointment to work with a peer tutor in a writing center (Bruffee, "The Brooklyn Plan"). Students can be at any stage in composing. Sometimes they want to talk to a tutor to clarify the assignment or to get some initial ideas down on paper. Other times, students come to tutoring sessions with drafts in progress, specific questions, and specific requests for response. Or students may bring in graded papers to discuss their strengths and weaknesses and the instructor's comments. And in still other cases, students call on peer tutors to deal with nonacademic writing—job letters, graduate school applications, résumés, and so on. Most students refer themselves, while some seek peer tutoring on the recommendation of an instructor. As a rule, though, the success of the writing center model depends on publicity and word of mouth, the extent to which the benefits of peer tutoring have penetrated the informal networks of student life.

The curriculum-based model, such as Haring-Smith's Writing Fellows Program, on the other hand, seems to grow out of the premise that if peer tutoring is good for those students who seek it voluntarily, it's even better to require it, to make sure that students in composition classes or writing intensive courses in other fields hook up with peer tutors. In the curriculum-based model, tutors are typically attached to a course as much as to a writing center. Ten years ago, when peer tutoring was still viewed mainly as a remedial activity, the curriculum-based model often provided a required lab component in basic writing courses, where peer tutors administered drills and exercises. More recently, however, the curriculum-based model has expanded the scope of its activities in new and much more sophisticated directions. Sometimes peer tutors provide in-class tutoring in coordination with the course instructor. Other times, the peer tutors provide written or oral responses to early drafts of writing assignments to encourage revision before the students turn in final drafts for their instructors to grade. In any case, in the curriculum-based model, peer tutors are, as it were, written into the plan of instruction. They're part of the course.

Thus the curriculum-based model operates through official channels; student writers receive peer tutoring as a part of their classes. By building peer tutoring into the course structure, the curriculum-based model makes peer tutors an extension of the writing program, a way to deliver state-of-the-art peer responses to student writers. Building peer tutoring into the plan of instruction in such courses guarantees moreover a certain level of efficiency: tutors will have someone to tutor and program administrators will be able quite accurately to predict the number of tutoring sessions that will take place, the number of tutors necessary, the best times to schedule tutoring, and so on.

Looking at the writing center and curriculum-based models as organizational strategies, the issue that divides them seems to be how best to

plug in tutors with tutees. We have, that is, two delivery systems and the meaningful question to ask appears to be which one works better, which one better delivers the knowledge it takes to learn to write well. By such operational criteria, the curriculum-based model has some real strengths compared to the writing center model: it makes sure tutors and tutees connect: it promotes communication between tutors and faculty; it simplifies administration by concentrating peer tutoring in selected courses. And it avoids some of the potential pitfalls in the writing-center model: the no-shows, the stigma of seeking help, the indifference, the parasitical behavior. For these reasons, the curriculum-based model has become increasingly widespread. Compared to the Writing Fellows Program at Brown University, the writing center model appears to be diffuse and unfocused, at best an adjunct service for those students not enrolled in courses targeted by the curriculum-based peer tutoring program.

If, however, we stop thinking solely in terms of operational efficiency for a moment and begin talking in terms of educational ideology, we can make some distinctions we couldn't make by looking at these models as administrative strategies. The differences we are going to see at this level of analysis are not operational but political; they concern not the delivery of services but the powers ascribed to and internalized by tutors and tutees—the ideology of peer tutoring.

Models and the Ideology of Generation and Transmission

According to the traditional ideology of teaching and learning, universities "generate" knowledge and then "transmit" this knowledge into the academic community and eventually to the community outside the university. One need only look in the front of a dozen college catalogues to see how habitual and commonsensical this ideology of generation and transmission has become. The metaphor is worth unpacking: knowledge is generated like heat is produced in a college's steamplant or electricity from a nuclear reactor and then transmitted through the steamlines or electrical cables to a radiator or an electric typewriter—or a student. Scholars on the "cutting edge" of their fields, on the boundary between what we know and what we don't, generate new knowledge, turning darkness into light. While the moment of ignition or transformation is so mysterious that we cannot explain it, the process of transmission can be easily traced. Slowly new knowledge works its way back from the "cutting edge," from scholar to scholar, in articles, monographs, books, to where it is assimilated by teachers who, eventually, transmit it to students. For convenience sake, we will label this cluster of ideas the "gen/tran" ideology, for generation and transmission.

Where does peer tutoring fit into the gen/tran ideology? According to the gen/tran ideology of knowledge, peer tutoring is conceived as a new fixture in the transmission lines. It is a substation along the way designed to jump up the signal or change the quality of transmission. With the help of peer tutors, students who aren't receiving the signals properly can tune in better to the same message, except that now it is in a new voice, the voice of the students' peers. The key word for understanding the politics of peer tutoring within the gen/tran ideology is supplement—more power for transmission.

Peer tutors then get the authority to transmit knowledge through an act of installation: they are installed in the existing power grid. They receive knowledge from their tutor trainers, turn and pass this know-how on to their tutees. Within gen/tran, the pedagogy—that is, the relationship among students, teachers, and curriculum—remains what it always was, hierarchical. A new component has been put in place to improve the system's performance: a teacher teaches a student or group of students to then turn and teach other students. The only difference in education after the installation of peer tutors is that the transmission lines are a little longer. They can now reach a larger and perhaps more diversified audience. But the authority to generate and transmit knowledge, even though mediated by new voices and new social relationships remains where it always was—firmly in faculty hands.

In the curriculum-based model of peer tutoring, students working as peer tutors can't help but experience their own activity, and with it a sense of themselves, as part of a delivery system, a supplement to repair the short circuits, recharge the sources of power, and keep the transmission lines functioning smoothly. By attaching peer tutoring to the official structures of teaching and learning, by writing them into the plan of instruction, the curriculum-based model makes the peer tutors an extension of the faculty. In effect, peer tutoring in the curriculum-based model removes tutors from the student community by installing them a power station or two above their peers, a step away from student culture, a step closer to the faculty. Thus, the curriculum-based model keeps tutors from collaborating with tutees as peers because the tutors are already identified with the functions of the faculty and the writing program, already implicated in the lines of transmission. In the curriculum-based model, the key collaboration is designing a plan of instruction, a collaboration that takes place between faculty and student-tutors, and not among themselves.

Enter Collaborative Learning

It might be argued that the writing center model of peer tutoring, with its system of paying tutors and locating them in an officially sanctioned

writing center, operates under the aegis of gen/tran as much as the curriculum-based model. And that seems to us often to be the case, that in fact many writing centers are designed to be part of a larger delivery system of writing instruction. It is the exceptions, however, such as those based on Bruffee's Brooklyn Plan, that interest us, the writing centers that emphasize collaboration between faculty and peer tutors.

Peer tutoring programs based on collaborative learning are, of course, located inside the institutions of higher education, but they are situated at a remove from the normal delivery system of curriculum and instruction, in the semi-autonomous space of writing centers. What gives such writing centers their semi-autonomous character is that although they are part of the official institutional structure, they operate primarily as voluntary associations of peers. As we have pointed out elsewhere, peer tutoring based on collaborative learning taps into the networks of mutual aid already present in student culture (Kail, Trimbur). Students have always banded together informally, in rap sessions and study groups, to deal with the intellectual demands of their experience as undergraduates. Collaborative learning, in this respect, is an effort by educators to mobilize the power of peer influence toward the intellectual activity of co-learning. By organizing tutors and tutees as co-learners, peer tutoring based on collaborative learning does not so much repair a dysfunctional system of transmissions as it offers an alternative to the dominant hierarchical model of teaching and learning, an alternative based on voluntary social interaction among students. It replaces the metaphor of the generation and transmission of knowledge with that of a conversation.

To replace generation and transmission with conversation is to challenge some of the basic beliefs and practices in higher education. For one thing, it challenges the traditional reward system, with its emphasis on individual performance and competition among students for grades and faculty esteem. Collaboration among students in the form of peer tutoring may make faculty nervous because it seems to verge on plagiarism, cheating, and ghostwriting. More important, though, collaboration among students challenges the way we habitually think about the authority of knowledge.

As Kenneth A. Bruffee has pointed out, to think of knowledge as conversation among knowledgeable peers is to abandon the view that knowledge is fixed once and for all, something that once generated needs only delivery ("Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind'"). Nor is knowledge hierarchical in the sense that we think of the individual scholar at the "cutting edge" confronting the unknown and wrestling meaning out of the void. We get knowledge not from some higher authority but from ourselves and our activity talking to others, even when this inherently social activity of conversation is displaced into the solitude of reading and writing. We are never really alone facing the

void, as tempting as such mythology may be. Knowledge, rather, is a social process, a part of and inseparable from what we call the "social fabric," authorized by the mutual consent of knowledgeable peers.

Locating the sources of knowledge in the social fabric rather than in the power lines of generation and transmission offers a way to talk about peer tutoring that goes beyond the operational model of plugging tutors into the grid. Peer tutoring, in this view, is not a supplement to the normal delivery system but an implicit critique of gen/tran ideology and the official structures of curriculum and instruction. To reorganize the relationship among students is simultaneously to probe the traditional relationships of teaching and learning.

Peer Tutoring and the Crisis of Authority

By posing an alternative to the prevailing hierarchy of generation/transmission, collaborative learning precipitates a crisis of authority. It asks students to rely on themselves, to learn on their own in the absence of faculty authority figures or their surrogates. In tutoring programs based on collaborative learning, tutors and tutees not only must learn to work together. They must also learn to free themselves from their dependence on the faculty continually measuring and certifying their learning. To do this, of course, requires that students break with some of the habitual behaviors of schooling and form new habits of thought and action. Collaborative learning in this sense begins as an exercise in unlearning. Unless tutors and tutees unlearn the ideology of gen/tran, they will inevitably reproduce competitive, individualistic, authority-dependent behaviors embedded in traditional education. The power of collaborative learning, we believe, is that it offers students a way to unlearn what the sociologist and cultural critic Richard Sennett calls "visions of a satisfying omnipotent authority," to reinterpret the power of the faculty, and to see that their own autonomous co-learning constitutes the practical source of knowledge.

