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WPA Writing Program Administration

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Volume 16, Numbers 1-2, Fall/Winter, 1992

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Council of Writing Program Administrators

The Council of Writing Program Administrators is a national association of college and university faculty who serve or have served as directors of freshman composition or writing programs, coordinators of writing centers and writing workshops, chairpersons and members of writing-program-related committees, or in similar administrative capacities. The Council of Writing Program Administrators is an affiliate of the Association of American Colleges and the Modern Language Association.

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Author's Guide

The Editor of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* invites contributions that are appropriate to the interests and concerns of those who administer writing programs in American and Canadian colleges and universities. Articles on teaching writing or research in composition are acceptable only if they deal with the relationship of these activities to program administration. *WPA* is especially interested in articles on topics such as establishing and maintaining a cohesive writing program, training composition staff, testing and evaluating students and programs, working with department chairs and deans, collaborating with high school or community college teachers, and so on.

The length of articles should be approximately 2-4,000 words (WPA on Campus, 1-2,000 words). Authors should submit an original plus two copies, with the author identified only on a separate cover letter. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you would like a copy of your manuscript returned to you. All articles are anonymously reviewed by our Editorial Board, and their responses will be forwarded to you within about ten weeks of receipt of the manuscript.

Articles should be suitably documented using the current MLA Handbook, although as much reference as possible should be included within the text. Annotated bibliographies accompanying articles are encouraged, as well as any other apparatus that might make material more conceptually and practically valuable to writing program administrators. The editor reserves the right to edit manuscripts to conform to the style of the journal.

Authors whose articles are accepted for publication will be asked to submit their articles both in print form and on IBM compatible disk, if possible. (An article submitted on disk using WordPerfect in particular will greatly facilitate production.) Authors will also be asked to submit a 100-word biography for inclusion in the "Notes on Contributors" section of the journal.

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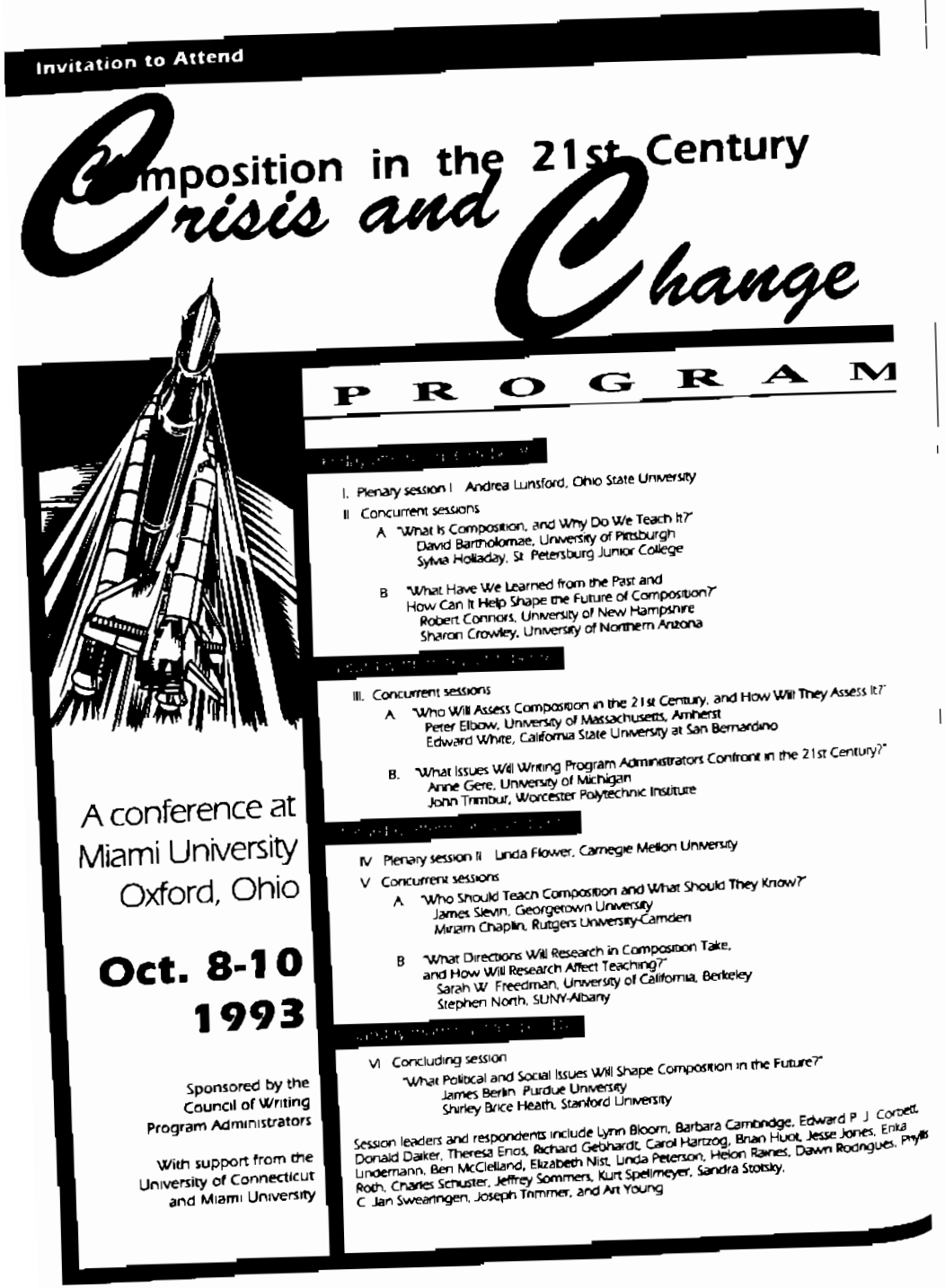

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Validity and Reliability Issues in the Direct Assessment of Writing

Karen L. Greenberg

During the past decade, writing assessment programs have mushroomed at American colleges and universities. Faced with legislative mandates to certify and to credential students' literacy skills, college writing teachers have become more knowledgeable about writing assessment, and they are trying to make writing tests parallel more closely their writing curricula and pedagogy.

According to national surveys of post-secondary writing assessment practices, writing teachers have developed and administered holistically-scored essay tests of writing, which they prefer over all other types of writing tests (CCCC Committee on Assessment; Greenberg, Wiener, and Donovan; Lederman, Ryzewic, and Ribaudo). These surveys confirm the growing consensus within our profession that the best way to assess students' writing skills is through writing or "direct" assessment. While there is still much disagreement about what constitutes an effective writing sample test, there is agreement that multiple-choice testing--the"indirect" assessment that once dominated post secondary writing assessment--is no longer adequate for our purposes; yet direct writing assessment continues to be challenged. This essay will elaborate on and respond to some of these challenges and will speculate on future directions in writing assessment.

The Reliability of Essay Test Scores

Most essay tests of writing are evaluated by holistic scoring, a procedure based on the response of trained readers to a meaningful "whole" piece of writing. Holistic scoring involves reading a writing sample for an overall impression of the writing and assigning the sample a score point value based on a set of scoring criteria. Typically, holistic scoring systems use a scoring scale or guide, created by composition faculty, that describes papers at different levels of competence (for examples, see Cooper; Greenberg, Wiener, and Donovan; White, 1985). In order for a holistic scoring system to be of any value, it must be shown to be "reliable," that is, it should yield the same relative magnitude of scores for the same group of

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writers under differing conditions. Reliability is an estimate of a test score's accuracy and consistency, an estimate of the extent to which the score measures the behavior being assessed rather than other sources of score variance.

No test score is perfectly reliable because every testing situation differs. Sources of error inherent in any measurement situation include inconsistencies in the behavior of the person being assessed (e.g., illness, lack of sleep), variability in the administration of the test (inadequate light, insufficient space) and differences in raters' scoring behaviors (leniency, harshness). This last source of error has been the focus of almost all direct writing assessment programs, probably because it is subject to the greatest control (i.e., raters can be trained to apply scale criteria more consistently). Most programs calculate only an inter-rater scoring reliability--an estimate of the extent to which readers agree on the scores assigned to essays.

The inter-rater reliability of holistic scores, and of essay tests in general, has been under attack since 1916 when the College Entrance Examination Board (the College Board) added an hour-long essay test to its Comprehensive Examination in English. The College Board--the country's largest private testing agency and creator of multiple-choice tests of writing--has published most of these attacks, and it has done so in rather acrimonious terms: "The history of direct writing assessment is bleak. As far back as 1880 it was recognized that the essay examination was beset with the curse of unreliability" (Breland et al. 2).

During the first half of this century, essay tests did indeed have relatively low inter-rater reliability correlations. As Thomas Hopkins showed in 1921, the score that a student achieved on a College Board English exam might depend more on"which year he appeared for the examination, or on which person read his paper, than it would on what he had written" (Godshalk et al. 2). Concern with reliability of essay tests increased with the College Board's introduction of essay tests of achievement in the 1940s. In 1945, three College Board researchers examined data from various College Board essay tests and wrote a report indicating that the reliability (.58-.59) was too low to meet College Board standards (Noyes, Sale, and Stalnaker). The late 1940s and early 1950 were the heyday of indirect "component" measurement. Introductory college courses overflowed with thousands of World War II veterans who did not possess the usually expected skills and knowledge, and faculty turned to multiple-choice tests to screen and diagnose students (Ohmer 19). During the 1950s, the College Board began commissioning studies to assess the "component skills of writing ability" (Godshalk et al. 2). In 1950, Paul B. Diederich examined the correlations between the grades assigned to writers by their high school English teachers and the scores that the writers achieved on

three types of tests: multiple-choice questions on the verbal sections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, an objective editing test, and the English Composition essay test. Diederich found that the SAT verbal score was the best predictor of the teachers' grade ("The 1950 Study"). In 1954, Edith Huddleston conducted a similar analysis of the correlations between essays written by 763 high-school students and their English grades, their scores on multiple-choice tests of composition, and their teachers' judgments of their writing ability. Huddleston concluded that the multiple-choice measures were superior to essay tests because they had higher correlations with teachers' grades.

Similar conclusions were reached by Paul Diederich and his colleagues John French and Sydell Carlton in their 1961 study of inter-rater reliability. They asked fifty-three academic and nonacademic professional writers to sort into nine piles 300 essays written by college freshmen. Using factor analysis, the researchers discovered five clusters of readers who were judging the essays on five basic characteristics: ideas, reasoning, form, flavor, and mechanics. They also found that the readers who were most influenced by one of the five characteristics also favored two or three of the other characteristics; the average inter-correlation among the five factors was .31. The researchers concluded that this low correlation was unacceptable.

However, many teachers believed that a test of writing ability should require students to write, and they found support for their belief in a comprehensive review of research in written composition done in 1963 by Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer. After detailing the shortcomings in multiple-choice testing, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer noted flaws in several of the College Board studies described above. They pointed out that Diederich never gave his readers any standards or criteria for judging the essays, so he should not have been surprised that the readers did not often agree with each other and he should not have used this disagreement to condemn holistic scoring procedures (which usually do use scoring guides) (43). They also noted that none of Huddleston's measures included items on logic, detail, focus or clarity and that her twenty-minute essay topics did not give students an opportunity to analyze and formulate their ideas (42). In addition, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer commented that defenders of multiple-choice tests of writing "seem to overlook or regard as suspicious the high reliabilities that they obtained in some of their studies of essay testing" (41). They concluded with a question that still needs answering today:

> In how many schools has objective testing been a good predictor of success in composition classes

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> precisely because those classes have emphasized grammatical and mechanical matters with little or no emphasis on central idea, analysis, organization, and content? (43)

At the same time that Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer were writing their criticisms of multiple-choice tests, the College Board was commissioning the most comprehensive study of essay tests to date, a study that was to influence the way in which writing was assessed in America for the next two decades. Fred Godshalk, Frances Swineford, and William Coffman examined a sample of 646 high-school students, each of whom wrote five free-writing samples (two 40-minute essays and three 20-minute paragraphs) that were holistically scored by five readers. The researchers summed the scores on each of these writing samples and examined their correlations with the students' scores on multiple-choice tests and on editing tests. The results led the researchers to two major conclusions: (1) the scores on these students' multiple-choice usage and sentence construction tests correlated highly with their writing sample scores and (2) the scores on the 20-minute writing samples were as reliable as the scores on the 40-minute samples (Godshalk et al. 40-41).

These conclusions came to define writing assessment, as noted in a recent College Board publication: "This study [by Godshalk et al.] was considered for some time the quintessential study of writing assessment. The findings of this study led to the use of multiple-choice usage and sentence correction items as the primary testing devices in the College Board's English Composition Achievement Test and in other composition tests" (Breland et al. 3). Almost twenty-five years passed before the College Board commissioned another comprehensive study of direct and indirect writing assessment. During those years, multiple-choice tests continued to dominate writing assessment, but essay tests of writing began to gain popularity. In 1978, Rexford Brown, the coordinator of the first National Assessment of Educational Progress, pointed out the weaknesses in current methods of assessing writing ability. Commenting on the growing dissatisfaction of writing teachers with multiple-choice tests, he noted that their high reliability is often illusory:

> Of course these tests correlate with writing ability and predict academic success; but the number of cars or television sets or bathrooms in one's family also correlate with his writing ability, and parental education is one of the best predictors there is. All existing objective tests of writing are very similar to I.Q. tests; even the best of them can only test reading, proofreading, editing, logic, and guessing skills. They cannot distinguish between proofreading errors and process errors, reading problems and scribal stutter, failure to consider audience or lack of interest in materials manufactured by someone else.(3)

Brown also noted the invidious influences of multiple-choice tests of writing: they require a passive mental, state whereas writing samples require active mental processes, they focus on and give undue importance to the less significant components of writing (usage, spelling, and punctuation); and they are often culturally and linguistically biased (4). This last problem was documented by researchers at the California State University System, who found that multiple-choice tests of English usage produced a far more negative picture of the writing abilities of minority students than did the university's essay test (White, *Teaching and Assessing*).

By 1980, universities and colleges across the country were developing or refining their own holistically-scored essay tests of writing for varied purposes, including determining placement, diagnosing strengths and weaknesses, and certifying proficiency (CCCC Committee on Assessment; Greenberg, Weiner, and Donovan). The College Board was quick to respond to the decline in the use of multiple-choice writing assessment. In 1984, the Board commissioned Hunter Breland, Roberta Camp, Robert Jones, Margaret Morris, and Donald Rock to replicate the "Godshalk" study and to examine the reliabilities of essay and of multiple-choice measures of writing skills.