This process of unlearning and reinterpretation is a complex one. At the risk of appearing overly schematic, however, we can trace its broad outlines. As Sennett points out in his book *Authority*, a crisis of authority that leads to renouncing an authority as omnipotent proceeds through three stages: detachment, reflection, and reentrance. According to Sennett, the first stage is marked by "detachment from the influence of authority." This is what can happen, we believe, in the semi-autonomous space of writing centers. By removing themselves from the lines of transmission, tutors and tutees form their own co-learning communities, establish their joint purposes, decide on a plan to work together, and evaluate the results. The point of peer tutoring, in this respect, is not the delivery of knowledge from tutor to tutee but an experience of their own

powers as learners that will lead peers to discover authority in each other. Peer tutoring based on collaborative learning begins, then, by organizing tutors and tutees outside the normal channels of teaching and learning so that they can constitute each other as active subjects in the social interaction of co-learning.

The process of co-learning leads to the second stage of Sennett's sequence, to the reflection "What was I like under the authority's influence?" As students detach themselves from faculty influence in order to work together collaboratively, they may also come to a mutual recognition of their shared status as undergraduates, their common position at the bottom of the academic hierarchy where they compete as individuals for personal success and faculty esteem. This mutual recognition can take students beyond an atomized perception of their own personal predicament to a social understanding of a system that frequently pits student against student in a struggle for the scarce resource of faculty approval. The experience of co-learning can help students not only to remove themselves from faculty influence. It can also help them to understand the structures of authority they have internalized.

Finally, based on the work of detachment and reflection, a further question, Sennett says, can be asked: "Is the authority legitimate?" The point of collaborative learning, in this regard, is not to reject the authority of the faculty out of hand. Such rejection, in fact, does not lead to autonomy but can lead instead to withdrawal from authority into individual isolation and cynicism. Or it may lead students to substitute idealized versions of authority for the real forms of power that dominate their lives, as sometimes occurs in peer tutoring when tutees rehabilitate the authority of the faculty by transferring it to the tutor, thus establishing a new relationship of dependence. These sequences of events need not necessarily occur, however. Another possibility, as Sennett suggests of crises of authority in general and we see as one of the educational goals of peer tutoring, is that once students have removed themselves from the official structures, they can then reengage the forms of authority in their lives by demystifying the authority of knowledge and its institutions.

It is this reentrance that offers the most dramatic argument for peer tutoring based on the ideology of collaborative learning. It is not that writing center-based peer tutoring works better than curriculum-based programs and their implied gen/tran ideology. Our argument is that it does a different kind of work. Curriculum-based programs, in our view, suppress the crisis of authority precipitated when students work together, domesticate it, and channel the social forces released by collaboration into the established structures of teaching and learning. Peer tutoring based on collaborative learning, by contrast, provides students with a form of social organization to negotiate the crisis successfully and reenter the official structures of authority as active agents

rather than as passive objects of transmission. The power of the faculty and transmitted knowledge is still there, embedded in the institutions of higher education. What students can gain is the ability to reinterpret that power by defining the authority of knowledge as a relationship among people—not a hierarchical structure of generation and transmission. When peer tutoring works (and we are the first to admit that the complex schema we have outlined frequently short circuits), it does more than help students learn. The experience of co-learning changes students and helps them to see that the power ascribed to the faculty depends on the students' own sense of powerlessness and their need for omnipotent authority.

The benefits of peer tutoring can be considerable. Once faculty lose the omnipotence ascribed to them, they become more interesting and useful to students. The faculty's struggle to generate and authorize knowledge through conversation with their peers becomes more accessible to students, divested of the mystery that surrounds the scholar on the cutting edge. And by reinterpreting the authority of the faculty, students learn to recognize their own powers as learners and to invest authority in each other. And what this leads to is not so much a better delivery system but a student culture that takes learning and intellectual activity seriously.

Note

¹For a description of the range of current peer tutoring programs, see *A Guide to Writing Programs, Writing Centers, Peer Tutoring, Writing Across the Curriculum*. Ed. Tori Haring-Smith. Glenview: Scott Foresman, 1984.

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When Administration Becomes Scholarship: The Future of Writing Program Administration

Richard H. Bullock

At most universities scholarship, the pursuit and application of knowledge, is divorced from administration, the day-to-day running of the school. While faculty regularly perform administrative functions ranging from committee work to chairmanships and the administration of various special programs, their "service" to the university is perceived as an activity subordinate to their primary function, the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. I wish to argue in this essay that the administration of writing programs should confound such traditional categories and should instead be performed as and considered a form of scholarship.

In terms of past practice and, I suppose, much current program administration, this is a ridiculous suggestion. Professor X would be asked (or told) to be in charge of freshman English, meaning that he had to take time out from his Shakespeare or Whitman to monitor the graduate students as they were thrown, untrained and unprepared, into their assigned sections. Or a willing faculty wife would be hired to run the freshman program so that the tenured faculty could pursue their scholarship unhindered by the demands of staffing, scheduling, and textbook selection.

Recent scholarship demonstrates that this dismal picture has changed, though perhaps not as much as it should. Linda Peterson's survey of WPA members reveals that "the typical WPA . . . specializes in a traditional field of English or American literature" (12), implying that not much has changed (though the recent growth in graduate programs in composition studies may change that, along with the growth in courses in composition taught by WPAs), while Carol P. Hartzog reveals in her survey of 44 writing program directors that nearly all run programs that have a statement of principles to guide them and extensive training programs for TAs and other teachers in the program (35, 49).

At many schools, however, even this picture is changing as writing programs proliferate and diversify. At Northeastern University, for example, the English Department includes in addition to its literature offerings and traditional freshman writing courses basic writing, ESL,

and a writing center; an advanced-level, interdepartmental writing program; a graduate program and a certificate program in technical writing; and an off-campus summer graduate program in the teaching of writing. Recognizing that these programs require constant monitoring and nurturing, the department has hired four tenure-track professors to design, implement, and oversee them. These four people, two of whom are tenured, have developed their expertise not in literature but in writing, and design and alter the programs in light of their expertise. This is obviously not an isolated example, as Hartzog's survey, accompanied by case studies of three schools with extensive writing programs, shows.

This fact, that scholars of writing (at least, WPAs who, "while they hold Ph.D.s in English, . . . have specialized in both a literary field and composition studies" [Peterson 17]) control writing programs, signals a profound change in the structure of English departments because administration at these schools is no longer a shared burden rotated, as are many chairmanships, among all faculty. Increasingly, faculty members are hired to use their expertise to design and run writing programs; the administration of those programs is an integral part of their jobs. Faculty in these positions are not caretakers of a slice of bureaucracy; they are experts and scholars testing and refining their knowledge in the practical arena of application. The administration of writing programs under these circumstances advances our knowledge of the teaching of writing. No less than an architect's erection of a building or a playwright's successful directing of his or her own play, it is scholarship.

The design and implementation of assessment procedures at Northeastern may prove a helpful example. When I began administering the freshman writing program there, I inherited a placement procedure consisting of a one-hour timed essay given students during fall orientation week. While this sort of test is common in colleges and universities, it conflicts both with what we know about valid writing assessment—that various samples of writing must be evaluated to determine students' abilities in various writing situations—and with the writing program itself, which acknowledges the difficulty of assessing writing by delaying the giving of grades, evaluating groups of papers, and requiring faculty collaboration in the evaluation of student essays. In short, the instrument used to determine students' placement into writing courses conflicted conceptually and operationally with the courses themselves.

After defining this as a problem, I decided that a potential solution lay in turning the freshman writing course itself into an evaluative instrument, under the assumption that students' performance over eleven weeks would better indicate who needed additional help. Students who did need more help would then be required to take an additional course before continuing in the regular freshman sequence. There were practical problems, of course. Although the crudity of the single writing sample

guaranteed that each class's students would show a broad range of ability, under the new system that range would broaden further, so that instructors would need help with the weakest students, who would need help themselves when placed in a potentially too-demanding course. In administering the basic writing program I had observed that instructors got to know their students' abilities after about three weeks of class. To give the needed help I instituted a third-week assessment of students' overall abilities, based on various samples of their writing: students identified then would be required to attend a weekly small-group session in addition to their regular coursework.

At the core of this administrative action lay a conceptual base: the belief that writing programs should be pedagogically sound and consistent throughout, and more specifically that placement and evaluation procedures must conform to our knowledge of students' growth and development as writers and of accurate, valid, and humane tools for the assessment of writing. While no empirically verifiable data can be gathered from such situation-specific manipulation and innovation, the knowledge that results—it can be done, it works—is surely as valuable as that derived from classroom research and case study analysis, which has supplanted the scientific model in recognition of writing's individual and situationally-based nature.

The analogy between this sort of scholarship in action and the assessment of an architect's work, or a dancer's, is revealing. Architects must spend much time and energy attending to practical matters of plumbing, wiring, load distribution, traffic patterns, and other aspects of a building in daily use. A dancer preparing a performance must obtain a theater, convince backers, audition dancers, arrange lighting, hire musicians, and choreograph not only the dancers on the stage but the entire *gestalt* of the performance. In both cases the achievement depends on hours of mundane activities; but what elevates their efforts above mere administration are their roots in concepts based on artistry and expertise. (The artist Christo provides a telling if extreme example; he considers the efforts involved in obtaining financing and permission to wrap islands, buildings, and bridges with sheets of plastic or nylon integral aspects of the work of art and meticulously documents the process leading up to the product, explicitly recognizing the role of implementation in the production of significant art.)

So it is with the writing specialist in charge of a writing program. If the administrator bases the program on sound principles and coherent, consistent concepts of writing and its teaching, all administrative activities—from articulating the program's guiding principles, suggesting syllabi, and recommending textbooks to interviewing prospective faculty and arbitrating students' grievances—aim toward the construction and

implementation of a program that embodies the key elements of the administrator's knowledge and expertise. And since such administration cannot rest solely on received knowledge, its dynamic nature constantly producing challenges to be faced and problems to be solved, it demands that the administrator innovate, based on expertise, developing novel solutions to the difficulties involved in implementing general principles in specific situations. Like the literary scholar applying theoretical critical principles to a specific text, the writing specialist's arena is the writing classroom and program.

Where all this comes home, of course, is in the evaluation of the WPA's performance as a WPA. And that evaluation, as Hartzog and Peterson both point out, is sadly inadequate to the tasks a WPA faces and their importance. Hartzog observes that "formal reviews are often directly associated with, or perhaps subsumed by, academic reviews." In then affirming that program administrators nonetheless are evaluated, she quotes "one person who said that he is not reviewed except 'on broader performance as a scholar and classroom teacher' [and] added that 'of course, steps would be taken' if he did not handle his job well" (25; emphasis added). Peterson echoes this assessment, quoting a WPA who noted that administrative work would only have mattered at tenure time "if any had been bad" (14). Informal review, much less the threat of negative response as the only response, is hardly sufficient for the time- and energy-consuming task of directing writing programs.

A further complication arises as both Hartzog and Peterson observe that because composition studies themselves, let alone program administration, are often tainted in the eyes of literary scholars, WPAs must "have commitments in both academia and administration" (Hartzog 25) and, further, must publish in both composition and literature to assure their place in English departments. Peterson in particular argues forcefully in favor of such dual-field scholarship "to fulfill an oft-neglected ideal of the profession: to integrate teaching with scholarship and research" (15). Unfortunately, unlike literary scholars who teach, research, and write about literature, WPAs must by this reasoning divide their energies (already strained, in Hartzog's reckoning, by the demands of their duties) between two distinct fields, primarily to placate intolerant English faculty members. Such attitudes may be necessary for WPAs' survival in many schools, but I have to wonder whether it serves the interest of WPAs to accept their unpleasant implications. Rather, I believe WPAs should concentrate their scholarly work in their primary area of interest: composition studies.

Unlike traditional scholarship, though, administrative scholarship does not always result in publications, the traditional measure of a scholar's work. Like an exhibition, reading, or recital, program administration is bound to a certain time and place. Like a building, it cannot be

moved. Like a performance or an improvisation, it is dynamic; it changes, develops, evolves. And like a grant, it is based on expertise but involves the testing and working out of ideas grounded in that expertise. Just as grant evaluators must evaluate a recipient's work on its merits, the evaluators of writing programs and their administrators must recognize that same dynamic, situation-specific nature of writing programs and adapt to it. Mechanisms already exist for writing program evaluation which involve sending teams of recognized experts on writing to evaluate programs, and this method of on-site refereeing is ideal, though it must be clearly focused. Referees must distinguish among the various aspects of administration, focusing their attention primarily on the scholarly achievement embodied in the program and its relationship to clearly articulated, discipline-wide standards or goals. A program's success depends on many things, including administrators' personalities, the nature of the teaching staff, the context within which the program operates, and available financial and moral support; but at the heart of the refereed evaluation must lie the assessment of the success with which the administrator has applied cogent, articulated principles based on scholarship, the same grounds on which a journal referee must judge a manuscript. That principle, not a program's cost-effectiveness or its smoothness of operation, must be paramount.

Writing program evaluation must also recognize its evolutionary nature. In designing and implementing programs, scholar-administrators must consider the program over several years. Unlike a scholarly publication, which at some stage of its writing must be considered "finished" and published, a writing program continually evolves. Like a student's writing ability, it cannot be evaluated fairly on the basis of a single sampling, a single visit, but must be looked at in a larger context of accumulated, incremental changes and revisions as well as conceptual and organizational leaps.

The administration of writing programs as scholarship then involves a reconceptualization not only of administration but of scholarship as well. This was brought home by an objection I received from a reader of this manuscript. This reader wrote, "WPAs are paid very good money for possessing this 'expertise.' To exact it as 'scholarship' is about as logical as paying scholars administrators' salaries because they publish articles and books." This reviewer is missing the point. If 'expertise' consists of administrative ability only—ability to evaluate transfer credit, to keep the machinery running, to smooth feathers as they ruffle, and perhaps to give TAs pointers on classroom behavior—then the objection is valid; such an administrator is not performing scholarship. But if, as I am arguing, the WPA's role is to innovate, to erect and maintain a program that embodies and tests theoretical principles and monitors the results over several years, that activity is scholarly and should be recognized as

such, and the traditional disciplinary view restricting scholarship to written publication must broaden to include performance in the artistic or theatrical sense. Such a shift in evaluative concepts will engender further change in the nature of writing programs as they move from burdens borne by unwilling or unqualified caretakers to dynamic laboratories in which composition theory and composition pedagogy grow together. Such unity of research and application can then serve as a model for other fields, bringing the elusive ideal of the scholar-teacher—for whom teaching and scholarship are not separate and compartmentalized, but integrated and mutually informing—closer to reality.

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Defining Writing Across the Curriculum

Susan McLeod

Writing across the curriculum, unlike many other phrases having to do with writing these days, has a positive ring about it. Administrators and faculty may see student writing skills as abysmal and view basic writing programs with suspicion, but writing across the curriculum is generally seen as a positive response to the student literacy crisis and therefore something to be desired. Administrators have heard of it and generally want to implement it on their campuses, even if they are not entirely sure what "it" is, because it is defined as something that will improve student writing.

But administrators and faculty alike often have only partial definitions of writing across the curriculum in mind; they may know of only one program, or they may have read a general article on the phenomenon. Their half-defined notions of the term lead them to sometimes serious misunderstandings of what WAC is all about. At a recent conference, for example, I talked to a dean who told me that he was thinking about implementing a WAC program in which teaching assistants from all disciplines would teach writing as part of the discussion sections they already led. So far, so good; but the second part of his projected program involved eliminating Freshman Composition from the budget because it would be added to the job description of all TAs, a cost-effective approach that pleased him. And our faculty colleagues, while they may agree that something needs to be done, often interpret writing across the curriculum to mean grammar across the curriculum, and therefore as something that they themselves are not capable of doing.

Such mis-definitions can damage and even destroy our writing programs. As writing program administrators, we need to be sure that we clarify for our colleagues and university administrators, and perhaps for ourselves as well, exactly what we mean when we use the term "writing across the curriculum." What I should like to do here is discuss two aspects of this complex and multi-dimensional term—the philosophical bases for our programs (the "why"), and their various institutional manifestations (the "how").

Philosophical Bases

There are two philosophical approaches to writing across the curriculum. These approaches are not necessarily opposed to one another and

mutually exclusive, as Lil Brannon implied in a paper given at the 1986 MLA meeting. We should instead think of them on a continuum from (to use James Britton's terms) expressive to transactional writing. The first philosophy, which I would term "cognitive," assumes that writing is a mode of thinking and learning. Janet Emig and James Britton are the philosophical godparents of this approach, which is based on constructivist theories of education. We build our own knowledge structures, the theory goes, changing them as we receive new information. One of the most powerful ways of building and changing these knowledge structures is through writing, through explaining things to ourselves in a conscious way before we explain things to others. The curricular manifestation of this approach is the use of journals and other ungraded writing assignments in all classes, at all levels, to make writing as a tool for learning in the classroom. Toby Fulwiler's very successful program at Michigan Technological University is the most well-known embodiment of this approach to writing across the curriculum; teachers at Michigan Tech. learned to use writing in all disciplines to encourage learning. Their methods are presented in Toby Fulwiler and Art Young's book *Language Connections: Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum* and the results are discussed in Young and Fulwiler's *Writing Across the Disciplines: Research into Practice*.

The second approach, which I would term "rhetorical," acknowledges the importance of writing as a mode of learning, but emphasizes the contextual and social constraints of writing. This philosophy sees writing in a particular discipline as a form of social behavior in that discipline, and sees academic writing as a discourse community into which we must introduce our students, much as we try to make newcomers feel at home in conversations among our friends. Because this approach sees the discourse community as crucial to the understanding of both the writing process and the conventions of the finished products, classes that emphasize the approach make extensive use of collaborative learning and peer revision. The aim is to create a community of learners and writers in the classroom, similar to the knowledge community we call a discipline. The philosophical godparent of this approach is Ken Bruffee, and its most well-known embodiment is the program at Beaver College, established by Elaine Maimon. Her methods are presented in her text, *Writing in the Arts and Sciences*, and in various articles, especially in "Talking to Strangers." The most common curricular manifestation of this approach is the writing course in a particular discipline ("Writing in the Sciences" or "Writing in History") which are often, but not always, at the upper-division level.

These brief summaries cannot do justice to the philosophical bases for writing across the curriculum programs; I invite interested readers to look at the articles and books mentioned above. Before I leave the issue of

philosophy, however, I would like to emphasize one point: the two philosophical approaches are different only in emphasis, not in kind. Programs which emphasize writing to learn do not necessarily denigrate the importance of writing for audiences other than the self, audiences with specific expectations. Programs which emphasize the importance of the rhetorical expectations in particular discourse communities do not by definition leave out writing to learn. The philosophies are compatible; many flourishing programs are philosophically ambidextrous.

Whatever the controlling philosophy for a WAC program, the actual program structure may differ, depending on the needs of the institution it serves and the situation in which it was born. There are a number of combinations and permutations of elements in each institutional model; what I will do here is list those elements, and explain how they work in a particular context. I base my classification system on how WAC affects students and faculty (for a related classification system see Kinneavy).

WAC for Students

The Freshman Composition WAC Course:

This model uses Freshman Composition as an introduction to writing in the university. The WAC course at this level goes beyond the reading and writing of the personal essay (the common 1970's curriculum for Freshman Comp.) to include readings from disciplines across the curriculum and writing about and for those disciplines. The essay, or "freshman theme," is not excluded, but the course no longer assumes that learning to write such an essay gives students thinking and writing skills that will transfer to all other writing tasks. Students also write summaries, critiques, book reviews, research reports, case studies, and lab reports as part of their undergraduate education, and a true WAC composition course would include these kinds of writing as well. In some programs, such as Harvard's Expository Writing Program, there are separate courses for various disciplines; in others, such as the program at Beaver College, the Freshman course is a single course but completely interdisciplinary. In some, like the innovative PAGE Program (Plan for Alternative General Education) at George Mason University, writing has become part of an interdisciplinary undergraduate curriculum which includes such courses as "Reading the Arts" and "Symbols, Codes, and Information."

The Adjunct Course:

In this model, a writing course (often one or two credits) is attached to a course in a particular discipline, and is taught by an instructor knowledgeable about the teaching of writing. This instructor works closely with the

subject-matter teacher in developing writing assignments, and with the students in the adjunct class in writing those assignments. Such a course makes a good deal of sense in large research institutions with enormous undergraduate lecture sections. The drawback is, of course, that it can separate writing from the course, and that students and faculty see writing itself as a mere adjunct to the "real" curriculum. But as Robert Cullen points out, the adjunct course has been implemented successfully at such schools at UCLA and the University of Washington.

Upper-Division Writing Intensive Courses:

This course introduces students to the writing tasks of their chosen disciplines. Where the freshman WAC course teaches writing about a particular field, this class teaches writing in a particular field—not just writing about history, for example, but writing history. The teachers for this class are usually teachers from a subject-matter discipline, the reason being that such teachers are the best ones to introduce novices to the discourse community of their chosen profession. The focus is not just on forms and formats, but on the critical thinking skills that define the various disciplines.