For this study, 267 students from six colleges and universities each wrote six essays on two topics in three modes (narration-description, exposition, and persuasion), and each essay was holistically scored by three readers and analyzed for errors in grammar, usage, sentence structure, and mechanics. In addition, the researchers examined students' scores on six multiple-choice tests, their course grades, and their teachers' ratings of their writing skills. Their search indicated that the essay scores had lower inter-rater reliability correlations than did the scores on the multiple-choice tests. The researchers concluded that "these problems in reliability [of essay tests] can be alleviated only through multiple essays or through the combination of essay and non-essay measures" (Breland et al. 57).

Once again the College Board was asserting that multiple-choice tests were better than essay tests because they had higher inter-rater reliability correlations. But nowhere in this College Board challenge to the reliability of essay testing--or in any of the earlier studies--was there any discussion of whether users of essay tests should strive for "perfect" reliability.

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Obviously, multiple-choice scores will always be more consistent than scores on essay tests simply because machines can score a multiple-choice answer more accurately than humans can score a piece of writing. However, a "correct/incorrect" score on a multiple-choice test can never reflect the subjective, social process of writing evaluation as it genuinely occurs in the academy and in the "real world." Indeed, as Ed White recently pointed out, there can never be one "true" score for a piece of writing:

> But when we evaluate student writing (not to speak of writing programs or high schools), we sometimes find differences of opinion that cannot be resolved and where the concept of the true score makes no sense.... Some disagreements (within limits) should not be called error, since, as with the arts, we do not really have a true score, even in theory. Yet if we imagine that we are seeking to approximate a true score, we exaggerate the negative effects of disagreement and distort the meaning of the scores we do achieve. ("Language and Reality" 192)

In other words, the differences in readers' judgments of a writing sample are often simply that--deliberate differences, not random or non random errors. Forty years ago, Stephen Wiseman, the British critic of indirect assessment, asserted this point: "It is arguable that, provided markers are experienced teachers, lack of high inter-correlation is desirable, since it points to adversity of viewpoint in the judgment of complex material... and the total mark gives a truer 'all-around' picture" ("Marking" 206).

Reliability is a continuum. In their selected summaries of research, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer cited essay test inter-rater scorer reliabilities ranging from .87 to .96 (41-42). Over the past decade, as faculty experience with scoring essay tests has grown, many colleges and universities have been able to achieve respectable inter-rater reliabilities on the scoring of their writing samples. For example, at The City University of New York (which requires a university-wide single-sample writing test that is scored holistically by two readers), the annual audits of approximately 2,000 essays per year have revealed inter-rater correlations ranging from .75 to .88 over the past seven years (Ryzewic 25). Similarly, single-sample, double-reader reliabilities on the Freshman English Equivalency Examination at the California State University and Colleges have ranged from .68 to .84 over a six year period (White, "Comparison and Contrast" 291). Administrators of writing programs need not resort to multiple-choice testing in order to feel that students' test scores are reliable. Currently, many writing programs have essay test writing tasks and scoring criteria that eliminate sources of random error and enable readers to score reliably. Indeed, the Educational Testing Service has produced a scoring manual that enables teachers all over the country to improve the reliabilities of their essay test readings (ETS Quality Assurance Free-Response Testing Team). However, as administrators and teachers focus on improving the reliabilities of their essay tests, they must simultaneously examine their tests' validaties. Stephen Wiseman's 1956 comment about validity and reliability still holds true today: "There seems to be no doubt that, over the past two or three decades, educational psychologists have slowly but steadily inflated the importance of reliability, perhaps at the expense of validity" ("Symposium" 178).

The Validity of Essay Test Scores

Validity is a controversial subject in writing assessment and in all behavioral research. Determining any test's validity involves finding evidence to establish the extent to which performance on the test corresponds to the actual behavior or knowledge that the test user wants to measure. Objections to the validity of multiple-choice writing assessment have a long history. For decades, many English teachers have claimed that multiple-choice tests of writing oversimplify and trivialize writing as the mere ability to memorize rules of grammar, spelling, and punctuation and foster instruction in memorizing discrete bits of language (Witte et al.).

The three sources of evidence for any test's validity include its content, its relationship to the underlying "construct," and its ability to predict scores on related "criterion" measures (American Psychological Association 1-4). "Content-related validity" depends on the extent to which a test reflects a specific domain of content (in this case, the content of the writing courses to which the test is attached). Many researchers have noted that there is little evidence for the content validity of multiple-choice tests of writing because their "content" is English grammar and usage; none of them samples what most teachers consider the important content of writing courses--the processes of composing, revising, and editing ideas (Brossell; Bridgeman and Carlson; Brown; CCCC Committee on Assessment; Cooper; Faigley et al.; Gere; Greenberg, Wiener, and Donovan; Lloyd-Jones; Lucas; Nystrand; Odell).

Most of the research on the validity of writing tests has focused on "criterion-related validity"--the extent to which scores on essay tests and on multiple-choice tests correlate with other measures that purport to assess

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writing ability; and almost every study of criterion validity done in the past four decades has focused on the correlation between test scores and course grades. While course grade is a reasonable criterion variable for tests that are designed for admissions purposes (like the tests of the College Board and the Educational Testing Service), it is not an appropriate criterion for placement, competency, and proficiency testing. A student's grade in an English or a composition course results from many variables besides writing ability (including student motivation, attendance, and diligence).

Further, a serious problem with focusing exclusively on criterion validity is that one can easily lose sight of the skills or abilities being taught and assessed. As Rex Brown pointed out, there is a high correlation between the number of bathrooms in one's home and the grade he or she is assigned in a composition or English class, but that does not mean we should consider "quantity of bathrooms" a valid measure of writing ability.

More important than criterion validity is the evidence for a measure's "construct-related validity." In essence, construct validity is the degree to which a test score measures the psychological or cognitive construct that the test is intended to measure. To determine the construct validity of a writing test, one attempts to identify the factors underlying people's performance on the test. This is a hypothesis-testing activity, rooted in theories about the ways in which writing ability manifests itself. Because of the inadequacy of our profession's current heterogeneous theories of the nature of writing ability, however, the construct validity of most writing tests is very questionable. Only a handful of test developers have tried to analyze the domain of abilities, skills, understandings, and awareness that comprise the construct of writing ability (see Bridgeman and Carlson; Faigley et al.; Gorman, Purves, and Degenhart; and Witte for some excellent attempts at defining this construct.) Unfortunately, even the best analyses result in taxonomies of the domain, and, as Arthur Applebee has noted, "There is no widely accepted taxonomy of types of writing, and certainly none that holds up to empirical examination of the kinds of tasks on which students can be expected to perform similarly well (or poorly)"(7).

To repeat, the evidence for the construct validity of a test of writing grows out of its conceptual framework. The strategy for obtaining this evidence is to build a theoretical model of the writing process and then to examine the dimensions of the process that the test taps. This is the method that College Board researchers used in a recent attempt to provide evidence for construct validity of multiple-choice tests of writing (Breland et al.). Using factor analytic techniques, College Board researchers tested a series of hypothesized models of writing ability: a single-factor model ("general writing ability"); a three-factor model ("narrative, expository, and persuasive writing abilities"); and a hierarchical model ("general writing ability" and "narrative, expository, and persuasive writing abilities in response to two different topics in each mode")(Breland et al. 45). They found that the model that predicted the data best was the hierarchical one, and they concluded that "while there is one dominant writing ability factor that explains about 78 percent of the common variance, there are definable subfactors based on writing topics and, to a lesser extent, mode of expression" (45).

This finding calls into question the practice of assessing writing ability with a single writing sampleand also echoes recent evidence that writing ability is not a single construct but rather is a composite of several situation-specific constructs (Applebee, Langer, and Mullis; Bridgeman and Carlson; Faigley et al.; Gorman et al.; Lucas; Purves et al.). If writing ability does vary across discourse modes, the implication is that it should be assessed by two or more tasks (including tasks that require writing to construct or to communicate one's knowledge, writing to convince readers to feel or to so something, writing to entertain, and so forth). The College Board researchers, however, did not reach this conclusion, possibly because a multi-sample, multi-domain essay test is expensive, and, as they pointed out, the increase in validity might not be "cost-effective":

> Although small increments in validity are possible with additional readings [of essays], the marginal cost of these additional readings is very high. Consequently, one way to reduce the cost of essay assessments is to combine them with a multiple-choice assessment. (Breland et al. 59)

However, while multiple-choice tests cost less to score than do essay tests, they are more costly to develop. Because of recent "truth-in-testing" laws, many institutions have to buy multiple forms and new revisions of their multiple-choice tests to keep them secure. Thus, in the long run, it is often less expensive to develop essay tests.

Essay tests of writing have one major advantage over multiple-choice tests: Faculty who share ideas and work together to develop an essay test often shape an exam that is grounded in their theories, curricula, and classroom practices. This has been true for teachers who have developed "portfolio" writing assessments, tests that sample several discourse domains and that provide opportunities for students to revise their writing (Anson; Belanoff and Dixon; Belanoff and Elbow; Camp, 1985; Elbow and Belanoff; Faigley et al; Lucas).

Portfolio evaluation is probably the most valid means of assessing writing available to us today because it enables teachers to assess compos-

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ing and revising across a wide range of communicative contexts and tasks (Camp, "The Writing Folder"). Moreover, this process sends the message that the construct of "writing" means developing and revising extended pieces of discourse, not filling in blanks in multiple-choice exercises or on computer screens. It communicates to everyone involved--students, teachers, parents, and legislators--our profession's beliefs about the nature of writing and about how writing is taught and learned.

Further, multi-sample writing tests enable teachers to evaluate parts of the writing processes that so many of us emphasize in our curricula. As Leo Ruth and Sandy Murphy have pointed out, it is possible to design large-scale writing tests that preserve more of the steps of "real" writing than normally occur in most testing situations (113-114). For example, in England's version of a national assessment of writing, teachers administering the test introduce the writing task and discuss it before students begin writing. In addition, three samples of writing, each involving different types of tasks, are collected (113). In Ontario, Canada, students have two days to take their writing assessment. On the first day, students generate and record ideas; and on the second day, they write and revise their essays (114).

Multi-sample portfolio tests seem more relevant to our theories about the construct of writing and to our classroom practices than do other writing assessment measures. However, questions about the scoring of these tests remain unresolved. Is holistic scoring the most appropriate method of rating writing samples? Are holistic ratings based on the consistent application of mutually agreed-upon substantive criteria for "good writing"? Researchers have not addressed these questions extensively, and the results of existing research are contradictory. Several studies indicated that holistic scores correlate strongly with "superficial" aspects of writing, such as handwriting, spelling, word choice, and errors (Greenberg, 1981; McColly; Nold and Freedman; Neilson and Piche). However, the essays being scored in these studies were quite brief (written in time periods ranging from twenty to sixty minutes), and one can argue that readers were predisposed to attend to these salient but superficial errors. To my knowledge, no one has yet analyzed the holistic scores of raters who evaluate tests that require writers to do extensive revision or to write multi-sample portfolios.

The question of substantive criteria for "good writing" relates directly to the issue of construct validity. Lacking a theoretical model of effective writing ability, most test developers fall back on descriptions of text characteristics for inclusion as criteria in holistic scoring guides. An examination of these guides reveals that many of them are quite similar, indicating some professional consensus about the characteristics of effective writing across a wide variety of tasks and testing purposes. Nevertheless, the skills described in the criteria on current holistic scoring guides do not provide an adequate definition of "good writing" or of the many factors that contribute to effective writing in different contexts. Criteria on holistic scoring guides cannot accommodate many of the cognitive and social determinants of effective writing, not the least of which include the writer's intentions and the situational expectations of the writer and of potential readers. Nor can holistic criteria assess a writer's composing processes or the ways in which these processes--and products--vary in relation to the writer's purpose, audience, role, topic, and context. But should they?

Evidence for validity depends on the purpose for which the assessment instrument is used. According to the surveys cited earlier, most post-secondary writing assessment in America is done for entry-level placement purposes (CCCC Committee on Assessment; Greenberg, Wiener, and Donovan; Lederman, Ryzewic, and Ribaudo). The second most frequently cited purpose is to certify that students have mastered the competencies that they practiced in a specific writing course. These surveys revealed that the majority of the respondents whose schools used holistically-scored essay tests for these purposes were "very satisfied" with the results of the tests. These findings indicate that many users of holistically-scored essay tests believe that the tests can provide adequate and appropriate information about students' abilities to function successfully in different types of writing courses. In addition, holistically-scored essay tests may provide a more accurate assessment of the writing skills of minority students than multiple-choice testing can provide. The California State University research (mentioned earlier) indicated that many more Black, Mexican-American, and Asian-American students than white students received the lowest possible score on a multiple-choice test of usage but earned a middle or high score from trained essay readers for their writing ability (White, "*Teaching and Assessing*). This disparity casts further doubt on the validity of multiple-choice testing as an indicator of writing ability.

Research is needed to determine whether holistically-scored portfolio tests can provide diagnostic information and can function as fully contextualized assessments of students' writing competence or improvement. As Brian Huot pointed out in his recent review of research on holistic scoring, "We need to question and explore the particular problems associated with the specific uses of holistic scoring" (208). What we have now, holistically-scored essay tests, serve our limited purposes very well. What we still need—a multi-draft instrument that adequately represents writing in different discourse domains for different purposes and for different discourse communities--is an inchoate vision that many of us share.

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The Implications of These Challenges for Our Profession

Writing teachers are asked to do more assessing than are any other humanities colleagues, yet many of us are particularly subject to insecurity about our ability to understand and manipulate data. It is no coincidence that most of the research on writing and writing assessment that followed the 1966 publication of the College Board's "Godshalk" study borrowed the quantitative empiricism of research in the physical sciences. This reverence for objective data diminished in the early 1980s, partially in response to the publication of Janet Emig's contextualized research and her scathing indictments of empirical and experimental research. One of the recent outgrowths of the trend toward contextualized research on writing was a consensus about the need for naturalistic, context-rich, qualitative models of evaluating students' writing. Current portfolio measures come closest to capturing these models.

Those of us who are committed to the direct assessment of writing understand that we do not have to model our programs on multiple-choice assessments, that there is no need to create the"perfect" essay test. Readers will always differ in their judgments of the quality of a piece of writing; there is no one "right" or "true" judgment of a person's writing ability. If we accept that writing is a multidimensional, situational construct that fluctuates across a wide variety of contexts, then we must also respect the complexity of teaching and testing it.

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Readers' Responses to the Rating of Non-Uniform Portfolios: Are There Limits on Portfolios' Utility?