This model has arisen in many states (California, for example) as a response to legislation aimed at "doing something" about student literacy. The obvious drawbacks to these upper-division writing courses are two-fold: some junior-level students are not yet skilled enough writers to handle advanced writing tasks, and teachers in the subject matter areas are often uneasy about teaching a writing class. The first of these is best handled by a careful screening procedure, such as the Writing Effectiveness Screening Test (WEST) at California State University, Chico, which insures that the students in such classes are capable writers. The second drawback is best handled by a faculty workshop or seminar, discussed below.

WAC for Faculty

The Faculty Seminar:

Most WAC programs, whatever their structure, have a faculty writing workshop or seminar somewhere along the way. Sometimes, at the community college level, these are courses that faculty can take for credit (and therefore salary advancement). Often they are workshops that are led by outside experts such as Toby Fulwiler, Carol Holder, Barbara Walvoord, or Tori Haring-Smith; sometimes they are led by faculty members themselves. All such workshops have a common goal—showing faculty methods of assigning and evaluating student writing, and helping them understand that integrating writing into the

curriculum will help students' thinking and learning processes. There is an important affective element in such workshops as well; almost all programs that evaluate their workshops report a high degree of intellectual excitement at the end, a sort of "revival" experience (see, for example, the article by Weiss and Peich). This excitement is not to be taken lightly; the attitude change brought about by such workshops may be the most important element in bringing about change in the university curriculum.

The Writing Helper:

In some schools, faculty who agree to teach subject matter classes designated as writing classes are rewarded with extra help. This sometimes comes in the form of a Teaching Assistant, as at the University of Michigan, or in the form of a Writing Fellow, an undergraduate who has been trained to respond to student drafts of papers. The danger of using such helpers is that the teacher in charge treats writing as something separate from (and inferior to) the subject matter of the class, something he or she can treat as the helper's responsibility. In the best programs, like the one at Brown University, the Writing Fellows do not fall into the traditional TA role of grader, but coach the process of writing initiated by the subject matter professor, who takes ultimate responsibility for the writing assignment.

The Writing Consultant:

On some campuses there is a resident "writing consultant" who is available to help individual faculty design and sequence writing assignments, and give advice on evaluating writing. The faculty who ask for advice are sometimes graduates of a faculty workshop, sometimes not. The most successful programs using the writing consultant, like the one at La Salle University, are multi-tiered; faculty may make use of some or all of the components (long workshop, short workshop, individual consultation).

What It All Really Means

I said at the beginning that the term "writing across the curriculum" is generally equated with a program which will improve student writing. That holds true as a general definition. But those who have read this article carefully will note that it means much more. Writing across the curriculum also means change—change in the structure of writing programs, change in the university curriculum, change in faculty behavior in the classroom. At its best, WAC means a change in the entire educational process at the university level; students who are writing in all their

classes and sharing their writing with their peers are no longer passive but active learners, junior colleagues who are engaged with their subject matter in a way that emulates the professional discourse community. At its best, a writing across the curriculum program makes the university what it should be—a comprehensive environment of literacy and learning.

Notes

¹A directory of WAC programs is available from the National Network of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs; contact Christopher Thaiss, PAGE Program, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. For those wishing information about setting up and running WAC programs, the Board of Consultants of the National Network holds sessions at both the NCTE Conference and the Conference on College Composition and Communication every year. The members of the Board of Consultants are: Toby Fulwiler, University of Vermont; Richard Graves, Auburn University; Joyce Magnotto, Prince George Community College; Susan McLeod, Washington State University; Margot Soven, La Salle University; Keith Tandy, Moorhead State University; Christopher Thaiss, George Mason University; Barbara Walvoord, Loyola College.

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LynnDianne Beene and Scott P. Sanders

In a 1985 article in *College English*, Jay L. Robinson calls for English professors to "rethink what we mean by reading and by writing" (489). He offers advice to those who would design or administer writing programs:

A proper aim for writing programs . . . might well be to invite and help students to develop as ethnographers of thought—as careful and reflective participant-observers, critical thinkers of their own thoughts, . . . able to assert and make a place for themselves as makers of meanings that are personally satisfying . . . (492).

Ideally, writing programs offer students the means of making such meanings, of obtaining such satisfactions, both in the world of literature and in the world of work. However, many writing programs fall short of these ideals because they simply overlay a traditional curriculum of literary studies with a few specialized courses, typically in technical writing and traditional grammar, and assume that students will develop professional writing skills from their experiences analyzing literary texts. Rethinking the complementary skills of reading and writing demands a new curriculum, one that does not diminish the importance of either literary analysis or the mastery of applied skills. An innovative writing program should encourage this process of curricular redefinition. At the University of New Mexico (UNM), we feel we have created such a writing program—the concentration in professional writing.

The undergraduate English curriculum at UNM has evolved over the last seven years from a single curriculum concentrating on literary study to an array of several curricula, each with its own concentration. The traditional concentration remains to prepare students for graduate study of literature. The other concentrations emphasize pre-law, pre-business, public school teaching, creative writing, and, most recently, professional writing.

Recognizing that most of our undergraduate majors enter non-academic, professional careers, the Department approved the newest concentration in the fall of 1984. The professional writing curriculum attempts to integrate the study of writing practice, language theory, and literary criticism into a single curriculum that will prepare students for the diverse employment opportunities they will find after they graduate.

The professional writing concentration teaches the analytical, research, and writing skills needed for non-academic, professional careers in

technical writing and editing, public relations, and many other positions in business and government. In that sense, the concentration is vocational. But it also asks students to question what it means to be a professional writer. To the uninitiated, writers in the world of work are quasi-professionals, support staff who merely transmit the information they communicate. In fact, professional writers are responsible for the rhetorical effectiveness of their work. For the most part they do not originate information, but they create the documents whose contexts turn information into knowledge, and knowledge into action.

To be more than skilled technicians, more than hacks or propagandists, professional writers must critically examine their roles as communicators. The messenger is no longer removed from the morality of the message. Recognizing and reconciling the moral dilemmas of life is the great theme of the humanities in general and of literature study in particular. Our professional writing concentration anticipated Robinson's call for new curricula: it offers students vocational and humanistic preparation by teaching skills and critically examining the contexts in which those skills will be employed.

Curriculum Description

The curriculum requires thirty-four hours of coursework in English beyond the six hours of freshman composition required of all UNM students. Twelve of these hours are in writing courses, and twenty-one hours are in literature and language seminars and surveys. One hour of credit is granted for a required internship in writing, completing the thirty-four hours of required English courses. In addition to their English study, students complete a professional complement that requires nine hours of upper division coursework in a technical, professional, or scientific field. Finally, students must demonstrate minimal computer competency by demonstrating proficiency in the use of a word processor. The complete sequence of courses is presented at the end of the article, along with descriptions of the writing courses, a listing of some recent internship placements, and the titles of some representative senior projects.

Of the twelve hours of required writing courses, nine are upper division, which balance exactly with the nine hours of upper division work required in literature and criticism. The concentration is similar to an English honors curriculum designed for students whose special interests are in writing rather than in literature, and in non-academic, professional employment rather than in graduate English study. The similarity to an honors program is strongest in the senior year when all students complete an internship and most complete an optional senior project. Students may elect to substitute an additional upper division writing seminar for the senior project, but most choose to do a project. Instead of

the traditional curriculum's honors seminar and senior thesis, professional writing students undertake an internship and then an extensive writing project that culminates in a written report of undergraduate thesis length and quality. The project report is reviewed by the Professional Writing Committee, and the student must give a public, oral presentation in a manner similar to the defense of an honors thesis.

The curriculum does not require English 219, our department's service course in technical writing. We decided it would not be wise to mix English majors preparing for careers as professional writers with engineering and business majors seeking skills to complement their professional careers. We require technical writing in the 18-hour professional writing minor, where 219's focus on the writing needs of students who are not English majors is appropriate. For majors, the course is optional. This makes the technical writing course analogous to the 100 and 200-level literature courses the Department offers that do not satisfy requirements in the traditional literature concentration. Students take such courses to fulfill the requirements of other departments, the college, the university, or simply to satisfy their own curiosity.

We do offer a course devoted to technical writing in the major concentration. It is taught in rotation with other topics in the junior-level workshop in advanced expository writing, English 320. In different semesters, the 320 workshop and its companion course, the senior-level 411 special topics course, focus on different genres, such as technical writing, non-fiction writing, science writing, and writing for visual presentation. Technical writing is only one of many careers open to professional writing graduates. Excluding the service course in technical writing from the required courses in the professional writing curriculum emphasizes that the concentration is an English degree, that it is concerned with literacy in a broad sense, that it is not simply an expansion of the Department's service offerings in technical writing.

Literacy as a Professional Skill

The English department is the appropriate academic address for a curriculum that promotes literacy as a generalized professional credential. Professional writers must possess an analytical and critical intelligence coupled with a synthetic, expressive power—they must be insightful readers as well as efficient writers. The critical reading of literature promotes research and analytical skills, and the practice of writing skills encourages the critical reading of all types of writing, literary and non-literary alike. Together with a basic knowledge of the grammatical structure of our language and familiarity with professional practices acquired in the professional complement coursework, the professional writing

curriculum offers a rigorous preparation for a professional career based on proficient writing skills.

That the traditional literature curriculum is a decent preparation for a professional career has been argued in several articles and pamphlets (see Orange 1972, rev. 1979; Evans 1978; Clayton 1981) and is the sole topic of Dorothy K. Bestor's well-known book *Aside from Teaching English, What in the World Can You Do?* These authors answer the central question about English studies, that Bestor candidly acknowledges in her title, by citing non-academic careers that English graduates have successfully pursued. But none of them calls for fundamental changes in the English curriculum.

Linwood E. Orange's pamphlet, *English: The Pre-Professional Major*, is the classic source for statistics indicating the employment market value of an English degree. Orange surveyed "fifty-three law schools and thirty-seven medical schools . . . nearly four hundred industrial organizations of the 'blue chip' variety, and forty-three governmental agencies" (2). He discovered English majors working everywhere he looked, from aircraft industries to rubber manufacturers. These former literature majors held an equally wide variety of positions (see Orange, Table 2, p. 9). Orange's immediate point is important and utterly convincing: the jobs are there for English majors who will actively seek them.

But Orange's larger argument that the traditional English curriculum adequately prepares students for those jobs is not so convincing. Orange notes that some of the more successful job seekers had academic preparations quite different from the typical English major's. He cites a "straight A 'double major' (English and Business Administration)" as "the most successful of these graduates," and also notes that "several . . . graduates who included advanced composition, creative writing, and technical writing in their undergraduate curricula" found satisfying work as technical writers (19). Orange mentions these students in passing without assessing how much their extra-literary studies might have influenced their success in the job market or reflecting that these students' experiences might indicate a need for changes in the English curriculum.

William H. Evans takes an historical approach, citing studies from the 1930s to document first that today's poor job market for college professors of literature is not an aberration and second that English majors have always entered careers outside of academe. Evans summarizes the advice of the authors he researched, and he asserts that their advice remains valid: "Stress at all times the practical skills of reading, writing, and speaking. Give practice, practice, practice in writing . . . better information about alternative careers . . . [and] participate actively in non-teaching internships" (205). Like Orange, Evans does not discuss the problems students would encounter trying to accomplish these goals

while meeting the survey and seminar requirements of the traditional literature curriculum.

John J. Clayton writes that majoring in English "leads naturally to careers in many areas" (122) because students learn how to learn: "They . . . become creative, aware, critical learners" (123), which makes them "people who think for themselves, communicate well, and operate with a complex humanity," who are thereby "more competent in new learning, [and] better professionals in any field" (125). This is attractive stuff for all humanists, but the practical recommendation that Clayton offers is only that English departments should provide their majors with better counseling about non-academic careers. He recommends against changing the traditional curriculum to include courses that explicitly teach non-academic skills.

Evans writes that the "B.A. in English is a viable degree, provided the student . . . adds non-English courses and work experience in a field in which that student has interests and skills" (204). And Clayton tells us that "one theme asserted itself again and again: the necessity for training *outside* English—through coursework, job experience, and advanced degrees" (130) [Clayton's emphasis]. The obvious question that is neither asked nor answered is this: What is really viable and relevant? The English degree? Or is it the "non-English courses," the "training *outside* English"?

UNM's professional writing concentration responds to this question by clearly identifying the acquisition of language skills, analytical skills, and writing skills as the three goals of a pre-professional approach to English studies. The integrative theory behind the concentration is evident in the three courses students must take before beginning upper division work: English 240, "Traditional Grammar"; English 250, "The Analysis of Literature"; and English 298, "Writing and the Professions."

Sophomore-level courses provide the foundation of basic knowledge and skills that allows for more intensive study in upper division courses. In the teaching concentration, English 240's curricular role is to ensure that future public school teachers thoroughly understand the structure of English as it is described by traditional grammar. In the pre-graduate, traditional literature concentration, English 250 introduces students to methods of literary criticism. In the professional writing concentration, 240 and 250 become parallel courses that prepare students to take English 298, the pivotal sophomore course. The study of traditional grammar in 240 introduces students to basic analytical techniques for working with sentences; English 250 does the same for whole texts. Then, in English 298, students see how the knowledge gained in the two earlier courses may be used in the world of professional writing. For example, copyediting uses some of the analytical skills learned in the study of

traditional grammar; substantive editing, audience analysis, and rhetorical analysis use some of the analytical skills learned in the study of criticism.

Students in "Writing and the Professions" explore the range of careers open to college graduates with strong writing abilities. They write two papers each in the context of three scenarios that reflect the genres that roughly describe the employment opportunities for writing professionals: technical writing, public information and public relations writing, and freelance non-fiction writing. Some limited library research into the concept of professionalism itself is augmented by the presentations of professional writers who appear as guest speakers to discuss their experiences and respond to students' questions. The course combines the identification and practice of professional writing skills with reflection on the ethos that must accompany the application of those skills if a practitioner is to be recognized as a true professional.

Literacy and Literature

We agree with E. D. Hirsch, Jr. that as English professors "our recent experiment of being exclusively professors of literature has been a rather short-lived and unsuccessful one, with unfortunate practical consequences" (64). One of the most unfortunate of those consequences is the vitiating schism in English departments between literature and writing professors. Maxine Hairston, in her keynote speech at the 1985 CCCC, expressed the frustration of many writing professors when she called for "a psychological break with the literary critics who today dominate the profession of English studies" (1). UNM's professional writing concentration is our attempt to avert this break, to replace Hairston's call for separation with a call for reunion. Our professional writing concentration recalls an older time when the mission of English departments was defined by commitment to a more broadly defined literacy—to reading and to writing, in more equal measures.

Today, literature and writing professors and the curricula they teach in need each other in a single, united department for very practical, unromantic reasons. Academics have always been challenged to articulate to society outside of the university the relevance of our studies and of our teaching. But recently the nature of this challenge has profoundly changed. Corporations are spending billions of dollars annually to train students, not all of them employees. In more and more cases, the corporate classroom is part of an accredited, degree granting program. These huge expenditures would not threaten academia if training meant no more than teaching the application of specific skills to specific jobs. However, corporations now train students in everything from remedial

education to sophisticated graduate research. In a recent Carnegie Foundation Special Report, Nell Eurich documents how instruction in corporate classrooms is encroaching upon the traditional domain of colleges and universities:

Beyond basics, more and more companies are teaching analytic skills and critical thinking, conceptual bases for transferable knowledge, foreign language, psychology and sociology, economics, college algebra, physics, and other courses in science and technology (77).

Eurich's statement is chilling: no department in any college or university goes unchallenged. Those of us in English, whether we teach Romantic poetry or advanced composition, should be especially sensitive to the implications of the corporations' need to offer instruction in "analytic skills and critical thinking." Cultivating precisely those habits of mind has been the traditional province of the University, the special charge of the colleges of liberal arts, and the specific concern of the traditional English curriculum. The syllabi being distributed in these new corporate classrooms should tell us that English curricula designed to teach "analytic skills and critical thinking" predominantly in the context of literary criticism do not adequately prepare students to analyze and criticize outside of academe. The remedy to this deficiency, however, is not to create separate writing departments with heavily skills-based curricula. That would challenge the corporate trainers on their own vocational ground—and lose. Let the corporations have the vocational ground. But keep them there.

English department faculty and students need not choose between avoiding or embracing either vocationalism or humanism. Hairston pointed to this conclusion when she noted that nothing is "more central to English studies than teaching people to write" (2) and that writing courses teach "the exercise of a primary intellectual activity" (4). UNM's professional writing curriculum defines a sequence of courses designed to show students how that "primary intellectual activity" is relevant to both writing and literature courses, to both the academic and the non-academic interests in our society.

Conclusion

We believe that the most promising future of specialized writing study is as one part of a generalized English curriculum that accepts the complementary importance of writing and literature. Similarly, the most promising future for specialized literature study is as another part of that same curriculum. We want writing across the English department.

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Concentration in Professional Writing: Sequence of Courses

Core of Required Courses (19 hours)

Eng 240	Traditional Grammar
Eng 250	Analysis of Literature
Eng 298	Writing and the Professions
Eng 320**	Advanced Expository Writing
Eng 411**	Special Topics in Professional Writing
Eng 497	Professional Writing Internship (One Credit Hour)
Eng 498##	Senior Project in Professional Writing

Lower Division Electives (6 hours)

Eng 219 OR 220	Technical Writing OR Expository Writing
Eng 294-95	British Literature Surveys
Eng 296	American Literature Survey
Eng 375-76	World Literature Surveys

Upper Division Electives (9 hours)

Eng 351-410	Authors: Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and so on
Eng 440, 441, 445	Rhetoric, English Grammars, History of the Language
Eng 449-470; 485-86	Genres, Historical Periods, Criticism

Professional Complement: 9 upper division hours in one or a combination of professional/technical/scientific courses.

Computer Competency: Demonstrate proficiency using any word processor.

**Students may substitute appropriate courses in other departments or take either 320 or 411 twice when it is offered with different topics.

##Students may substitute an additional 320 or 411 for 498.

Professional Writing Course Descriptions

298 Writing and the Professions

The introductory course to the upper division curriculum. Students learn PC-Write, a shareware word processor; write proposals and reports, brochures and newsletter articles, query letters and a non-fiction article while studying technical writing, public information and public relations writing, and freelance writing; prepare a portfolio of their writing.

320 Advanced Expository Writing

Offered with different emphases in different semesters, the course focuses on practical applications of writing. Some recent course titles include "Writing for America's Media," "Rhetoric of Practical Writing," "Writing Academic Discourse," "Advanced Technical Writing," "Public Information/Public Relations Writing," "Writing for Visual Presentation," and "Rhetoric of Political Writing."

411 Special Topics in Professional Writing

Approaches writing topics with greater emphasis on theory than on practice. Recent course titles include "Language Theory and Editing Practice," "Writing Biography and Autobiography," "Varieties of Audience Analysis."

497 Internship in Professional Writing

Students receive one hour of credit for the proposals, progress reports, and final reports they write that document their experiences as writers and editors in non-academic, professional settings. The on-the-job internship placements vary greatly. Students have written and supervised the publication of pamphlets and booklets ranging from one to one hundred pages in length; they have written and edited software documentation and technical spec sheets; they have written and produced videotapes for corporate training and promotions; they have researched, written, and proposed public relations materials ranging from brochures announcing single events to a proposal for an entire year's campaign; they have written and edited for newsletters and journals; they have contributed freelance non-fiction articles to magazines. Students have worked as volunteers and in paid positions with private companies ranging from local small businesses to Fortune 500 corporations, with professional and non-profit organizations, with the state government, with Los Alamos National Laboratory, and with several publication organizations at UNM.

498 Senior Project

An independent study project leading to a research paper or a report that documents and critiques non-academic work in professional writing. Titles include "Starting a Software Documentation Department: Problems and Solutions," "A Field Guide to Poisonous Plants of the Sandia Mountains," "Writing for Non-Broadcast Video: A Case Study," "The Rhetoric of Visual Design," "The Importance of the Employee Newsletter: A Case Study," and "Persuasion and Proposal Writing: One Company's Experience."



A Retrospective on Training Teaching Assistants

Janet Marting

In 1980 Joyce Carroll wrote that "what is necessary for writing to improve . . . is a change to occur deep within the writing classroom. And this change must focus first on our greatest resource—the teacher" (70). Because teaching assistants have been and continue to be largely responsible for much of the teaching of freshman composition at many universities, the resource to which Carroll referred includes the graduate teaching assistant. According to John Wahlquist, teaching assistants are "*de facto* instructors" (44). He claims that "it is common knowledge that the traditional TAs learn the practical tasks of instruction by trial and error" (44) and that because "much of the college instruction is done by graduate assistants, the improvement of college education in general depends upon their improvement" (44). Responsible to students, the department, the college and the university, and in some people's estimation, to the fostering of a literate society, teaching assistants cannot be overlooked. Nor can their training be taken for granted.