LaRene Despain and Thomas L. Hilgers

Portfolios are "in." Writing specialists who focus on pedagogy, assessment, and program administration, generally agree that many samples of a student's writing are preferable to a single sample. Students write differently in different genres, on different types of tasks, for different audiences, and under different circumstances. Collections of student writing yield better portraits of students as writers and promote useful faculty discussion of teaching practices. Thus, more and more writing programs use portfolios of student writing as the bases for placement and course completion and for faculty training (Belanoff and Dickson; Bishop; Elbow and Belanoff, "Portfolios"; Hamp-Lyons and Condon; Smit). Assessment specialists note that wherever generalizability is a goal of the evaluation of texts, a portfolio of samples is preferable to the single sample.

As a basis for assessment, portfolios offer enhanced validity. Validity has always been a problematic concept, more likely to exist in potential than in demonstrated reality. Even potential validity is limited by the reliability that can be achieved in rating any item or sample set.

The most frequently mentioned "successes" with portfolios have involved sets of compositions in response to a single set of prompts (Elbow and Belanoff, "Using") and speedy readings to yield a simple yes or no decision on course exit (Belanoff). When we move toward use of portfolios for more complex forms of assessment, we find ourselves moving into somewhat uncharted territory, most particularly in the area of establishing reliability in reading practices. As Sybil Carlson has noted, even one hundred samples will not guarantee generalizability; the samples still must be rated reliably. The reliability that has been achieved in judging single samples of student writing (Cooper, Diederich, Lloyd-Jones; White) has contributed significantly to the credibility of writing professionals. Retaining this credibility while using a more valid measure such as portfolios is an important goal.

What we report here--the results of our own efforts to describe readers' responses to the task of assigning scores to nonuniform portfolios of student writing--suggests that reaching that goal will not be easy. Our readers all reported satisfactions that others have reported, that is, the experiences of group training and of reading portfolios forced them to

rethink their own teaching and evaluation of writing. But the same readers' problems and reservations lead us to suggest that writing program administrators greet suggestions for the use of non-uniform portfolios with questioning restraint, especially where speed and the reliability of scoring are primary considerations.

The Structure of the Portfolio Reading Sessions

The study we report here, which might best be categorized as "action research," was part of a larger investigation of writing done in our university's standard and tutorially enriched introductory courses in writing (Despain et al.). At the end of each of ten training-plus-rating sessions, we reviewed rater logs in an attempt to deal with rater concerns in subsequent training sessions. One of our goals was to come to a better understanding of what training (or "standardizing") for raters of nonuniform portfolios might profitably involve, since models for such training are not generally available.

The raters were seven college instructors who had taught the standard introductory writing course several times. Each had also worked reliably in the rating of single essays that are part of our university's means of placing students into appropriate introductory writing courses (see Brown, Hilgers, and Marsella). During the ten sessions, the seven teachers rated 208 portfolios. These portfolios had been assembled by students from more than 20 sections of the university's standard and tutorially enriched courses in writing; while all section instructors were held to a common course policy statement, each instructor created his or her own syllabus and sequence of assignments. Each portfolio contained four pieces of writing: a description, narration, or analysis of a personal experience written in response to one or another assignment in the student author's section of the introductory writing course; an analytic essay based on reading and research, written as a course requirement; an in-class "impromptu" written by students in all sections of the introductory writing course in response to a single prompt; and an out-of-class revision of the "impromptu." Since assignments across sections were not uniform, the topics of the first two texts generally differed from portfolio to portfolio.

The first reading session established a pattern for training and rating that we followed in all sessions, with some modifications explained below. For training, readers were asked to read and then to rank a set of three randomly selected sample portfolios that had been duplicated for the training session. In the first session, no criteria were provided; readers were asked to base their rankings on "first impressions." After rankings were summarized on a chalkboard and reasons for rankings were discussed,

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readers were instructed to assign A, B, C, D, or F to each portfolio just as they would assign grades to essays in a regular introductory writing course. (The decision to assign grades reflected our commitment to keep our procedures "real world"; among our teachers, few advocate not assigning traditional grades.) Discussions of reasons for rankings and for assigning grades were followed by an invitation to rerank and regrade the same portfolios. This process of discussing and rerating was repeated until a consensus on "impressions" (now second, third, or fourth impressions) and ratings had emerged.

Actual evaluation then began. Each portfolio was initially read and rated by two teacher-raters. When two readers assigned scores more than one letter-grade apart, the portfolio was rated by a third teacher, and the discrepant score was discarded.

During the hour-plus of training for the first session, we were somewhat surprised to find that readers had great difficulty in agreeing upon both rankings and grades for the sample set of portfolios, since the same readers had achieved relatively high levels of interrater reliability with single-sample evaluations. Given the open-endedness of the training and the novelty of the portfolio task, we were not surprised to find that the correlation between grades assigned by two readers on the first set of portfolios was .39, indicating a positive but rather low-level predictive relationship between rating 1 and rating 2.

Following our "action research" agenda and using reader logs and what we knew about techniques to improve reliability in other circumstances, we modified the training strategy for the second and subsequent sessions. Our overall progression was from sessions that emphasized "trusting your first impressions" to sessions in which the leader directed readers' attention to criteria in a progressively more defined scoring guide. One motive behind this progression was our desire to use reader responses to improve training. An even greater motivator was our desire to learn more about the dynamics and possibilities of assessing a single writer based on multiple samples in a portfolio. Our actions were guided by two questions. First, is it possible to overcome, in a controlled setting, the problems raised by a relative nonuniformity of portfolios from "real-world" multiple-classroom settings? Second, what methods of training seem best able to equip readers to cope with these problems?

Readers' Recurring Experiences with the Reading of Portfolios

Readers' logs from each training-and-rating session, plus our own notes on the sessions, reveal several patterns of reader experience.

1. Teacher-readers find assessment problematic when they do not know the contexts of individual essays' production. This finding has two aspects.

a. Generally, when teachers read to assess writing they are reading essays written in response to identical prompts, and they have the prompts in front of them as they read. Thus, the context for the essays is quite clear. However, because our portfolios were drawn from sections of a course that each had different assignments and because the readers read portfolios from many sections at every session, the variety in essays was great. Further, prompts for the assignments were not available for the readers.

The difficulty of reading papers without knowing the context in which they were written was a common theme in raters' commentaries from the end of every session. "Without some sense of the assignment, I don't know where to place the emphasis," wrote one. "Some teachers do not stress thesis, nor a developed intro and conclusion like I do," wrote another; "without a sense of what the assignments were, it is hard for me to grade the portfolios."

b. Readers also expressed frustration over their lack of knowledge of individual authors. In any assessment situation, one might wonder whether the papers one reads really present a fair picture of their authors as writers. But in the investigators' experiences with the assessment of single samples, such concern was usually minimal. Having a group of papers from an actual semester's work, on the other hand, seemed to heighten this concern. Reader comments often expressed strongly held views. "Norming [standardizing of ratings] in the training is a good idea, but one always grades on more than a 'norm.' Writing is never done in a vacuum, nor is it evaluated without the student's history." Another reader questioned the fairness of grading without knowledge of students' contexts: "This grading is hard because I often grade my own students according to additional variables--like improvement from the last paper. Here I have been trained to grade on the quality of the writing alone. But this session makes me more and more convinced that grading on writing alone is not fair to the students."

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In the nonschool world, we often assess the quality of what we read without knowing about the context or the circumstances of the writer that spawned the work. Thus, readers' problems here may have derived not only from lack of assignment sheets but also from their associating the task with the school world and from their desire as teachers to be fair in grading. Some of the problems might be overcome by having an author's own description of contexts included in each portfolio, although this alone would be unlikely to promote reliability in grading. Other problems could perhaps be overcome by limiting features both in the portfolios and in the rating procedures that readers associate with the school world.[1]

2. Within each portfolio, different types of writing produced in different contexts often triggered readers' biases.

Comments such as those above suggest that reading multiple samples may put raters into a "real-classroom" frame of mind as they read, that is, they respond as they would in a teaching situation. Besides raising questions of context, such reading also prompts more reader bias than does reading a single sample. Many of our readers reported conflict between the group consensus on grades for sample portfolios arrived at during training sessions and their own predispositions, especially as they relate to genre, subject matter, and types of assignments.

Biases related to genre and subject matter undoubtedly affect all reading of student work, both in the classroom and in other assessment situations. Portfolios, with their multiple samples, provide multiple possibilities for reader conflict and may make readers more consciously aware of their preferences and biases. At least our readers noted their own biases openly in what are often exceptionally frank pieces of post-session writing. The desirability of countering predispositions was one of the major reasons for our moving toward more structured training methods.

For example, some readers showed a strong predisposition to value exposition more than narration or description. This was explicit in several comments (e.g., "It is hard for me to weight narrative and expository essays the same"), even after we had articulated a commitment to equal weighting of genres during training sessions 4 and 6.

Another recurring problem concerned some readers' persistent valuing of writing done in class over writing done out of class. When readers' logs made this clear, we tried to negotiate differences during training; however, even after the group had apparently agreed to assign equal weightings, evidence of some readers' biases remained.

Since no scoring guide for readers can anticipate every possible source of bias and since the sample portfolios used in training could never tap all of the possible "triggers" in the set of portfolios to be read, biases were

difficult to deal with in systematic ways. All seven of the readers commented at one time or another, some more than once, on the difficulty of suppressing their predispositions, although several suggested that training had provided some help. For example:

> The training sessions helped me to re-think my priorities and raised a number of issues, for example, the relationship of genre to the perceived "quality" of the writing.

> The training session was invaluable because first, I needed to pay more attention to instruction on the scoring guide, to give equal weight to narrative and expository papers; to see a "C" portfolio as fulfilling requirements but doing so unimaginatively . . . . I had to realize how to "screen out" of my mind any bias toward a "better" assignment.

Finally, we found that over time, even the reader who is consciously trying to avoid or compensate for biases is likely to find his or her best efforts compromised by what we now take up--fatigue.

3. Reading and assessing multiple portfolios is tiring, and fatigue is a major threat to reliability.

Fatigue is easy to overlook, but it was mentioned in readers' written post-session comments more than any other item--in 21 individual entries. It was mentioned by each reader at least once, and in conjunction with both late-afternoon and Saturday half-day readings. Comments relating to fatigue appeared after each session except Session 3, even though the average number of portfolios read in any one session was less than 20 (each read twice), or about six portfolios per reader. A typical comment: "I realize that I just read through 48 papers [including samples used in training], most good . . . . I am just now recovering from the glaze, the glaze, the glaze."

Fatigue is a concern in reading for any testing situation, just as it is early a concern in teachers' grading of student work; however, the ading of nonuniform portfolios may increase the likelihood of fatigue. is method multiplies the types of attending the reader has to do and plicates the process of rating. Clearly, this must be taken into account y decision on the possible use of nonuniform portfolios for evaluation, e it means that the project will require more time and, probably, more ders--in sum, more money--than other types of assessment.

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Reactions to Efforts at Improving Inter-rater Agreement

As mentioned above, problems in reader bias showed up in the first training session as did problems with reliability. An analysis of this first session showed that readers disagreed most particularly on decisions that involved assigning grades of "C" (i.e., distinguishing between C and B and between C and D). Thus, training for the second session focused on establishing clearer understandings about this discrimination.

The sample portfolios for use in the second session were selected from those on which two readers had disagreed in the previous session. Further, although the discussion ranged freely and consensus on standards was still to be in the hands of "the community of readers," the leader directed readers' attention to aspects of texts and portfolios that seemed to have caused problems. The correlation between scores assigned in this session was .52, an improvement in agreement between raters but still far from the 1.00 correlation of total agreement.

Training for the third reading session moved even further in the same direction. First, sample packets were "made up" by combining, in some cases, essays from several actual portfolios. Thus, the training packets became "model" portfolios rather than "representative" portfolios. To accompany the packets, a more prescriptive, criterion-referenced scoring guide was prepared to describe the grades from A to F. With these changes, the inter-rater reliability ratio went up slightly to .58, again an improvement but still far from the .80 that is frequently used as the standard for minimally acceptable level of agreement in circumstances where a score has significant consequences.

Changes in training came in response not only to correlation statistics but also to observations and especially to written comments, both negative and positive, by the readers. From session 3 on, then, the training sessions focused largely on distinguishing among features of the scoring guide and on working with model portfolios. The scoring guide itself was modified twice, for sessions 5 and 8, mainly to make the language more explicit and in response to suggestions by the readers. Perhaps the most significant change occurred during session 7, when, in an attempt to increase the interrater correlation significantly, we trained readers to use the scoring guide on individual essays and then to average ratings in order to arrive at a rating for the portfolio. (See Appendix for final version of scoring guide.)

The discussion in each training session was free flowing but over time was more and more directed by the leader toward the criteria in the scoring guide and toward the model portfolios. Clearly, every change in

focus led readers a bit further from "first-impression" scoring and, possibly, from the value of the portfolio as a single whole.

That readers preferred greater direction is clear from their comments:

> The introduction of a scoring guide has helped me be more consistent . . . [it] keeps me more focused on specific grade standards and helps me avoid an unintentional curve.

> Papers of all three types tend to have characteristics from more than one grade category (as given on the scoring guide). For example, sentences may be "wonderful" while the essay as a whole is "boring." So often I wind up either averaging a B/D to a C, tending to split the grade on a given paper (A-B or B-C or C- D). The listing of items "in order of importance" on the scoring guide IS VERY HELPFUL in these difficult cases.

> The use of a scoring guide . . . and individual grading within the portfolios, all help focus the reader and, I think, make evaluation easier.

Scattered among these favorable comments are some mixed ones. These anticipate some of our reservations concerning the whole process:

> Following the priorities of the scoring guide really DOES help--provided that one does not become distracted by the 1001 strengths and weaknesses NOT dealt with by the scoring guide. Stick to the scoring guide, then; that's been hard to do, but keeps the grading from being TOO impossible.

> First let me say that the scoring guide really helps make the process of evaluating clearer. They serve as general guidelines--something to consider. I can't, however, shake the feeling that some of my decisions are arbitrary--made in what feels like a vacuum.

> The suggestion at the beginning of the third hour that we stop and re-read the sample packets C,B,D, (in that order) was extremely beneficial. After doing so,

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> I could see better the fine distinctions between B-C and C-D. Due to my fatigue, I was beginning to doubt my judgment; thankfully, often checking the sample essays helped me very much in making decisions. (I'd already done some referring back to sample essays during the first two hours, when it was also helpful.) I conclude that perhaps consulting a scoring guide is not sufficient. Sample essays, particularly in the third hour, seem to be an invaluable tool in evaluating portfolios.

While it is not precisely true to say that through more focused training techniques we steadily improved reliability, it can be said that once past the rather disappointing ratio of the initial reading, we climbed to the .50 level, then to the .60 level and stayed there. This gives some indication that the direction of the training--toward more structure--worked to increase the likelihood that our readings would be consistent. The improved reliability was not, however, without a price. The standardizing scoring guide achieved a better "fit" with characteristics of individual essays than with the more varying characteristics of nonuniform portfolios. Thus, the scoring guide's use shifted focus away from the variety of expressions that is the basis for the portfolio's claim to enhanced validity.

Readers' responses to our attempt to improve reliability by moving in the direction of more structure formed an interesting pattern. Early comments on the training showed raters thinking of the complexity of real-life reading and thus resisting the discipline necessary for reading in a controlled situation.

In later sessions, this resistance seemed to disappear. Readers believed the discipline of training to be necessary, even valuable; nonetheless, some of the original resistance to the constraints resurfaced over time, at least with a couple of readers. This pattern may say something both positive and negative about the process. The comments show that readers gradually accepted the particular circumstances presented by the reading even to the point of helping shape the circumstances, but certain readers also showed a healthy resistance to a reading situation that forced a reading style on them. The comments point up the paradox in our experience with portfolio reading: Problems inherent in attempting to achieve reliability in the new and complex situation of reading several nonuniform writing samples in portfolios force a structured approach to reading that differs from the flexible reading one ordinarily finds in a real-world community of writing teachers. This is further evidence that the original intent of our decision to use portfolios--to provide a "real-world" assessment by using

a comprehensive sample of a student's writing--may to a certain extent have been compromised. Our readers put it well:

> There IS a point at which having a well-spelled out scoring guide works against you--the reading stops being holistic and becomes a labored effort to fit writing into discrete categories.

> Our going over the scoring guide so closely makes me realize something about my way of reading holistically: that it seems always to be some criterion OTHER THAN WHAT IS ON THE SCORING GUIDE that makes me feel like I am making an accurate assessment. What seemed like a great idea--to make the scoring guide more definitive--turns out to be more problematic because it is so limiting in our reading of the portfolios holistically.

Final Considerations

As with all experiences related to holistic rating of writing, ours were "unique" in that particular persons participated at particular times and in particular places in reading particular portfolios. In addition, our raters had all been previously trained to be reliable holistic raters of individual writing samples. Nonetheless, our training methods were rather conventional, and our student authors were in many respects typical of college freshmen; however, we think that some of what we learned may be helpful to writing program administrators who must make decisions on ways of assessing written texts.

Our experience taught us three things about using portfolios in situations where speed and high degrees of interrater agreement are deemed necessary. First, using portfolios takes a tremendous amount of time and energy, requires long training sessions with careful planning, and probably works best when not too many portfolios are rated by a single reader at any one session.

Second, the reading itself tends to be more unruly than the reading of single pieces of writing produced under controlled circumstances in response to identical prompts. The complexity of multiple samples keeps readers from holding in check their predispositions, even biases, regarding genres, content, and context. In addition, the lack of a clear context, both for the material to be read and for the writers of the material, presents as

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yet unresolved problems for readers who see a body of work that they know was produced as part of an academic course.

Third, a paradox seems to emerge from our data. When we first started this project, a colleague rather cynically noted that inter-rater reliability depends upon a leader's imposing his or her will on raters. In a real sense, this proved true as training sessions needed to become more and more structured if readers were to reach agreement. Thus, the manipulations needed to improve inter-rater reliability may undermine the very "real-life" validity that prompted portfolio reading in the first place (for further discussion, see Hilgers & Marsella).

Those who report successful experiences with portfolios as a means of evaluating student writing appear to operate without the constraints we faced. For example, where portfolios with uniform contents serve as a "leaving exam" for a writing course, maintaining high levels of inter-rater reliability is not a pressing issue since there are other checks on the outcome (mainly the records established by the students in the course). Reading sessions involving such portfolios are conducted in a spirit of negotiation rather than with a goal of standardization.

Can the rating of portfolios with nonuniform contents be used for research projects or for program assessments that require highly reliable findings? Perhaps not, or perhaps not yet. If not yet, then we must work to discover how we can achieve the control necessary for satisfactory levels of reliability without sacrificing the validity sought through use of portfolios. If simply not, not all is lost. It may prove possible that different purposes for assessment will dictate different trade-offs between validity and reliability. Our project did not arrive at a completely satisfactory set of trade-offs, but this experience does not mean that an acceptable compromise between the validity that maintains in "real-world" settings and the reliability we seek when we want to generalize our findings about real people cannot be found. Our experience does suggest, however, that writing program administrators should carefully consider the goals and particular circumstances of assessment before they decide whether or not nonuniform portfolios and holistic ratings are the best available vehicles for the evaluation of writing.

Note

1. Elbow and Belanoff report that they began including a statement on the nature of the assignments with their portfolios at the request of their readers. They also specified what was to be included in the portfolios so their portfolios were perhaps not as varied as ours were. This might have helped in our case, but in the absence of a uniform curriculum for each section of a course, variability will always exist. Thus, inclusion of prompts, while possible in many school situations, would not only add to reading time but would also introduce another source of error--readers' (mis)readings of prompts.

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Appendix

Portfolio Scoring Guide

Use this sheet with each portfolio.

1. For each student text, check the appropriate grade score in each column.

2. Compute a grade for each paper. Grade in left column should have more weight than grade in right column.

3. Average the two paper grades.

4. If the average is between grades, use the composite grade you gave to the "war" text to break the deadlock.

DESCRIPTIVE or NARRATIVE (personal experience) text:

Interest	*Sentences*
A____Captivating throughout	*A____Wonderful*
B____Holds attention	*B____Correct & efficient*
C____On the runway, but not in the air	*C____Correct, but awkward*
D____Boring and general	*D____Awkward, noticeable errors*
F____All talk	*F____Error-filled*

***EXPOSITORY** text:*

Structure	*Support*
A____Intelligent thesis: crystal clear structure	*A____Intelligent & imaginative use of support*
B____Interesting thesis; organization clear	*B____Support substantial & well used*
C____Has thesis, but obvious and boring	*C____Minimally necessary support*
D____Thesis & structure unclear	*D____Little support, badly used*
F____No apparent thesis	*F____Filled with generalizations & undigested quotes*

["WAR" text scoring guide omitted]

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The Deprofessionalization of the Writing Instructor

Dave Healy

It may seem odd to invoke the notion of deprofessionalization in reference to an occupation whose bid for professional status has been so zealous and so comparatively recent. Indeed, many insiders would doubtless resent the implication that their occupation, which has finally achieved some hard-earned respect within the academy, is somehow becoming less professional. If my suggestion that writing teachers have been "deprofessionalized" arouses my colleagues' ire, it probably inspires little more than a yawn from occupational sociologists, who have been discussing the general phenomenon for over twenty years (Haug; Haug and Sussman). Within that group, however, the assumption is that deprofessionalization is due primarily to threats from without, while I will argue that for composition instruction it has resulted mostly from internal, self-imposed changes. Furthermore, the very assumption that deprofessionalization represents a threat to writing teachers is, as I hope to show, debatable. In any event, composition studies would do well to assess developments within the field in light of deprofessionalization, for the discipline's professional image will have much to do with its continuing struggle for recognition and influence within the academy.

To suggest that composition is undergoing deprofessionalization implies that the field had achieved professional status and is now in the process of losing that status. It should be noted that the notion of professionalizaton refers either to a process whereby occupations acquire the status of profession or the degree to which an occupation has achieved that status. Professionalization is, therefore, a dynamic rather than a static condition. Those occupations that have sought but not yet achieved full professional standing--for example, nurses, social workers, pharmacists, etc.--are always in the process of trying to achieve it, while the established professions, such as medicine and law, are always in the process of protecting their standing in the face of various external threats to their domain. Furthermore, although sociologists sometimes use the terms nonprofession, semiprofession, and profession as though they designated fairly discrete categories, the notion of a continuum is more accurate and helpful. As Ritzer notes, "The idea of a continuum grows out of the focus on social change" and enables researchers "to study how and why an occupation moves up or down the scale" (43). Professionalization, then, is a continuum, and deprofessionalization represents movement on that continuum.

Evaluating the professional status of an occupation depends on the criteria used. For Maxine Hairston, in her 1985 Chair's Address to the CCCC, the existence of graduate programs in composition and rhetoric, new courses and journals, burgeoning attendance at writing conferences, and a thriving job market for composition and rhetoric faculty were all evidence of composition's professional stature. Carol Berkenkotter, who finds indications of professionalism in the increasing specialization within composition studies, points to changes in the categories on the CCCC Program Proposal Form as evidence of "the proliferation of specialized areas of interest" (155). The 1980 form had eleven categories; by 1990 that number had increased to thirty-two.

Occupational sociologists have their own measures of professionalization. According to George Ritzer, two approaches have predominated. One, the structural-functional, emphasizes the characteristics of a given profession. Among the structural-functional characteristics that Ritzer discusses, three are especially relevant for composition studies: 1) a body of general systematic knowledge that is the professional's exclusive possession; 2) a norm of authority over clients; and 3) a distinctive occupational culture (48-55).

Regarding the body of systematic knowledge, Ritzer questions whether there are any "inherent qualitative differences between professions and nonprofessions in terms of knowledge" and surmises that "where qualitative differences exist, they have been artificially created by professionals' denial of access of their knowledge to others" (49). In the case of composition, access to knowledge has not been explicitly denied, but for many years composition teachers, by ghettoizing writing instruction in the English department, perpetuated the notion that only they could and should teach writing. The writing-across-the-curriculum movement, however, with its assumption that all disciplines share the responsibility for academic literacy, potentially undermines the exclusivity of composition's claim on a body of systematic knowledge and thus can be seen as evidence of deprofessionalization.

Ritzer's second structural-functional characteristic, the so-called "norm of authority," is an interesting one for teachers of writing. The traditional image of the red-pencil-wielding English teacher is authoritarian to the extreme, and the easy association in the popular mind between writing competence and grammatical correctness, together with the often mysterious aura surrounding the act of composition, has made it easy and natural to author-ize the position of writing teacher. Even among our colleagues across the disciplines, those of us in composition often arouse discomfort

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and a reluctance to let us see any piece of writing that is not sufficiently "finished."

Today's composition teacher, however, is conflicted about the notion of authority. Browsing through the 1991 CCCC Convention Program, for example, reveals such titles as: "Responding to Student Writing: Is There an Expert in the House?"; "Involving Students in Assessment"; "Empowerment/Being All That You Can Be: Negotiating the Costs of Critical Pedagogy"; "Giving Up Authority Just When They've Got It: New TAs and Student-Centered Writing"; "Learning from Students: Surrendering Expectation and Adapting to Realities." The mantle of authority traditionally bequeathed to composition teachers is increasingly one they are reluctant to don. But to the extent that composition instructors seek ways to empower their students, to help students recognize and develop their own authority as writers, they alter their own professional image, at least according to structural-functionalists.

Ritzer's other structural-functional characteristic, a distinctive occupational culture, is readily documented for composition. The emergence of CCCC as a viable subset of NCTE, the numerous national and regional writing conferences now in existence, the number of journals focusing on writing and the teaching of writing--all of these have contributed to a culture, or at least a subculture, that reinforces among its members the feeling that what they do is vocationally distinctive. It is possible, though, that the academic specialization noted by Berkenkotter might lessen the commonality of purpose felt by those within the field of composition. Professional unity is also compromised by composition's persistent dependence on part-time instructors, many of whom do not feel a sense of professional identity (Wallace).

The other main approach to professionalization within occupational sociology is the power approach. Ritzer defines power as "the ability of an occupation (really its leaders) to obtain (and retain) a set of rights and privileges (and obligations) from societal groups that otherwise might not grant them" (56). In addressing the question, "Where does professional power come from?" Ritzer points to two key sources: a margin of indetermination and a level of uncertainty. The first has to do with "the degree to which an occupation's task(s) cannot be routinized, that is, made available to masses of people" (57). Human physiology and psychology are so complicated, we have become convinced, that only a professional, the physician or the therapist, can be trusted to prescribe treatment for illness. The law, too, has become a domain into which lay people venture at their peril. The wise citizen--whether contemplating marriage or dissolution, whether buying or selling, whether conferring or claiming, consults a lawyer.

Closely related to a margin of indetermination is a level of uncertainty. As long as professionals deal with their clients' areas of uncertainty, their professional wisdom is valued and their professional status secure. It makes sense, therefore, for the professional "to protect as well as to expand this area of uncertainty and thereby increase his power" (Ritzer 58). The ever-increasing complexity of getting a divorce or filing one's income tax is in the best interests of lawyers and accountants, assuring them a ready supply of clients.

How does composition fare when analyzed in terms of the power approach to professionalization? Does the teaching of writing enjoy a margin of indetermination? Some recent trends in composition appear to narrow that margin. A process approach to writing, for example, stresses the steps or stages or components of the act of composing, thereby rendering it less esoteric, more accessible, and more manageable. Peer feedback groups in the composition class are based on the assumption that students, not just teachers, are qualified respondents to each other's writing. The writing-across-the-curriculum movement, with its assumption that the responsibility for teaching writing should be shared among all disciplines, democratizes the teaching of writing. Finally, the proliferation of computer software designed to aid not only in checking spelling and grammar but also invention, organization and style suggests that much of the writing instructor's "esoteric" knowledge may be encoded in computer programs. As Marie Haug, writing about trends in the professions as a whole, has noted, "To the extent that scientific professional knowledge can be 'codified,' it can be broken into bits, stored in a computer memory, and recalled as needed. No longer need it be preserved in the professional's head or in books alone. A great deal of the learning transmitted to professional-in-training can be made accessible in this way" (201).

As the margin of indetermination surrounding composition shrinks, the level of uncertainty also decreases. While the study of literature often tends to mystify the act of writing, many composition teachers and current textbooks seek to demystify it. From literature we get the idea that writers are gifted, that they work alone, that they write when they are inspired. But one need not be a serious student of literature to have distorted notions about how texts are produced. As Murray has observed, most students have an impoverished view of how writing is created. They "have never seen writing being made. They believe that teachers and writers know a magic rite that places words on the page in an order that is full of grace and meaning the first time, that each work arrives correctly spelled, each piece of punctuation appears at the moment it is needed, and that all rules of rhetoric, grammar, and mechanics fall into place on their own" (105).

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Murray, of course, is interested in demythologizing and demystifying the writing process for students. Lisa Ede shows a similar interest in her recent freshman writing text, where she attacks head-on "the romanticized image of the writer struggling alone until inspiration strikes" (15). Ede, like many other composition teachers, wants her students to feel part of a community of writers and to see writing as a process of making meaning, not a gift imparted to the fortunate few. To the extent that writing teachers attempt to level the playing field, they reduce the level of uncertainty surrounding the act of writing, indeed, most teachers probably feel that reducing uncertainty is part of their job. According to the power approach to professionalization, however, they may be making their job security more uncertain. Perhaps the ultimate uncertainty is the disappearance of the teacher altogether, a state of affairs described in some detail in Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers*.