As early as 1930, critics turned their attention to the preparation of college-level teachers, and in that year the Institute for Administrative Offices of Higher Institutions, organized by the University of Chicago, had as its central theme "The Training of College Teachers." The papers read at the conference, and subsequently edited by William S. Gray, ranged from inquiries into weaknesses in college teaching and methods of training college teachers to sample preparatory programs at three universities (Woodward 1). It is interesting to note that three years earlier in 1927, a Committee on the Professional Training of College Teachers stated that "indifference in the need for such training is all but universal in the graduate schools" (Woodward 1). During those three years, however, "there . . . [were] heard from the general direction of the colleges low rumblings of discontent, ominous mutterings of dissatisfaction, savage growlings of complaint, accompanied by flashes of forked criticism directed immediately at the teaching capacity, or, to use the word of the critics, incapacity of the brilliantly hooded products of our graduate schools" (Laing 51-2). Evidently, the dissatisfaction heard during those three years produced a need to attend to, if not remedy, the problem of college teacher training.

At the 1920 Institute, Henry Suzzallo cited three basic requirements for prospective college teachers: "civilized and cultured . . . intellectual

understandings and appreciations"; "more than ordinary mastery" of the content area; and specific mastery of "some of one subject or part of a subject" (20-3). While these requirements were said to have addressed the academic side of the prospective college teachers, other requirements were said to have fulfilled the professional side of the picture. Included in the professional requisites were an understanding of the American educational system, knowledge of the psychology of learning, and supervised experience in the actual teaching of students (25-6). One notes with interest and amusement that the University of Iowa also required a physical examination of all graduate students, and if any "impediments or psychopathic tendencies" (Gray 83) were displayed, the students would be discouraged from pursuing a teaching career. Of particular concern to the participants of the 1930 Institute and a concern which lasted for a number of years, however, was prospective teachers' actual experience in pedagogy.

Critics saw some sort of "professional training" necessary for prospective teachers, and in 1930 the most frequently cited training program consisted of a course on teaching methods conducted by a senior member of the department who was particularly interested in pedagogy. In that course, the prospective teachers, along with an experienced faculty member, discussed problems which might present themselves to beginning teachers. The other major recommendation of the Institute was for prospective teachers to enroll in an education course to learn about the developments in and the current state of education (Laing 57-8). Hence, the responsibility for training college teachers was shared by the particular department of the prospective teachers and the school of education. One interesting remedy to the problem of preparing prospective teachers was offered by Ernest H. Wilkins who saw the need to recruit more students of "high potential teaching ability" than the university had been doing, thus alleviating the need to rely so heavily on training programs. To successfully accomplish such a goal, Wilkins also saw the need to make the field of teaching more appealing to prospective teachers, thereby encouraging graduate students with the most potential to pursue the teaching field (Laing 70).

Despite the rhetoric on what "should" be done to train and improve new teachers of college courses, and despite the findings of the 1930 Institute, few universities demonstrated any appreciable commitment to preparatory programs. Columbia University officials, for example, stated that their university had no general program for preparing prospective college teachers, nor did it have any plans to institute one (Gray 218). Harvard College officials had no program to aid prospective teachers, and thought that one was not critically needed because, in their estimation, prospective teachers could learn the most from observing their own successful professors. Moreover, Harvard officials felt that graduate

students should teach in their specializations or where their strengths lay, and not necessarily in low-division courses for which they were frequently unprepared. Because of such thinking, graduate students would naturally be prepared for their teaching duties and would not need a training program (Gray 221-2). The University of Iowa's graduate students entered the university with certifications in education and, therefore, were considered knowledgeable in teaching. Although Iowa urged its students to attend departmental seminars in teaching, the university required only physical examinations of the students, and speech tests and coaching when needed (Gray 224-5).

In short, while many of the universities surveyed by the Institute recognized and acknowledged the need for training programs—or at least for prospective college teachers to be trained—few had made a concerted commitment to providing them for their graduate students. And if any commitment was made, it took the form of one seminar, non-compulsory supervision of senior faculty as well as a recommendation for prospective teachers to study the state of education through the education department.

As is the case with trends in education, the issue of college teacher preparation received renewed attention almost twenty years after the Institute. This time, a report of a 1949 conference on college teachers' preparation, chaired by O. Meredith Wilson, President of the University of Oregon, noted that in spite of the lip-service paid and minor gestures offered to alleviate the problem, few schools had made an active commitment to helping college teachers prepare for their jobs; rather, it was concluded, the attention to preparatory programs was expressed by a few interested professors, with little consistent or ongoing support and involvement evident from the rest of the department or university community (Wise 77).

While the 1949 conference participants noted that graduate schools were concerned with turning out qualified teachers, they found that the overwhelming sentiment was for graduate schools to produce the learned scholar, and only secondarily the accomplished teacher. Hence, one discovers some rationale for graduate schools' lack of commitment to supporting strong and active preparatory programs for their prospective college teachers. Finally at the 1949 conference, questions were raised concerning the professional needs that graduate schools would better serve. Among those questions or concerns were the fostering of individual teaching styles of prospective college teachers, prospective teachers' understanding of their students' motivations for learning, the content or subject matter of doctoral work becoming broad enough to help new teachers, and, most germane to the discussion of training programs, an inquiry into the extent to which graduate students are prepared by the universities to become the best teachers possible (Wise 78-80).

The recommendations made or the issues cited as needing continued support from graduate schools included assigning reduced teaching loads to new teachers, requiring new teachers to work under the supervision of experienced professors, providing new teachers with a diverse range of teaching experiences, monitoring new teachers' responsibilities from initial observation of classes to assuming full responsibility for teaching, and providing new teachers with seminars and workshops on teaching to be conducted by superior faculty members (Wise 88). Thus, the 1949 conference, more so than the 1930 Institute, generated not only specific areas of concern but, more importantly, remedies or recommendations to aid prospective college teachers. It should be noted that these recommendations, over thirty years old, are now the ones most frequently adopted in graduate teaching assistant programs in universities, especially in departments of English.

Almost a decade elapsed before two more conferences on college teacher preparation were held and a renewed commitment to the area was demonstrated. In its discussion of pertinent issues in academia, the American Council on Education's January 1956 conference, whose proceedings were published in 1958, included inquiries into masters and doctoral programs as well as graduate study's commitment to preparing prospective college teachers. Like the 1930 Institute, attention was given to several programs in college teacher training at universities. The participants of this 1956 conference, however, disagreed on the kind of pedagogical training needed to prepare prospective teachers. Nonetheless, they did reach consensus that some sort of training was necessary, and that requiring graduate students to take a course in college teaching was insufficient to the demands of real teacher training (*English Journal* 537-47).

The most significant issue raised at the American Council on Education's conference was the long-overlooked distinction in teacher training programs between the prospective teachers' mastery of course work (content or subject matter) and the methods of teaching that content or subject matter. While the 1930 Institute had focused primarily on the professional preparation of prospective college teachers (e.g. handling student problems and becoming *bone fide* members of the profession) and the 1949 conference had focused on pedagogical issues (e.g. class loads and the supervision of new teachers' classes), all of the conferees at these two conferences had failed to talk specifically about the prospective teachers' mastery of the material they were to teach as an important feature of college teacher training. In reporting on the proceedings of the 1956 conference, Joseph Axelrod noted that the participants agreed that "two obvious fallacies are to be avoided: the assumption that such preparation [college teachers'] is exclusively a matter of content preparation, and the assumption that pedagogical competence can serve as a substitute for

scholarly knowledge" (1-3,95). Thus, under examination at the 1956 conference were not the methods behind teaching (pedagogy) as much as the knowledge of subject matter required of college teachers that informs what will happen pedagogically—the distinction between the knowledge of course material and the presentation of that course material to students, with the 1956 conference addressing the former.

Held in 1958 under the auspices of the American Studies Association, the College English Association, the Modern Language Association, and the National Council of Teachers of English, the Basic Issues Conference posed thirty-five issues which the participants deemed worthy of investigation, and of those thirty-five, seventeen dealt with the preparation or training of prospective English teachers. Hence, the concerns of the 1930, 1949, and 1956 conferences received renewed attention. Of the issues germane to teaching at the college level, the committee asked "What preparation for college teaching should the Ph.D. candidate receive?" and "How can we achieve articulation of teaching and teacher training at all levels in English?" (Axelrod 95). While the issue of teacher training for prospective college teachers was not a major consideration at the Basic Issues Conference, it was given some attention, and suggests that while previous conferences had focused on college teacher preparation, the area was still open for further consideration; no hard and fast conclusions had been reached in almost thirty years of discussion.

Perhaps the one issue that united all of the conferences on teacher training for the college level was the question of whose responsibility it was to train prospective college teachers. There appears to be consensus on this question, and the answer, according to a number of critics in recent years, rests with the individual academic departments, and not with the graduate school or department of education. In *The Miseducation of American Teachers*, in 1963, for instance, James D. Koerner wrote that the "academic departments must accept major responsibility both for the present state of teacher education and for affecting improvements" (263). The conclusion of a program for college teacher training at the University of Michigan during 1967 and 1971 was that "a move toward active departmental responsibility for preparation of college teachers was gaining momentum. More time and resources are being devoted to this responsibility" (Stockdale, Wochok 90). While the Michigan program involved the departments of botany, history, philosophy, physics, and psychology, it appears that English departments are not exempt from similar commitments to college teacher preparation. In his article "How the Candidate Learns to Teach College English," for example, Warner G. Rice made just that claim: "If, then, departments of English think that college teaching is important, they must accept the obligation for providing a more thorough discipline in the art than they have attempted in the past" (583).

Certainly one of the most damning and inflammatory commentaries on the issue of responsibility for college teachers' training also came in 1963 from Albert R. Kitzhaber:

... much of the poor teaching that one so often finds in freshman English is less the result of inexperience and indifference than of inadequate professional preparation—as indeed it is in the high schools also. The blame for this state of affairs must rest squarely with the college departments of English that have given these teachers their undergraduate and graduate education. (15)

Kitzhaber cited the English curriculum's reliance on the study of literature (and not on writing and its teaching) as the culprit. Despite the interest and care that prospective college teachers bring to their own classes, such qualities, according to Kitzhaber, do not take the place of training or preparatory programs. Good intentions and hard work, while complementary to, are no substitute for training in the teaching of college English. Commenting on the need for teacher preparation, one critic noted, "... all the high-priced texts and high-powered materials will not replace a well-prepared teacher" (Carroll 7).