The word "power," like "authority," makes many modern composition theorists and teachers nervous. When a Peter Elbow talks about power, for instance, it is not something to be guarded by members of the elite, that is, teachers, but rather a power available to everyone. His book, *Writing with Power*, says Elbow, is based on "an assumption that virtually everyone has available great skill with words. That is, everyone can, under certain conditions, speak with clarity and power" (7).

If a major component of professionalization is power, then deprofessionalization is primarily the loss of power. One explanation for professionals' perceived loss of power that has achieved some notoriety is the "revolt of the client," a tendency for clients to question the professional's authority. Client revolt is fueled, among other things, by increased knowledge; the more clients know, the less willing they are to trust the judgment and authority of the professional. Haug and Sussman, writing at the end of the 1960s, saw in the student demonstrations of the period evidence for a challenge to the professional expertise of college and university teachers. Two decades later, though, it is more difficult to see college students as clients in revolt. Most teachers are as likely to lament student passivity as they are to complain of excessive challenges to their authority. The gripe against today's students is usually that they are too extrinsically oriented and motivated to risk biting the hand that will one day pass them on to the hand that will feed them. Also, modern college students, according to most faculty, are less knowledgeable and skilled than their predecessors, especially in the area of writing, and hence less able and likely to mount an effective challenge to the teacher's authority.

Composition has, however, adopted some practices that create a climate in which "client revolt" could flourish. By stressing that as teachers they are not the only audience for student writing and by encouraging their

students to get feedback from other readers, whether classmates, friends, tutors, or others, composition teachers both systematize and sanction what Bloor and Horobin, writing about physicians and their patients, call "lay consultants." Bloor and Horobin hypothesize that "the proto-patient who has negotiated a diagnosis with his lay consultants is likely to present to his doctor a relatively well developed set of requests . . . [and] to be less compliant in his interaction with the doctor than is the patient whose proto-patient career has been foreshortened" (278-79).

While physicians do not encourage prospective patients to consult lay people before making office visits, they may, in an effort to minimize trivial consultations, subtly encourage patients to assess their own condition in order to decide whether an office visit is really necessary. Such behavior may make patients more capable of and more likely to engage in self-diagnosis, which in turn may make them more likely to question the physician's judgments. Because doctors dislike both trivial office visits and challenges to their authority, Bloor and Horobin accuse them of placing patients in a "double bind":

> The sick person is expected to analyze his condition in terms--is it serious or non-serious, does it require medical treatment or some other alleviative action, etc.--which imply diagnostic and prognostic evaluation, but on presentation to the doctor the sick person is expected to "forget" his own prior assessment of the condition and defer to the doctor's; the sick person is first encouraged to participate in and then excluded from the therapeutic process. (277)

Do writing teachers do the same thing? Certainly an emphasis on student self-diagnosis is a hallmark of much current writing instruction, for it is consistent with the conviction that, as Hawkins puts it, "the teacher is not solely responsible for what goes on in the classroom" (11). But when self-diagnosis leads students either to question authority (and as long as teachers give grades, they will be perceived to have authority) or to resist treatment (Elbow, *Contraries* 81-82), how do teachers respond? It may be impossible to generalize about teachers' behavior in such situations, but clearly both the challenges and the responses do much to shape our evolving professional image.

Any attempt to analyze the professionalization or deprofessionalization of an occupation assumes a certain amount of internal occupational consistency. Whether composition evidences that consistency is certainly arguable, as is the question of whether it should be internally consistent.

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Bartholomae, in his 1988 Chair's Address to CCCC, concludes with an appeal to resist calls for "a disciplined, ordered field," stating flatly: "I am suspicious of calls for coherence. I suspect that most of the problems in academic life--problems of teaching, problems of thinking--come from disciplinary boundaries and disciplinary habits" (49). To the extent that Bartholomae's characterization of and hopes for composition studies are representative, to the extent that we are "fractious, prone to argument . . . multivocal, dialogical," attempts to analyze the profession as a profession will be complicated.

While it may be difficult to say exactly what the new paradigm of composition instruction looks like or just where we are in the paradigm shift (Hairston, "Winds"), it seems clear that a different role has emerged for the writing teacher. The new writing teacher is more a facilitator than a dispenser of truth, a referee rather than a judge (Hawkins), a collaborator rather than an evaluator (Jacobs and Karliner), a coach and diagnostician (Murray), a commentator and counselor (Harris). These roles all narrow the gap between teacher and students. They also redefine, as I have suggested, the nature of professional authority and may be seen as having contributed to deprofessionalization. Whether deprofessionalization, as defined by occupational sociologists, is a negative phenomenon for composition, however, is debatable.

As Ritzer notes, professionals have never enjoyed unrestricted authority over clients. Especially for such professionals as doctors and lawyers, whose livelihoods depend on a constant flow of patients, there is considerable pressure to accommodate oneself to patients' desires (164-165). Most writing teachers do not have to compete for clients in the same way that other professionals do. Still, since in most departments student evaluations figure in promotion, advancement, and merit decisions, teachers are obliged to pay attention to students' wishes and to their own standing in students' eyes. Writing teachers are not strangers, then, to the demands of what Ritzer calls "client-centered conflict" and to the pressure to compromise as a way of coping with that conflict.

Compromise with clients does not, however, necessarily compromise the quality of the professional's performance or the outcome of the professional-client consultation. Rosenthal, in his study of professional-client relations among lawyers, observed two approaches: the traditional and the participatory. The traditional model "holds that client welfare and the public interest are best served by the professional's exercise of predominant control over and responsibility for the problem-solving delegated to him rather passively by the client" (2). The participatory model, on the other hand, holds that "both client and consultant gain from a sharing of control over many of the decisions arising out of the relationship" (7). After

studying the lawyer-client relationship in 59 personal injury claims, Rosenthal found that participating clients tended to receive better settlements than did traditional clients. Rosenthal concludes that "neither lawyer nor client should be in charge, but that professional service should be a matter of shared responsibility" (2).

Increasingly in the composition classroom, the participatory model is the norm, as it has always been in the writing center. In this respect, writing teachers are allied with psychotherapists, most of whom adopt a participatory model of therapist-patient relations. Indeed, Rogerian psychology has significantly influenced conceptualizations of writing conference dynamics (Duke, Murphy, Reigstad and McAndrew, Taylor). To the extent that writing teachers see their task in Rogerian terms, providing clients with "the opportunity of making responsible choices" (Rogers 51), they will adopt what Reigstad and McAndrew call a "student-centered" conferencing style, in which students "are treated as conversational equals and fellow writers" (30) who determine "the direction of the session, initiating movement to each new phase of the conference"(29). Some research suggests that this approach is more effective than a directive, teacher-centered style. Studies by Beaumont and Jacobs and Karliner note a clear relationship between instructional style and students' revision of their writing, finding that directive, prescriptive instructional roles promoted student passivity and minimal revision, while a collaborative, student-centered approach produced more substantial revisions in students' drafts.

Despite the effectiveness and appeal of collaborative approaches to teaching writing, there are factors militating against their widespread adoption, and these factors have to do with the roles with which teachers and students feel comfortable. Diane Stelzer Morrow, a former doctor turned tutor who explores possible connections between physicians and writing tutors, describes three models of doctor-patient relationships: activity-passivity, guidance-cooperation, and mutual participation. In the first two models, the doctor is assumed to be knowledgeable, the patient ignorant. In the third model, the physician does not claim to know what is best for the patient; instead, determining the best course of treatment becomes a shared goal of the interaction between doctor and patient. While the practice of medicine has changed and with it the conception of the physician's role, mutual participation, says Morrow, "is not, by any means, the most prevalent model" (227). She speculates that mutual participation has failed to become more popular because of both doctors' and patients' attitudes. Patients do expect their doctor to be an expert, to know more than they do, to diagnose, to give specific advice--in short, to fulfill a traditionally professional role. Physicians, for their part, recognize that a patient's trust in the doctor can be instrumental in the patient taking action that will

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promote healing and health. Thus, the doctor may well be reluctant to say, "I don't know."

Within composition circles, it is fashionable to espouse "dialogic" approaches to writing and teaching. The politically correct writing teacher is expected to agree with the Freirean dictum that "knowledge of the object to be known is not the sole possession of the teacher" and that "the object to be known is put on the table between the two subjects of knowing" (14). Especially for the composition instructor, as opposed to the subject-area faculty member, the teacher is expected to concede the authority of the writer, recognizing, as Donald Murray asserts, that "as much as the teacher--the experienced writer--knows about writing, the composition teacher does not--and should not--know the subject of the student's draft as well as the student writer" (129).

These concessions are, from the standpoint of professional authority, just that: concessions. Writing teachers who believe that their role as authority and expert inhibits their students' empowerment as writers, and who deliberately shun that role, are in the process significantly affecting the way they are perceived professionally, both by clients and by peers. Many composition teachers, still chary about their tenuous status in the academy, would appreciate the irony felt by a colleague of mine, who, on the way home from a CCCC convention, observed, "Everybody keeps telling me to give up my power. What power?"

This, then, is the postmodern writing teacher's dilemma: The experts in the field tell her to actively resist being cast in the role of expert. Her goal should be to empower student writers. Her classroom should be collaborative, dialogic, her pedagogy liberatory and nonauthoritarian. The result of these attitudes and behaviors, she is assured, will be better writing, and, more importantly, better writers, but another result, one that does not get talked about nearly as much, is deprofessionalization. What is the future of a deprofessionalized segment of the academy in times of retrenchment?

From the perspective of occupational sociology, participatory, collaborative, liberatory, or student-centered pedagogies are evidence of deprofessionalization because they weaken teachers' claim to an exclusive body of knowledge, lessen their authority over clients, diffuse professional power, and narrow the margin of indetermination teachers enjoy. As I have suggested, deprofessionalization, by this definition, does not necessarily compromise the quality of what goes on in the composition classroom. Indeed, it may result in more effective teaching and learning. Furthermore, as I have noted, composition is not the only profession to have discovered the effectiveness of "deprofessionalized" approaches to client relations. At the same time, deprofessionalization does affect composition's image and standing in the academy. For a discipline that has worked long and hard

to achieve professional status in the university, what I have called deprofessionalization is a dynamic that composition teachers would do well to pay attention to and be self-conscious about.

Emerson wrote, "Nature arms each man with some faculty which enables him to do easily some feat impossible to any other, and thus makes him necessary to society." Peter Elbow has said, "I think teachers learn to be more useful when it is clearer that they are not necessary" (*Teachers* x). Between these two poles, teachers of writing live and move and have their professional being.

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Reconsidering Faculty Resistance to Writing Reform

Jody Swilky

Over the last decade, writing and educational specialists have devoted considerable attention to defining and studying resistance. By determining the various ways that students respond to curriculum, educators and compositionists have illuminated how resistance can represent both "positive" and "negative" responses to teaching, as well as how we can identify and respond to these behaviors to effect transformation. Perspectives on resistance represent a range of oppositional behaviors that are significantly influenced by social relations, pedagogical objectives, and institutional conditions. For instance, some perceive resistance as oppositional behavior that both reacts against the demands of the dominant ideology and serves the goals of affirming student voices, exercising critical interrogation, and improving the quality of education (Giroux 107-08; also see Chase 15, 20-21). Others, by contrast, consider it a "negative" response to the ideology that informs a particular pedagogy, such as feminism, which can be productively resisted through teacher commentary and response (Wolff 485, 490-91; also see Bauer 387, 392-93). What this sampling of recent work suggests is that by considering competing perspectives on resistance, writing instructors can attain clearer understanding of what is being resisted, the causes of such resistance, and how to address such behavior.

The scope and concerns of this recent work do not characterize all discussions concerned with resistance, however. When proponents of writing across the curriculum (WAC) speak about resistance, coming from faculty rather than students, they generally assign a negative meaning, identifying institutional divisions, policies and practices, as well as faculty attitudes and beliefs, that represent obstacles to "positive" curricular change (Fulwiler and Young 289-93; McLeod 343; Russell 191). Impediments to WAC reform have been defined, recently, as "the enemies" of cross-curricular writing programs (Fulwiler and Young 287). From this perspective, resistance becomes support for the status quo, and those who resist oppose meaningful reform.

This thinking restricts our ability to understand the reasons for and nature of resistance because it fails to perceive the possibility of productive opposition to reformers' attempts to influence others. As discussions concerning student resistance show, resistance can signify something other or more than "negative" behavior. Although faculty resistance to cross-curricular writing instruction can be a conscious or unconscious attempt to preserve the status quo, such response also can represent a critical interrogation of the purposes of reform or uncertainty about the objectives of educational change. To deny either possibility limits our ability to distinguish unproductive opposition to arguments for reform from productive responses that question the agendas that reformers impose on others.

I want to reconsider the way WAC proponents have been defining resistance, taking into account how oppositional response to writing reform--like student resistance to teaching--can represent both "positive" and "negative" behavior. My aim is to illuminate reasons for and forms of faculty resistance to writing reform. I will base my analysis on my collaboration with faculty during a summer seminar and over the ensuing semester, concentrating on how their writing and their behavior suggest and represent forms of resistance to reform. I will focus on two faculty members who supposedly intend to change their teaching by using writing to promote learning, who have similar interests and experience, and who distinguish themselves through their ideological dispositions.

Writing Before the Seminar

The seminar aimed to introduce participants to theoretical and practical literature so they could gain awareness of how students can learn course content and discursive practices, as well as reformulate their understanding, through writing and revision. In addition, during seminar sessions faculty were asked to play roles students can (and often do) assume in the educational process, and then to discuss the various ways students might participate more actively in the classroom. Before the seminar, participants responded to questions about themselves as writers and about the writing that they require from students. Through these introductory statements, then, participants suggested their support for and/or opposition to the seminar's objectives.

Robert, a rhetorician and senior member of the faculty, introduced himself by providing two responses, one focusing on himself as a writer and the other describing his teaching. When Robert discussed his own writing career, he inscribed himself in an exploratory mode:

> What scares me is not writing. For years I did not write because I had nothing to say. Today I write regularly . . . . How do I feel about this writing? I do not enjoy writing this specific assignment. It is a

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> struggle; it is taking more time than I thought. What I have written is written in a computer, not in stone.