It is interesting to note that the early to mid-1960s produced a tremendous amount of interest in the training of college English teachers. In 1963, for example, Alfred H. Grommon edited *The Education of Teachers of English for American Schools and Colleges*. Also in that year, Albert R. Kitzhaber's *Themes, Theories, and Therapy: The Teaching of Writing in College* appeared. Two years later, in 1965, John C. Gerber edited *The College Teaching of English*. Clearly, critics in the field of English were concerned with how English might best be taught at the college level and how prospective teachers might be trained to become effective college writing teachers.

Despite the 1960's interest in the training of prospective English teachers and the call for English departments to shoulder the responsibility of preparatory programs, Ann M. Heiss reported in 1970 that "in half of the fifty institutions which produced 90 percent of the Ph.D.s each year, [training] program[s] for teaching assistants had remained substantially unchanged during the past decade or more" (231). Thus, from the 1960's call to prepare future college teachers to 1970, more talk than action had been given to training programs. Despite the call for individual departments to be responsible for training their graduate students how to teach, less than full and active commitment was being given to preparing prospective college teachers for their new role.

Addressing the issue of teaching assistants and training programs during a panel discussion, Edgar W. Lacy contended that "The system of using graduate students to teach freshmen can be regarded as functioning satisfactorily..." (36). However, Lacy was quick to add that one of the

"safeguards" was that the teaching assistant "must not be asked to do more than he has experience to do" (36). Twenty years later, in 1974, Maxine Hairston amplified Lacy's stance when she wrote that "In many ways, Teaching Assistants may do a better job of teaching freshmen than some of our senior colleagues. They will do a good job, however, only if we have effective ways to train them and to supervise them during the first years of their apprenticeship in the profession" (52). National English conferences such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication have included in their programs entire sessions which addressed the training of teaching assistants and ways to help them become successful college writing teachers. Such conferences, it is important to note, come twenty years after a 1959-60 survey on the issue of college teacher training which reported that "If there is a grave lack... it is in the production of teachers of freshman composition who are specifically trained and psychologically conditioned to perform with enthusiasm and real distinction" (Gorrell 113-4).

Most recently, a National TA Conference, sponsored by and held at The Ohio State University in 1986, convened at which course directors, college deans, university presidents, faculty, and TAs discussed issues such as TA training programs, ways to monitor and evaluate TAs' performance, the TA's role of student and employee, the establishing of national databases, etc. Such an enclave demonstrates the interest in preparing TAs to be informed, well prepared, and equipped to handle the responsibilities they are to assume; it also speaks to the need of different disciplines exchanging information of how TAs are trained in their specific programs. After all, much can be learned from shared experience.

Because of the need for well-trained college writing teachers and the plethora of research now emerging on the writing process and the most effective ways to teach college writing, the issue of preparatory programs continues to be a concern among directors of composition programs, English professors, and university administrators. The issue of college teacher training—at least in English departments and writing programs—has received more than lip-service, and has not been relegated to the departments of education or graduate schools as it had been in the past.

Increased interest in and knowledge of writing theory and pedagogy have determined the ways in which to best prepare prospective writing teachers. From the 1930 Institute's focus on teaching methods and educational history to the 1949 conference which debated the scholar versus the practitioner to the 1956 conference on mastery of course work and methods of teaching to the 1960's pointing to the culprits of inadequate teacher preparation, we now discover that newfound understandings and appreciation of the composing process dictate the content of training

programs in composition for teaching assistants. We now must address the writer in the teacher, the composing process, ways that composition theory and research can be translated into practice or "why [TAs] are being called on to do what they are doing. Superficial objectives produce superficial programs" (Irmscher 30). Indeed, training programs appear to have followed Richard C. Gebhardt's thinking when, ten years ago in *College Composition and Communication*, he identified four kinds of knowledge the writing teacher should have: an understanding of the history and structure of language, rhetoric, and composition theory, as well as ways to translate that information into a pedagogy (134-140). More recently, Gebhardt reiterates his belief in the importance of "helping . . . clients develop integrating perspectives on the diverse field of composition teaching" (1986, 4). And from the descriptions of writing and TA training programs in *Composition and the Academy: A Study of Writing Program Administration* and *New Methods in College Writing Programs: Theories in Practice*, it seems as though TAs are being trained and research in composition is finding a home in the classroom:

. . . [M]ethods are replacing muddles. The daily practice of writing instruction is now generally informed by the rich theory and research of the past quarter century. Increasingly, writing classes are influenced not only by the writing of James Britton, Janet Emig, James Moffett, Peter Elbow, and Ann Berthoff, for example, but also by the thoughts of Lev S. Vygotsky on the development of concepts in children; Walter J. Ong and Shirley B. Heath on orality and literacy; Richard Rorty, Clifford Geertz, and Thomas S. Kuhn on the social authority of knowledge; Suzanne K. Langer on the cognitive dimension of feeling. . . . The 'literacy crisis' has initiated a radical inquiry into learning, and [scholarship] record[s] not so much surface changes in teaching—another day's survival strategies—as emergent methods of learning: theories in practice. (1)

Because of this, training programs for teaching assistants have begun to succeed because some universities have done more than merely acknowledge composition in the academy. Some have done more than provide TAs with a crash course in the history of education; some have done more than "ease" TAs into their responsibilities; and some have done more than fall into the quicksand of politics, to emerge still discussing whose responsibility it is to train teachers. Rather, some schools have finally begun to engage TAs in a program of writing themselves as well as a discussion of writing theory and its implications for classroom practice; some have begun to use the resources available to us, and have seen them implemented in the classroom. Graduate students, once required to take the perfunctory Practicum in the teaching of college composition, are finding composition a rich field—and certainly one they need preparation in if they are to be viable job candidates and effective teachers. Training programs have also given rise to increased enrollments in composition theory courses and master's theses in composition, both of which extend teachers' knowledge of composition and its

teaching. As Carol P. Hartzog points out in *Composition and the Academy: A Study of Writing Program Administration*,

"many of the graduate courses in composition that have been developed are associated with TA-training programs. In addition, a number of faculty-development programs have been designed, either for temporary faculty members, to ensure the consistency and quality of instruction or to provide professional development for those who will return to the job market, or for regular faculty members, often in connection with a writing-across-the-curriculum program. Development programs for faculty members and TAs have received much attention and care in recent years" (48).

In short, the redefinition of composition and its place in the college curriculum has helped in beginning to put the teaching of writing in its rightful place. The change to which Carroll referred is being felt by those willing to abandon the politics, fear, and disdain associated with the emergence and importance of composition as a discipline and field of inquiry, not some "impoverished charge of the untenured" (Connolly 1). And for that, not only have our TAs—but their students—become the benefactors.

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Stalking the Wild TA

Ronald Shook

Choose one of the following:

- a. At no time in its history has the teaching of composition offered so many exciting avenues of approach to teachers and administrators.
- b. At no time in history has the teaching of composition been so disorganized and chaotic, with little stability or continuity.
- c. Neither of the above.
- d. Both of the above.
- e. Something entirely different.

The correct answer depends on how you view composition, when you last had any classes on writing, and your opinion of freshmen (that is, as semi-literate at best, or as wonderfully articulate in their own way). The halls of any English department are sort of a sedimentary record of thought in composition, from a Cenozoic product approach—complete with the five-part theme—to a class replete with the latest pronouncements of the process pantheon.

For those reading this review, the most likely answer is A, indicating a feeling that composition is an exciting discipline, one that is opening up whole worlds of knowledge as well as intriguing avenues for research.

However, for even the most enthusiastic proponent of modern composition theory, the torrent of ideas coming from every which way may cause some confusion, especially when that enthusiastic proponent of modern composition theory happens also to be the director of a writing program with faculty—old and mouldy to young and callow—to train.

And it is the problem of training teachers, I would think, that illuminates a major drawback to a process approach to teaching writing. The drawback is that the teacher has to know what he or she is doing. It is no longer possible to walk into a classroom, a B.A. in Victorian Lit with no training in writing, and teach a class by being one-half page ahead of the students. No longer can one blithely assign five pages of exercises, knowing that the answers are in the manual appended to the teacher's edition of the text. One has to by jiminy know what writers do when they write.

It's scary. How does one train—quickly and efficiently (accent on quickly)—incoming teaching assistants, retreated senior faculty whose seminars have dwindled, and part-timers?

Comes the NCTE to the rescue. They have provided the volume under consideration, *Training the New Teacher of College Composition* (Edited by Charles Bridges, with the assistance of Toni Lopez and Ronald Lunsford; NCTE, 1986). It's a series of essays on training comp teachers, including discussions of whom to train, what to teach, how to approach it, and a gaggle of questions posed and answered.

At least, I think the NCTE has come to the rescue, because without a scorecard, it's tough to tell who the players are. The variety of viewpoints, stances, approaches, emphases, postulates, structures, implications, explications, outlines, bibliographies and tangential references is not for the untrained or the faint of heart.

The composition specialists know most of the book's content anyway, but will pick up some good pointers now and again, seeing how their fellow wizards have faced the daunting task of teaching others to teach writing.

The untrained administrator, on the other hand, may emerge from the book more bemused and bewildered than before. I advise this administrator to open the book at random, read the complete essay thus uncovered, and make the ideas contained therein the basis of a writing course and TA training programs.

As an alternative, the untrained or confused administrator might read the following review and use it as a basis for making a decision on what to read.

It's difficult to catalog the essays in the book, as they resist grouping exercises. If I were pushed, I might list them as *overviews*, *seminars*, *specific approaches*, and *miscellaneous*. However, I'd almost certainly flunk this as an English 101 definition assignment, since the categories are not mutually exclusive, and there is one catch-all category.

Nor is it feasible to summarize the content of the book, as my comments would probably make this a book-length review. What I can do is sample representative essays to give the flavor of the book.

Overviews

The best overview is probably Gebhardt's "Unifying Diversity in the Training of Writing Teachers," which is luckily the first essay in the book. Gebhardt discusses who should be involved in training for writing (not only TAs but rereads and part-timers), and then discusses the characteristics of a "responsible" training program. This includes a listing of topics to be covered, beginning with "Writing Process," thence to "Rhetorical Forces of Audience and Purpose," and moving down the line, ending with "Making, Responding To, and Grading Assignments."

Then Gebhardt offers the heart of his essay: "Three Unifying Ideas for Training Programs in Composition." They are worth quoting (though for the text of the explanations, you'll have to go to the essay):

1. A training program in composition teaching should help its clients develop comprehensive, integrating views of writing and the teaching of writing. (4)
2. A training program should help its clients develop a comprehensive, integrating view of "the writing process" as a complex collaboration of physical and mental activities through which a writer discovers as well as communicates ideas.
3. A training program should help its clients use a coherent, integrating view of the writing process as the organizing center of composition instruction. (8)

Seminar Descriptions

A respectable number of the articles describe seminars used to train new teachers of composition. Perhaps predictably, the focus in the seminars is on new Teaching Assistants. Perhaps predictably also, the articles don't mesh together well, so that the reader is almost forced to take sides in what sometimes seems a discussion, sometimes a debate (and sometimes a brawl).