These statements reveal Robert's understanding of how writing can be a complicated activity, one that entails "struggle." Robert also suggests that he believes writing is a process of revision, that is, nothing is written "in stone." His statements about teaching, however, indicate that the aforementioned convictions about writing, particularly his implied beliefs concerning struggle and revision, do not apply to his use of writing in the classroom:

> Public speaking is discovering the best answer to a question of policy or value over which the truth or falsity can be argued and locating and refuting the reasons that the audience is against the speaker's conclusion. The public speaker is a participant in a process by which citizens arrive at good judgments.
>
> In the course, students write three manuscripts [of speeches] and two short papers. The manuscripts are graded on the learning goals for the speech and on the standards of university level writing. For each paper, students select a topic, locate the crucial issue and refute it . . . . Students develop critical reading skills by evaluating papers, ranking them according to how they meet the learning goals of the assignment and how they demonstrate university level writing.

The way Robert uses writing suggests that his assumptions and goals are at odds with the objectives of the seminar. He provides students with a list of "learning goals" and "standards of university level writing," which students apply when they evaluate an oral presentation or rank their peers' papers. Although students receive responses to their writing, through verbal feedback to speeches and numerical evaluations of papers, this commentary is not intended to assist them in revising a speech or rewriting a paper.

Robert closes his introductory statement with a series of questions that could signal positive and negative resistance to reform: "Why are several short assignments better than a single paper?"; "Does peer feedback provide quality as well as quantity?"; and "What is university writing and how does one teach it?" Considering his description of his public-speaking course, his years of teaching experience, and his expertise in a form of language use, Robert may be challenging the "writing expert," a stance that

suggests his potential resistance to change. (His questions could also reflect a longstanding dispute between public speaking and English departments over the purposes of teaching writing.) At the same time, however, his inquiries may represent his genuine interest in entertaining activities that he is aware of but has not yet integrated into his teaching.

In contrast to the way Robert separated his responses to questions, Robin, a philosopher of language and senior member of the faculty, integrated his analysis of his writing with his discussion of teaching:

> I start out to write a defense of Socrates but end up with a personal paper relating my mounting climbing experiences to the simile of the cave by way of Wittgenstein . . . . Now the problem is whether this is an excuse for being unphilosophical or whether such an approach can only be made after one has established oneself.
>
> This is my dilemma with students as well. Are they inventive or sloppy, insightful or lucky, scholastic or Socratic? Perhaps that's why I have students keep notebooks that they turn in from time to time. The format for this writing is the problem, however. Should students copy a passage from the [assigned] reading, interpret it, and relate their response to previous entries? Or should I select a specific passage and have them follow "how-to-read philosophy" guidelines?

Robin's discussion of his own writing indicates that he believes composing is a process of producing new understanding because intention changes through the process of writing itself. At the same time, however, he questions the value of exploration for students. Before finishing his introductory statement, Robin reveals a possible cause of his "dilemma." He explains that he presently asks students to follow a guide and to write about a passage selected for them, because "reading diverse responses and rereading earlier responses is just too much work." Moreover, he reads these notebooks "at midterm and at the end of the semester." His primary concern seems to be managing the work load, and because of this priority, he may resist any change that requires more of his time and labor.

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Writing During the Seminar

During the first two weeks of the seminar, participants read and wrote about articles concerned with theory and practice, becoming engaged with issues such as the purposes of schooling, writing in the disciplines, writing assignments, and responding to student texts. Faculty scrutinized, through writing as well as discussion, the convictions they held and the theory presented to them in the seminar. Each day we discussed the readings and participants' writing, in small groups and as a seminar, focusing on the pertinence or irrelevance of the readings to participants' concerns and objectives.

Robert, the rhetorician, wrote terse responses that focused on how the readings failed to address one or more of his concerns. Moreover, he consistently inquired about the university's freshman reading and writing course, particularly how instructors prepare students to write for other college courses. At his request, and with the approval of other participants,[1] we read articles that pertain to the introductory writing course, which elicited this response from Robert:

> You offer me some theoretical mumbo jumbo. Perhaps I am a nuts-and-bolts teacher. You propose that it is possible for students to become more competent writers if they try to "discover" what they want to say. I am more interested in reasoned argument than exploration. What happens when students have neither anything to say nor skills to write? What about mechanics and organization? Students in the classes that I teach who have taken English 1 have problems. What can I expect of your students as writers after they complete English 1?

Robert's questions suggest assumptions about teaching, learning, and institutional responsibilities that might cause him to resist change. Suspect of the freshman writing course's objectives and critical of what students learn in this course, he appears to challenge the "writing expert" and may wonder why he should listen to the recommendations proposed in this seminar. At the same time, however, his questions may represent an attempt to initiate a dialogue, his combative approach notwithstanding. Being a "nuts-and-bolts" teacher, as well as a rhetorican trained in the classical tradition, he encounters "mumbo jumbo" that challenges his assumptions and priorities, and therefore he questions this "new rhetoric." Robert considers himself a language expert and an accomplished teacher, subjectivities supported by his scholarship and institutional recognition,

and it is reasonable to assume that he will not change his beliefs unless persuaded by "reasoned argument"--what he expects from all orators--that addresses his concerns and priorities.

Robin, the philosopher of language, produced a response that, like Robert's writing, is critical of some academics, but Robin's criticism is directed at those who allegedly control language use in the university and in professional journals:

> The rules for successfully inventing the university reside in the hands of mostly white men who do not give others the secrets of successful invention. If the writing is white enough, it is deemed to be a proper copy of the Platonic form of the university. Now we all know about studies that show how blind referees cannot discern male writing from female writing. We also know that at times most blindfolded people peek.
>
> Bartholomae claims that all the student writers he knows are aware of [academic] conventions. This may be true . . . but the guardians of academic language games decide whose inventions of the university are genuine and whose will never get a patent. I'm inclined to think that such talk about students "learning to speak our language, to speak as we do," is a way to exclude whomever we want under the guise of objective standards.

Although Robin's oppositional voice appears to support the expansion of language use in the university, he fails to discuss how his teaching would serve this end. On the one hand, he implies that he opposes educational practice that underscores teaching students "to speak our language," because this agenda excludes certain students and preserves the status quo, yet at the same time, he makes no effort to explain how he would encourage students to write in ways that would counter the alleged objectives of the "guardians of academic language games."

Perhaps Robin fails to present an alternative to the status quo because his primary interest is not the expansion of language use in the classroom. In other words, his main concern may be the effect of institutional power on himself, not on students. When he refers to those individuals who will never receive a "patent" for their "inventions," is he speaking about students, teachers (like himself) outside the mainstream, or both groups? In his response, Robin is preoccupied with the idea that the "rules for successfully inventing the university," as well as for gaining entrance into

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professional journals, are available to a select few, a group that Robin suggests, in his response, ignores him and many others.

Writing After the Seminar

Before the seminar ended, participants and I met to discuss their plans for revising their courses. We agreed that during the fall semester we would work collaboratively, so I could assist them with designing assignments and responding to student writing, as well as converse with them about any problems or complications they encountered. We also agreed that teachers and students would evaluate the uses and value of the writing activities and that I would visit classes.

During the seminar, Robin decided that he would allow students in his philosophy course more interpretive freedom, no longer requiring that they follow rigid guidelines for interpreting an assigned passage (see p. 53). He also intended to read student writing frequently throughout the semester.

Robin and I neither spoke nor corresponded about his philosophy course until the fifth week of the semester when he sent me his syllabus and promised to forward copies of student writing. Not until the week before finals was I allowed to visit his class and given the opportunity to read his students' writing. In his course evaluation, Robin explained his intentions for revising his course and what actually occurred when he returned to the classroom:

> When I left the seminar, I decided to abandon the step-by-step guidelines for reading and writing. I also wanted to make writing a central concern of the course.
>
> . . . I quickly let writing take a back seat to lecture, [however], occasionally using it to initiate a class discussion. Although I intended to collect the writing every other week, I pushed it to the side because I felt I didn't have time for it. It wasn't until mid-semester that I read and responded to what students had written . . . . The notebook was extra work which was placed on top of an already existing course.

Robin's earlier writing foreshadows the behavior described in this

reading and writing assignments, and his indecision can be partly, and perhaps mostly, attributed to his concern for managing the work load. After the seminar, he intended to make "writing a central concern of the course," yet in the classroom he "quickly" ignored this "extra work," assigning "it a back seat to lecture," pushing "it to the side." It appears that Robin made no genuine attempt to use writing to promote learning and that he resisted reform because improving the quality and conditions of learning is less important to him than managing time and labor.

The lack of communication that characterizes my "collaboration" with R bin contrasts with the regularity of conversation that characterizes my work with Robert. Before the seminar ended, Robert and I discussed and debated many issues, and he eventually decided to restructure his use of writing in his public-speaking course. We agreed that Robert would send student writing to me each week throughout the semester and that we would discuss the assignments and his response to writing on a weekly basis.

Robert intended to use writing to promote learning by having students revise and write more frequently. He planned to modify his course by asking students to rewrite their speech texts after they receive feedback from the class and by requiring them to write "reflections" on what they learn from giving a specific speech. I recommended that Robert respond to the drafts of speech texts, but he rejected my advice because of the amount of work involved in responding to drafts and rewrites. Early in the semester, when I read drafts and revisions of speech texts, I noticed that students were concentrating on changing the surface features of their writing. I suggested to Robert that if he responded to the content of early drafts, students might then produce more substantive revisions. In response to my suggestion, he wrote, "Your point about responding to manuscripts before rewrites is well taken. Students aren't rewriting 'content.' I'll try reading and responding to their manuscripts."

That Robert resisted yet eventually adopted my idea suggests that his previous opposition to change (see p. 54) stems from ingrained belief about learning, which now, after our discussion, is being tested by his repositioning himself in the learning process. Throughout the semester, he scrutinized and revised his teaching, and such behavior is described in his course evaluation:

> I required students to write so they could become more proficient as public speakers and more knowledgeable about public speaking.
>
> I modified my original plan to allow for revision, first by requiring rewrites and then by helping students

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with their revisions. What I have discovered, however, is that not much change occurs through rewriting. Perhaps I am partly responsible for the results of this experiment, because my commentary may not have given students specific reasons for revising.

I believe the reflections on oratory have worked. For the final assignment, I asked students to read their first reflections and write about how their thinking has changed. On the whole, students reformulated their thinking . . . . Next semester, I will require students to reflect on present and past performances throughout the course.

Robert's evaluation reveals both positive and negative resistance. On the one hand, he experimented with and scrutinized my ideas, which caused him to use revision for his own purposes--to have students reformulate their ideas in their "reflections." On the other hand, he has not entirely changed his assumptions about learning and therefore does not modify the way he responds to student texts. Throughout the semester, he provides students with directives, such as "explain this subpoint" or "provide support," despite our discussions concerning ways to ask questions that give students "reasons" for expanding and/or rethinking their writing. By maintaining this approach to responding to student texts, Robert works against his goal of assisting students as they attempt to reformulate their understanding of oratory.

Working Against Resistance

One inference that I draw from this analysis of my colleagues and their writing is that to understand the sources and nature of resistance, and to assist teachers who are serious about changing their pedagogy, we need to collaborate with instructors as they revise their courses. The short seminar has serious limitations as a means of effecting change, in part because teachers are frequently responding to novel, complex ideas; in part because we can misread the reasons for and the nature of their responses; and in part because genuine pedagogical transformation requires the implementing and testing of ideas and strategies in the classroom.

As Robert's and Robin's cases demonstrate, when we work with teachers as they revise and scrutinize their teaching (if they elect to do so), we attain fuller understanding of their ideology and resistance, and with this knowledge we can work more effectively to encourage different levels

of transformation. As Deborah Swanson-Owens argues, the effectiveness of our efforts to improve curriculum is contingent, in part, on our understanding "why it is appropriate" for teachers to respond to reform as they do, which necessitates understanding "practitioners and not just practice" (94-95). Both Robert's and Robin's actions after the seminar reveal how different determinants, including personality, assumptions, beliefs, and institutional conditions, affect teachers' decisions about pedagogical priorities. And Robin's writing and behavior before, during, and after the seminar illustrate how a teacher can behave one way in this educational context and a different way when he returns to the classroom where he must contend with institutional pressures. If we work with teachers as they encounter institutional pressure, we have a better opportunity to understand their behavior and how to respond to such behavior.

By engaging in conversations about teaching and learning and by testing and implementing classroom reform, we work with our colleagues against the structures, attitudes and beliefs that are obstacles to reform. This type of collaboration is at odds with the nature and structure of the postsecondary institution, and, consequently, this activity will be met with resistance. Even when these conversations occur under optimal conditions, they will entail compromise and will likely produce tension. But WAC reformers claim that faculty value the discussions and connections that emerge in workshops and seminars (see, for instance, Fulwiler, "Evaluating" 65; "The Quiet" 184). Whether or not teachers will value collaboration when they return to the classroom can be determined only by continuing and maintaining discussions and debates begun in these forums.

Note

1. The freshman reading and writing course is based on an epistemic pedagogy similar to the one David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky present in *Ways of Reading*. For this day, faculty read Michel Foucault's "Discourse on Language," David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University," and Kurt Spellmeyer's "Foucault and the Freshman Writer." I also gave participants a description of our freshman writing course.

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In the Spirit of Wyoming: Using Local Action Research to Create a Context for Change

Elizabeth Rankin

As writing program administrators, we all have stories to tell--stories about what it's like to teach on our home campuses, how adjunct and part-time faculty are treated, what changes we are trying to make in their status and working conditions. Many of the stories sound familiar at first. They seem to have the same cast of characters, the same setting, the same plot, but the longer we listen to stories like these, shared at national conferences and professional gatherings, the more we begin to notice the differences. True, common elements pervade many of the stories we tell, but at the same time, local factors shape our separate academic communities.

At some level, of course, we all know this. It explains why some of us were dissatisfied with the Wyoming Conference Resolution and why some are still unhappy with the CCCC Statement of Principles and Standards that later evolved from that Resolution. Despite the CCCC committee's best efforts to come up with a set of recommendations that would apply to all of us--from TAs to tenured professors, from those who teach at community colleges to those who teach at research universities, from those who choose to teach part-time to those seeking full-time positions—they simply could not satisfy everyone; however, this does not mean that we should throw out the CCCC Statement, or even that we should spend more time trying to fine tune it further. What is needed at this point instead is some consideration of what we, on our own home campuses, can do to enact the *principles* of the Wyoming Resolution within our own institutional contexts.

In that spirit, I offer here two stories--or rather, one story with two intersecting plot lines. The main plot, a story about the situation of part-time faculty on my campus, may be fairly familiar to many of you. But no matter, it is the subplot--a story about the research project I undertook in an effort to understand that situation--that is the real subject of this essay. What that subplot suggests is that research of the kind I will describe, when it is undertaken locally and shared with a local audience, can complement, not substitute for but complement, broad based reform initiatives like the Wyoming Resolution and the CCCC Statement.

I will begin by giving some brief background on the situation I am about to describe. At the University of North Dakota we have recently relied on fifteen to twenty "part-time" non-tenure track lecturers and thirty to thirty-five GTAs to staff our composition program. Lecturers also teach occasional introductory literature courses and entry-level linguistics or creative writing courses. What we call "the lecturer problem" (shades of James Baldwin here) seems to have plagued the department, in this form at least, for the last fifteen years but reached a climax two years ago when a lecturer-organized request for upgraded positions (based on the LSU model of Career Instructorships) generated so much discussion that a departmental retreat was called to deal with the issue. Out of that original retreat--plus a subsequent Ad Hoc Committee proposal, a follow-up retreat, a revised proposal, and a departmental vote--came a unanimous English Department endorsement of a plan to create ten full-time Instructorships, designed for those with MAs who would teach primarily composition and lower-division literature courses. Although this would not entirely eliminate the use of part-time temporary Lecturers, it would reduce such positions significantly, while upgrading the professional status of most teachers in the department.

By no means an ideal solution to the problem (the plan still falls far short of the CCCC guidelines), this move by the department nevertheless constituted a significant victory for the lecturers. Still, it was only a temporary victory, because the department's request to hire four such Instructors in the Fall of 1991 was turned down by the Dean of Arts and Sciences. At this point the subplot begins.

In an attempt to find out what had happened to the department's proposal, how it got as far as it did and why it got no further, I set out to interview people who had been involved in the situation. I interviewed six Lecturers, six faculty members, and three administrators, all of whom had been at UND longer than I had. My idea was to use the open interview format, to begin with a broad general question ("How would you describe the situation of part-time faculty in the English Department today?") and then listen to the way people talked about the situation. By listening carefully not only to what was said but to how it was said, I hoped to pick up some important cues that would help explain what went wrong the first time we made our proposal and how we might be more successful in the future.

Later, I was to learn that there are names for this kind of research (e.g., action research, advocacy research, critical praxis) and that it has a short but honorable history in the more progressive branches of social science,

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including education, anthropology, sociology, and feminist studies. In their 1983 volume *Becoming Critical: Knowing Through Action Research*, British and Australian education researchers Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis describe action research this way:

> Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out. (162)

Based on the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin, action research of the type described by Carr and Kemmis began in the 1940s as a reaction against the limitations of positivist social science research. From there, the method spread into British and Australian education circles where it merged with the burgeoning teacher-researcher movement of the 1970s and emerged into our own field through such people as James Britton, Garth Boomer, and Ann Berthoff (Goswami). Most recently, American theorists concerned about the "technocratic co-option" of action research have developed its political and historical basis, thus reinventing it as critical social praxis (Kincheloe 19).

In terms of method, action research resembles other modes of qualitative research, making use of interviews, observations, and participant-observation studies, although the critical praxis arm of the movement also draws on methods associated with critical theory and historiography. As for "minimal requirements," Carr and Kemmis state:

> It can be argued that three conditions are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for action research to be said to exist: firstly, a project takes as its subject-matter a social practice, regarding it as a form of strategic action susceptible of improvement; secondly, the project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, with each of these activities being systematically and self-critically implemented and interrelated; thirdly, the project involves those responsible for the practice in each of the moments of the activity, widening participation in the project gradually to include others affected by the practice, and maintaining collaborative control of the process. Some of the work that now passes for action research in education does not meet these criteria. Some will develop towards meeting all of the requirements; some will be arrested action research and falter before completing its development. Still other work will fail to meet these requirements and cannot seriously lay claim to the title "action research" at all. (165-66)

Although my own research project might not lay claim to the title of action research--it certainly was not as "systematic" as it might have been--it does bear enough resemblance that I have since been able to understand and critique my own work in terms of those criteria.

For instance, although I could not say that I went through a "spiral of cycles of planning, action, observing and reflecting," I did discover, in the course of my interviews, that I needed to understand the historical base of our lecturer situation. Often my interview respondents would refer to events in the history of the department that had significance for them: the dismissal of three instructors on temporary appointment in the mid-1960s, the hiring of "the first lecturer" in 1975. Or they would refer to particular documents to corroborate a claim: the faculty handbook, the Board of Higher Education manual, Professor Joseph Smeall's history of the department, written during the University's Centennial year. Eventually I did become an historiographer of sorts, putting together a chronology of important dates and events, and assembling a file of documents relevant to the situation.

As I went about my research, which soon began to expand in scope and implication, I made some interesting discoveries, three of which I will recount briefly here. In some cases, what I learned may have implications for those on other campuses, but that is not my point in telling these stories. More than anything, the stories illustrate the importance of understanding the local context and then using that understanding to bring about change.

The first discovery I made had to do with terminology. One of my earliest interviews was with the Dean of Arts and Sciences, a well-seasoned and wily administrator whose association with the English Department dated back furthest of all those I interviewed. Because his own academic background is in English (he occasionally helps out the department by teaching a course in Renaissance literature) his ties with the department are closer (and thus perhaps somewhat more complex) than might be the case if he were in another field. When I called for the interview, I explained that I was working on a presentation to give at the following Spring's CCCC; thus, his opening remarks referred immediately to that context. I quote them here, verbatim, from the transcript of that interview:

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> I'm glad to have this opportunity to talk with you about a subject that's important. My understanding, Libby, is that you're preparing a report, a paper that you're going to share with others in March at the annual meeting of CCCC . . . . The title--I may not remember it exactly--of your panel, but as you said it to me, it includes the word "Adjunct Faculty," and later in our informal conversation you three times used the term "part-time faculty." I have no statistical data on this but I have observed, in discussions with my fellow deans at national meetings and with faculties at other institutions, that our university, the University of North Dakota, and the other schools in the North Dakota system, are in the very least a minority. Here we have almost no part-time faculty. . . . We have at UND principally three kinds of teaching personnel. We have faculty, GTAs, and lecturers. The lecturers are not part-time faculty or adjunct faculty. They are defined as "instructional other." And this is a policy of our State University Board. They are teachers, which is a very honorable profession, but they are not University faculty.

After some discussion of the role of faculty at a university, and the expectations of them in terms of scholarship and research, he went on to offer the following cautionary remarks:

> I hope if you're speaking about our situation you'll make it clear that we don't have, we have almost no, part-time faculty. But we do have a large number of lecturers.

I quote this opening segment of our interview at length because it illustrates one of the most important facts I learned in the course of my research: terminology counts. For in one sense, the Dean is absolutely right. At my university, and perhaps at many others, the designation of "faculty" is reserved for those tenured or probationary personnel who hold the rank of Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor. Lecturers, grouped with Graduate Teaching Assistants in a category called Academic Other (!), are not regarded as faculty and thus not entitled to certain faculty rights and privileges.

As it turns out, though, the situation regarding terminology is far more complex than the dean had led me to believe. As I tracked down

cuments that would corroborate what he told me, I learned that the iversity has, in fact, as many as sixty-two different titles to refer to demic personnel. Some of these titles were familiar ones: Lecturer, tructor, Adjunct Instructor; others, like Clinical Instructor, are less miliar, but intriguing to those of us who would like to find a place in the iversity for trained, knowledgeable, and professionally active full-time chers of composition and literature.

Another of my discoveries had to do with the history of the current uation. As I learned in my interviews, many in my department date the ginning of the "Lecturer problem" to 1975 when the first two people given particular designation were hired; however, those who had been in the partment longest, including the dean and a former chair, cited predeces- s of the Lecturers who shared with them the secondary professional tus that has made declarations like the Wyoming Conference Resolution irly regular occurrence in the profession.

The lot of one of those predecessors is described by our late colleague, seph Smeall, in his centennial history of the department. When the iversity opened in 1884, writes Smeall, its entire "instructional force" nsisted of four teachers, W.M. Blackburn, W. Merrifield, H. Montgom- y, and E.S. Mott:

> Symptoms of cultural unease soon appeared. Blackburn, Merrifield and Montgomery agreed to deny Mott a full role in determining institutional policies. Mott, in turn, complained of an unfair workload due to the policies. Expressions consequent upon the ensuing tensions sketch out roughly the nature of the uneasiness. Policies designed to cope with it were to give an unchanging core to the shape-changing Department even to its present times (1982). Blackburn, Merrifield and Montgomery had made up and administered entrance examinations. It might be assumed, in the circumstances, that these were quite standard and hence sacred. One result, however, was that not one student who applied for admission to the University that Fall was admitted; all were relegated to a primary or preparatory or sub-preparatory department. As a consequence most students in most branches became Mott's responsibility. By a very rough indexing of weekly teaching loads during that first term, Blackburn's comes to 4.272, Merrifield's to 4.277, Montgomery's to 8.820, and Mott's to 20.368. (2)

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For those of us who teach composition, this story has a familiar ring. Here were Professors Blackburn, Merrifield, and Montgomery deciding that they had better things to do with their time than to teach the great unwashed of the Dakota Territory. And here was E.S. Mott, Lady Instructor (apparently, her official title), ready to take up the slack. Infuriating as it is, however, this story too offers useful information, for it demonstrates convincingly that what we call the "Lecturer problem" at UND did not begin in 1975 with the hiring of the first two Lecturers. Armed with a fuller understanding of the true history of the situation--an understanding sometimes called "dangerous memory" (Kincheloe 183)--we are in a better position to respond to the argument often advanced, that these positions are in fact only temporary ones, created to fill an unusual and temporary need.

An interesting sidenote to the story told by Professor Smeall underscores the point about terminology made earlier. In a detailed appendix to his narrative account of departmental history, Smeall lists "the two hundred and twenty or so teachers, who over the century would work within the Department." Acknowledging that his list is "incomplete and probably occasionally in error," composed from old catalogues and class schedules, Smeall nevertheless makes a surprising and disturbing omission; he does not include on his list the names of thirteen Lecturers (eleven of them women) then serving with him in the English Department.

From this evidence one can readily see one consequence of the use of the title Lecturer. Because Lecturers at UND don't hold budgeted faculty positions (they are paid from a general pool of funds) and because they teach multi-section courses listed as "Staff," their names don't show up in university catalogues or on class schedules. For the women and men holding these positions, then, the title of Lecturer seems to have magical properties, making them virtually invisible!

A third discovery I made in the course of my research is perhaps more mundane and less intellectually interesting than those I have just mentioned, but in some ways it may have been the most important as far as our immediate situation is concerned. This discovery had to do with clogged channels of communication, a chronic problem on our campus, and on many others, I suspect.

One of the first interviews I conducted when I began was with our newly-elected department chair. A former part-timer herself and a Marxist/feminist cultural critic, she spoke passionately of this "increasingly acute problem" as part of a larger context, "the de-skilling of labor in our economy":

> I'm afraid that academic life is going to follow other modes of production. And that means that people will be taking the equivalent of piecework in academic life. That's what is happening to other modes of production in the American economy. So why should education not follow that line?

In fact, she went on to say,

> We *are* the part-time workers. I think it is a mistake for us to remove ourselves from the position of part-time workers in our universities. We . . . are thought of in the same way, those of us in the humanities are thought of in the same way. We can "round out" a student's professional education. Or we can provide the "soft side" of a business major's thinking about management and theory . . . . We can become a series of general education requirements that . . . distinguish between a technical education and a university education.

As she talked, it became more and more clear that, in her view, what was needed was not the creation of ten new positions but much more massive change--on campus, the dissolution of the tenure system; and in society, the radical "de-centering of professional life."

When considered in such a context, the department's resolution seemed far less dramatic, its proposal less likely to bring significant change. Still, I was surprised that the chair had not pressed the dean on the matter of the new positions. She seemed to expect the Lecturers to make the next move.

As for the Lecturers, they assumed that the request to hire had gone forward. When I passed on the word in the course of another interview that it had not, they went directly to the chair's office, where they obtained her promise that the request would be reinitiated immediately.

In the end, that renewed request resulted in the creation of four full-time Senior Lecturer positions that took effect Spring semester 1992. Clearly, these Senior Lecturer positions are not equivalent to the ten tenure-track Instructorships we had asked for. In fact, the position of Senior Lecturer, conspicuously absent from that list of 62 academic titles, seems to have no official existence beyond the Dean's office. For all we know, this

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may simply be an appeasement, an attempt on the Dean's part to grease the squeakiest wheels in the Lecturer ranks.

Still, it is a positive move of sorts, another in a series of positive moves our Lecturers have witnessed over the past few years: first, full-year contracts; then benefits; then tiny across-the-board raises; now a few full-time continuing appointments with modest salary increases.

How have these changes come about? I would argue that they are a result of both Lecturer-initiated action and sustained faculty support for that action. Such support can take a number of forms, of course, including endorsement of the CCCC Statement. What I have described here is another kind of support: local support in the form of critical action research. With this kind of research we not only get to know our local academic communities, but we also create within those communities a context for positive change.

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WPAs Assess the CCCC's "Statement of Principles and Standards"

Duncan Carter and Ben McClelland

What Became of the Wyoming Conference Resolution: In the summer of 1986 participants at the Wyoming Conference on Writing passed a resolution calling for redress of professional grievances suffered by writing teachers. In the spring of 1987, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) accepted the resolution for consideration, charging a committee to prepare a document for adoption. Two years of committee deliberation, open meetings, and circulation of a draft document culminated in the CCCC's adoption of its "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing." (See CCCC Executive Committee in Works Cited.)

The 1990 WPA Conference at Portland: Writing program administrators have a special stake in the fate of the Wyoming Resolution and the subsequent CCCC's "Statement." Few are in a better tactical position to effect change in the working conditions and status of writing teachers, especially those in the academic underclass, which has grown dramatically since the early 1970's. However, WPAs generally lack the strategic programmatic and budgetary authority to act. With this paradox in mind, Chris Anderson and Duncan Carter hosted the annual WPA Conference in Portland, Oregon, in July, 1990, focusing on the issues raised by these two historic documents. Eighty-four WPAs from twenty-eight states joined in the professional dialogue at the conference, entitled "Status, Standards and Quality: The Challenge of Wyoming." The lively, occasionally heated, discussions revealed differing ideologies among WPAs as well as differing needs at various institutions, large and small, public and private. Enlightenment, not consensus, was the order of the day as conferees struggled with the knotty complex of fiscal, intellectual, and political issues involved.

Some conference participants focused specifically on the position of writing program administrators, which lead to the drafting of the Portland Resolution, a document that calls for just and reasonable status and working conditions for WPAs. In the years following the conference this resolution underwent a process of development within the Council of Writing Program Administrators similar to that of the Wyoming Resolu-

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tion within CCCC. Christine Hult chaired the committee that deliberated on and revised the resolution. At its last meeting, the Council's Executive Committee adopted the document "Guidelines for Writing Program Administrator Positions," which is printed not coincidentally in this issue.