For instance, the essays by Irmscher and Van Der Weghe describe what could be called mainline process approaches, whereas the article by Comely takes the assumptions of the first two to task.

Let me outline each to show you what I mean. Irmscher describes a three-day seminar ("TA Training: A Period of Discovery") in which the TAs compose theme topics, comment on papers, prepare lessons, and respond to one another's work. The work is carefully supervised by Irmscher and two assistants.

Irmscher seems genuinely concerned that his TAs receive a solid grounding before they walk into the classroom, and that this grounding (though he doesn't say so), prepare the teacher to alleviate the writing anxiety that freshmen feel.

On the other hand, he clings quite firmly to at least one proposition that is, at the very least, the subject of vigorous attack. He notes, "appropriate comments on papers are one of the most helpful things a writing teacher does." (31) In fact, he gives his emphasis in the seminar to comments on papers.

Well, the fudge "appropriate" helps, of course, but all the data I know of suggest that comments on papers are usually a waste of time, and an indication that, however much lip-service the teacher is giving to process, the heart belongs to Miss Fidditch and product.

Irmscher also emphasizes the "writing as discovery" aspect of his composition program (as the title to his essay indicates), and his remarks make me believe that he values writing as communication less, and tends to de-emphasize it, perhaps even denigrate it.

The essay shares one characteristic with a great many others: it's quite general, and though Irmscher speaks of his program, the specifics are missing, so that, while he notes every TA receives a syllabus, that syllabus itself isn't discussed at all.

This means that Irmscher's discussion is a good overview of a program, but not much of a guide for the director of composition who wishes to train TAs. Of course, if the program seems sympatico, one can always write William Irmscher at the University of Washington.

Richard Van Der Weghe's article ("Linking Pedagogy to Purpose for Teaching Assistants in Basic Writing") has a little different slant from Irmscher's. He sees the purpose of their training as "linking pedagogy by helping TAs see how theory, research, and practice are interconnected." (37) This is done in an orientation session and "vigorous" workshops.

The orientation session consists of massive doses of Britton, Moffett, Elbow, Shaughnessey, Graves, and others. The conference is, as Van Der Weghe notes, full of current stances: an active, process-oriented, collaborative setting, with all that is being preached being practiced: free writing, journal-keeping, pre-writing, writing, rewriting, editing, peer collaboration, showing writing, and conferences. Nothing seems to be missing.

The vigorous workshops occur not at the beginning of the year (the seminar, Van Der Weghe admits, is "all talk and mostly theory"), but during the school year.

The workshops themselves are not "how-to-do-it" band-aids for panicky TAs, but in-depth examinations of a variety of topics. Among the things covered in the workshops (and explained in the article) are writing apprehension, assignment making, and peer editing groups.

So, Van Der Weghe's article is more pointed toward actually training the TAs than Irmscher's is, and probably more of a complete model for the administrator who wants to train new instructors. Even so, it's not much more than a blueprint.

The article by Nancy Comely ("The Teaching Seminar: Writing Isn't Just Rhetoric") begins ominously. After the colonized title, mine eye was

drawn to the first heading: A Fragmented Profession. Others follow: Readers as Writers (50); Literature in the Composition Class (53); and finally, The Teaching Seminar (55). A quick trip to the calculator, and I figure out that, with one page for bibliography, Professor Comely has 1½ pages to devote to the seminar.

What we have is a polemic. The chord is struck early on, when Professor Comely notes (referring, perhaps unconsciously, to the articles by Irmscher, Van Der Weghe and others):

With their single-minded emphasis on composition, they reinforce the existing split between writing and literature. (47)

That split, one assumes, is not a good thing (an assumption I disagree with). I wasn't even aware, silly me, that *composition* as a field excludes *writing and literature*.

The bulk of the essay is, for the most part, Comely's attempt to create an atmosphere in which the "notorious gaps" (47) that exist between lit, creative writing, and comp people might be bridged. She does make one point that bears repeating: it would be well if the literature people would get off their assonances and learn to teach writing.

When Comely does address the subject of the seminar, her remarks are (of necessity) very general, consisting of a listing, more or less, of the items that one should cover in a seminar. These suggestions make a good deal of sense, and one wishes there were more information in the suggestions.

For instance, Comely notes that one of the important parts of the seminar is "the creation, testing, and analysis of a writing assignment." (56) Apparently, each TA has to construct, use, and report on one assignment that he or she used in the classroom, including such things as what the purpose of the assignment was, and how well things went.

Well and good. Again, though, my soul thirsts for some more information. Are there any guidelines established? Are there any validation procedures or is it all seat of the pants?

In fine, my complaint with Comely's article is the same as with most of the articles in the book: there's just not enough information. In fact, it's almost as if they were all given the essay assignment "Write a five hundred word theme on training TAs" and not told of the audience expectations at all.

Ones I Liked

I liked those essays that immediately got down to some specifics; that allowed the composition chair to walk into the hall, book in hand, and

start shouting orders. Two that I thought especially appropriate were the essays by Larson and Burnham.

Richard Larson's "Making Assignments, Judging Writing, and Annotating Papers: Some Suggestions" was just what the title says—some suggestions. And good ones, too. He starts with assignments; a good place to start, since a great deal of bad writing begins with bad assignments. He then moves to general comments on judging writing, and finally to comments on commenting on students' essays. Since I don't believe in this last, I can say only that if you must comment on students' papers, Larson's ideas are as good as any and better than most.

Christopher Burnham's "Portfolio Evaluation: Room to Breathe and Grow" is ironically one of the best, most pointed, most beneficial essays in the entire collection, but not on TA training at all. It is an explanation of, and a rationale for, the portfolio system of paper grading. Read and enjoy.



Contributors

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Announcements

TELE-NADE

TELE-NADE is the National Association of Developmental Education's telephone placement network. Since January 1, 1987, NADE members have been able to dial a TELE-NADE number and listen to a tape of current job openings for developmental education professionals in higher education. The tapes are updated on the first and fifteenth of each month that TELE-NADE operates: January through August. The only expense to NADE job seekers is the cost of a phone call. Since the service operates twenty-four hours a day, callers are able to phone when rates are cheapest, if they choose. Tapes are up to thirty minutes in length, often shorter, and callers remain anonymous.

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The Writing Instructor

The Writing Instructor is an innovative quarterly publication for composition professionals at both the secondary and university levels. Committed to the field of writing and composition instruction, *TWI* publishes articles grounded in rhetorical and educational theory. Its editorial board is made up of professional writing instructors, many of whom are involved in graduate studies in composition and linguistics.

For information about manuscript submission and subscriptions, please write to:

The Writing Instructor
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Los Angeles, CA 90089-0062

The National Testing Network in Writing

The National Testing Network in Writing, The University of Minnesota, and The City University of New York announce the SIXTH ANNUAL NTNW

CONFERENCE ON WRITING ASSESSMENT on April 15, 16, and 17, 1988 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This national conference is for educators, administrators, and assessment personnel and will be devoted to critical issues in assessing writing in secondary and postsecondary settings. Discussion topics will include new models of writing assessment, classroom evaluation measures, the assessment of writing across the curriculum, computer applications in writing assessment, the impact of testing on minority students and on ESL students, research on writing assessment, certification of professional writing proficiency, the legal implications of writing assessments, and writing program evaluation.

For information and registration materials, please write to Karen Greenberg, Director, NTNW, 142 Irma Drive, Oceanside, New York, 11572.

Literacy Conference

The Right to Literacy, a conference sponsored by the MLA, Ohio State University, and the Federation of State Humanities Councils, will take place in Columbus, Ohio, on 16-18 September 1988. Members of the teaching profession at all levels, as well as others interested in the Literacy movement, are encouraged to attend, or to propose individual papers or entire sessions devoted to one or more of the following areas of concern:

The Users of Literacy—explorations of the relations between literacy and thinking, literacy and citizenship, and literacy and culture.

Literacy and Its Enemies, Illiteracy and Its Friends—explorations of the ways that social forces and institutions affect literacy, with particular attention to the resistance that obstructs, or the "support" that trivializes, the pursuit of full literacy.

Becoming Literate Today—exploration of how children and adults learn to read and write in their native tongues or in second languages.

Struggles for Literacy Today—explorations of attempts to achieve literacy in different historical periods and different cultures.

The deadline for submitting proposals is 15 January 1988. Anyone interested should request a proposal form from Robert D. Denham, MLA, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003.

Call For Papers

The Council of Writing Program Administrators will hold its WPA Annual Summer Workshop/Conference at Salve Regina College in Newport, Rhode Island, on August 3-5, 1988. This year's theme will be "Creating the Curriculum: Theory and Practice in Writing Program Administration." The keynote speakers will be:

James Berlin (Purdue University)
Patricia Bizzell (College of the Holy Cross)
Robert J. Connors (University of New Hampshire)

The conference welcomes proposals for panels or for individual presentations devoted to the problem of the curriculum in writing program administration. Each proposal should include:

- a title and brief description suitable for publishing in the conference program
- an abstract of no more than 500 words for each presentation
- your name, address, institutional affiliation, and phone numbers

Please send proposals to:

John Trimbur
Department of Humanities
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Worcester, MA 01609

The deadline for proposals is April 1, 1988.

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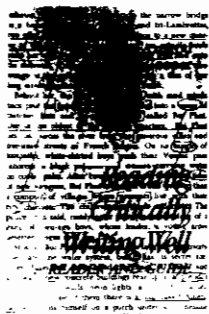
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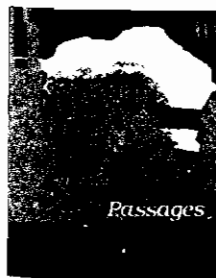
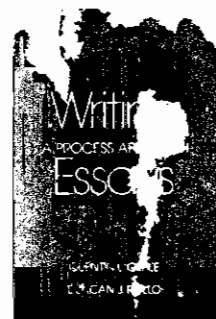
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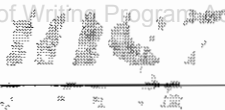
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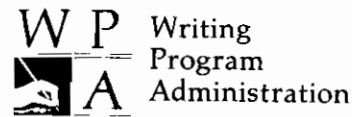
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