The Continuing Dialogue Over Professional Standards: The discussion at the conference revealed the need for such a document; yet the status of the WPAs, although a key issue, is still but one of the issues suggested by the CCCC "Statement." For the most part, the questions that dominated the 1990 conference remain the central questions of a continuing professional discussion. This article identifies those questions and captures the voices of conference participants as they pose answers. Reflecting on the questions raised and the ideas asserted at Portland, we insert "Authors' Comments" following some items. We also quote from the CCCC Committee's most recent statements, where pertinent, to update the discussion. For example, with Sharon Crowley as its current chair, the committee issued a progress report in the October 1991 issue of *College Composition and Communication*, in which it responded to criticism and clarified its position on "certain controversial aspects of the statement" (332). Bearing witness to the enduring and controversial nature of the issues raised at WPA's 1990 Portland Conference and discussed herein, five articles related to the CCCC's "Statement" also appear in the same issue of *CCC*, while the May 1992 issue of *CCC* carries the multiple-authored "Symposium on the 1991 'Progress Report from the CCCC Committee on Professional Standards.'" (See Merrill in Works Cited.) Full implementation of the committee's recommendations would result in a significant change in the nature of CCCC as an organization; arguably, it would also greatly increase the pressure on writing program administrators across the country to improve writing teachers' working conditions. Thus, we present some of the dialogue over these issues here because we believe they continue to deserve wider discussion--and action.

Ten Questions From the 1990 WPA Conference at Portland

1. Can/should we claim rhetoric and composition as a legitimate field of scholarship? Taking our profession seriously in the hope that others will too, the CCCC's "Statement" unequivocally announces, "Research in rhetoric and composition is a legitimate field of scholarship with standards comparable to other academic fields." Carol Hartzog saw this claim resting on the assumption that "Academic professions are of a type, within an

academy that continues much the same, and rhetoric and composition must show itself to be like them, a single and identifiable whole." But this assumption misrepresents the enormous variety within rhetoric and composition, in addition to ignoring many changes now taking place in other disciplines and in the academy at large. We come from different academic backgrounds, practice different methodologies and values, and work within a range of different institutional settings. Instead of trying to fit the traditional mold, Hartzog felt, we should acknowledge and affirm our own rich diversity, define ourselves much more broadly, and so position ourselves to "influence deeper changes in the academy."

James Sledd, who skeptically challenged the idea of making the claim to disciplinary status at all, characterized much of the research done in composition as either "piddling" or "wildly over-ambitious." Sledd saw the CCCC's "Statement" as a way "to placate the boss compositionists by admitting them to the worshipful company of privileged researchers," while allowing the exploitation of "contingent workers" and teaching assistants to continue unchecked.

If rhetoric and composition is to be viewed as a discipline, what kind of discipline is it? Ellen Strenski wondered whether composition should be thought of as "a separate discipline with its own research tradition and texts" or as "an enabling set of skills, attitudes, and techniques." Pointing to the CCCC's "Statement's" standard of "superior writing ability" for teaching assistants and part-time instructors (but not for tenure-track faculty), severe as the requirement of "research and publication in rhetoric and composition" for those on tenure track, Strenski concluded that "The CCCC's 'Statement' seems to want it both ways, with two corresponding streams of instructors."

Jim Slevin denied that the "Statement" encouraged any kind of two-tiered system; indeed, he saw the document as aimed at dismantling the two-tiered system now in place; however this reform and virtually any others we might wish are dependent on how we--and others--view our work. As Slevin contended, "We cannot separate considerations of institutional reform from considerations of how we define ourselves as a field and how our intellectual work--in our classrooms and in our scholarly journals--gets understood."

Authors' comment: If the study we conduct to understand our work and the writing we do to disseminate such knowledge are not scholarship, traditional or unconventional, what are they? For WPAs, the issue of what counts as research/scholarship continues to be problematized. Because it is so closely related to what counts toward tenure and promotion, the matter of scholarship in composition and rhetoric needs more profession-wide discussion and bears close observation on the local level.

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2. Must rhetoric and composition remain closely related to English departments? The CCCC's "Statement" declares that "because of the significant intellectual and practical connections between writing and reading, composition and literature, it is desirable that faculty from both areas of specialization teach in the composition program." Together with the "Statement's" stance on graduate student assistants, this claim suggests a close and continuing link between writing programs and English departments. As Ellen Strenski observed,

> The prospect, dramatized in the CCCC's 'Statement,' of writing instructors nestled in an English Department with traditional career paths--good graduate students to tenured professors via research and publication closely connected to literature--is a cozy picture. But there's a whole world out there of other kinds of writing [e.g. journalism, business correspondence, legal analysis, science and medical reportage, software]. These other kinds of writing seem to me to call for other institutional arrangements that acknowledge and reward the teaching of them, that is, other than the traditional scholarly publication model.

Noting the "symbiotic" relationship envisioned between composition and English studies, Carol Hartzog observed that "The administrative model suggested would suit some campuses: a writing program housed within or inextricably related to an English department. Other options, viable on some campuses, would be closed out or shut down. These include self-standing or interdisciplinary writing programs."

Ironically, self-standing programs sometimes have more power to improve working conditions than the kind of department the CCCC's "Statement" seems to envision. Virginia Polanski described her experience in an autonomous writing program, concluding, "I now have more freedom to move closer to the CCCC's 'Statement' . . . than I had as a member of an English department." If we are to remain in English departments, others argued, we are first going to have to overhaul them. Kristine Hansen began with Robert Scholes' view (in *Textual Power*) of the traditional English department, a hierarchy with literature and the consumption of texts on top, nonliterature and the production of texts on the bottom. Since the hierarchy is further divided into the "real" and the merely academic, we in composition are left to deal with the production of "pseudo-nonliterature." Gender mapping overlays this whole structure, with men dominant in

literature, women in pseudo-nonliterature. In short, if Scholes' structure is seen as a house, we are stuck in the basement. Hansen saw the CCCC's "Statement" as "a sketch of our remodeled dream house" but thought it remained to us to provide a more "specific blueprint." She presented specific recommendations for doing so within our own institutions: "Restructure the English major so undergraduates are exposed to courses in rhetorical theory and composition; hire only faculty with coursework in rhetoric and composition; place composition experts on search committees--and on tenure committees, to evaluate teaching."

Authors' comment: Administrative restructuring comes slowly to most campuses. While the matter of whether to stay within or to go outside the English Department seems more clearly delineated now than in the last decade, economic and political stagnation have brought budget cuts to many campuses and, along with them, a siege mentality that precludes serious consideration of long-term restructuring. Who can circulate a memo advocating a new program design when budget cuts have undermined the instructional integrity of the existing program? Some WPAs say that such a time is just right, however, for that sort of rethinking. Diligent and creative WPAs who are not daunted by the poor atmospheric conditions may seek change, but we wonder how many good, innovative program designs can be implemented during a period of insufficient funding. Working for more favorable structural arrangements will probably have to wait for budget lines to come alive once again. So what do we do in the meantime?

3. Should national reform of teaching conditions be tied to the issue of tenure for writing teachers? Carol Hartzog thought gains in professional status and tenure lines would be "important, but the need for improved conditions is so critical that it should not be fully dependent on them." Shelley Reece concurred, terming a shift from part-time instruction to faculty tenure lines "unrealistic" and "counter to a twenty-year trend." Jim Slevin acknowledged that a common response to the CCCC's document was to dismiss its insistence on tenure-line positions for writing faculty as unrealistic, unaffordable, even impossible. In particular, he spoke of the Association of Departments of English (ADE)'s resistance to the idea; however he also recounted what happened when he spoke at the annual convention of the Association of American Colleges. At one point, a dean acknowledged that "what was being proposed was in fact entirely affordable, that it represented a very tiny portion of any college or university's budget, and that there was no reason why the guidelines could not be realized within a few years." So what is the problem, then? According to Slevin, "The problem . . . is not that our demands are competing with lots

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of other demands for resources; it is that our demands are not seriously in the competition . . . . Status and just support are denied not because the budget makes it impossible but because the intellectual power of writing courses is not apparent to [that dean] or to anyone else." Thus, Slevin argues, "political pressure to alter institutional practices" cannot be separated from the "intellectual argument about the need for change and the reconceptualizing of the aims of writing programs."

Authors' comment: Perhaps no single issue is more contested than the professional status of writing teachers. The financial needs of the underclass (part-time and temporary full-time faculty) are immediate and in many cases urgent. So, too, professional status for writing faculty as equal, tenurable colleagues with literature faculty is a long-standing need; while it may appear less urgent, it is essential to equitable treatment. Of individuals who have spoken publicly to this point, Robert Merrill strongly rejects the "Statement's" advocacy of tenure for writing teachers, arguing that the "Statement" "effectively calls for at least doubling the tenure-track positions in most departments," and adding that "those of you who can imagine this occurring in our lifetimes are the last true optimists" (155).

These issues are configured differently at private research institutions than at community colleges and at large versus small institutions. Can a single policy assist WPAs at all kinds of institutions? What is the optimal strategy, working for tenure lines or for smaller class sizes or for more money for part-time lines?

4. Does an emphasis on tenure-track positions mean that individuals holding part-time or temporary positions should be replaced, even those who want to teach part-time? While agreeing in principle that writing should be taught by tenure-line faculty, Carol Hartzog considered any wholesale conversion of positions to tenure track unlikely; however, she added that "to the extent that change does occur, some of the trauma of change will be felt by those undergoing review as their positions are transformed." Others were more direct in asserting that a move to tenure lines would cost many temporaries and part-timers their jobs. Lex Runciman and Kristine Hansen both thought about what might be done for in-house candidates when and if such a change were to take place. Runciman suggested several ways to make searches fair to in-house candidates. He wondered if we would continue to insist on the PhD as the *sine qua non* for tenure-track positions, and if not, what other criteria we might find appropriate, and how we might weight them. Aware that the scarcity of jobs during the 1970s and 1980s forced many well-qualified applicants to accept part-time, non-tenure track positions, he also urged us to be careful

not to "consciously or unconsciously penalize [in-house candidates] for demographics over which they've had no control."

Kristine Hansen suggested exploring "ways to help current part-time faculty qualify for the full-time, tenure-track jobs that might be created. If part-time faculty presently lack the credentials that would enable them to be hired to do much the same work they've been doing all along," she added, "I would hope that we could find ways to let their experience count towards a degree and find means to offer grants, leaves, and other assistance to enable them to qualify for greater responsibilities."

Many felt that the CCCC's "Statement," in its zeal to stamp out exploitation, is unnecessarily restrictive in recognizing only two legitimate reasons for hiring part-time writing faculty. Aren't there other legitimate reasons for wanting to teach part-time? What about the desire to maintain a professional identity--not to mention making some money--while one's children are small? Kristine Hansen suggested that we explore such options as job-sharing, dividing one tenure-line job between two people. Susan McLeod, who once worked part-time while raising children, agreed: "The full-time position is not everyone's ideal job at every stage in their lives." She also pointed out that spousal accommodation policies, especially at more remote institutions, made it essential for institutions to retain the flexibility to hire some faculty on a part-time basis or risk losing promising couples altogether. Elizabeth Hedengren, mother of five and by choice a part-time teacher for fourteen years, argued for "permanent part-time" status for those with doctorates. She explained, "When part-timers are fully qualified for regular full-time faculty [status] they would [under this option] have salary, fringe benefits and responsibilities prorated from the comparable professorial rank." She recommended similar opportunities for qualified teachers lacking the PhD, say, part-time lectureships or some other paraprofessional category, again with prorated salary, benefits, and responsibilities. Acknowledging that the status of part-timers is to some degree a women's issue, Hedengren asserted, "In any case . . . career part-timers who have taught for years and are professionally committed to teaching should not be overlooked."

Authors' comment: Responding to criticism "from persons who want to preserve the availability of part-time positions," the CCCC Committee on Professional Standards reasserts in its most recent statement the condemnation of what it considers abusive hiring practices. Aside from some "concessions to practical exigencies," the committee "remains convinced that the quality of writing instruction is not now served, and cannot ever be served, by its long-term association with teaching practices that we take to be exploitative . . . [W]e are forced to conclude that there is a connection . . . between the institutional status of writing instruction and

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the hiring practices condemned in the statement" (CCCC Committee on Professional Standards 336). The Committee also addressed part-time teachers, distinguishing between those "who teach part-time because they must, in order to pay the rent and put bread on the table, and those who teach part-time because they choose to" (336-337). The Committee asked these latter individuals to "reconsider the far-reaching professional and political ramifications" of choosing to teach part-time, since "efforts to secure . . . support and [professional] recognition are hampered by the widespread use of part-time faculty to teach composition" (337).

5. What about the continued reliance on teaching assistants? Although the CCCC's "Statement" attempts to curb the abuse of graduate teaching assistants, many found the CCCC's "Statement" oddly tolerant of the use of teaching assistants in composition, while oddly intolerant of the use of part-time instructors, as if one were a form of exploitation and the other weren't. Some saw this imbalance as linked to the "Statement's" traditional view of writing programs as nestled comfortably within English departments. Leon Coburn also thought the reliance on TAs undercut the CCCC "Statement": although the "Statement" emphasizes professionalism, most TAs are trained as literature majors and are thus ill-equipped to teach writing. James Sledd observed that the Statement "would still allow the maintenance of armies of assistants," because they oversee the courses scorned by the professionals while filling their seminars. Slevin did not devote much attention to this issue, but he did say, "The reliance on graduate students as a source of cheap labor is clearly condemned in the document."

Authors' comment: Clarifying its position on TAs, the CCCC Committee on Professional Standards explains in its most recent statement that "[t]eachers of writing who are graduate students are entitled to compensation, benefits, class size, and course loads that are commensurate with the unusual and serious responsibility accorded them by the institution. They are entitled to adequate training in the teaching of writing and to careful supervision of their work. While their status as teachers-in-training does not, of course, accord them rights to promotion, tenure, and job security, efforts should be made to hire them in an ethically responsible manner and to provide them with frequent appraisals of their performance" (CCCC Committee on Professional Standards 336).

Still, some individuals are dissatisfied with the Committee's position on TAs. Eileen Schell asserts that "the CCCC's 'Progress Report' does not fully address the complexities of the GTA's position" (Merrill 165). She calls for the Committee to "further examine the complex double work situation that the GTA faces in his or her teaching responsibilities and academic work" (167).

6. What can WPAs do to improve the lot of untenured instructors on our own campuses? Perhaps the most creative answer to this question was provided by Shirley Rose, whose paper (with Susan Wyche-Smith) has since been published as "One Hundred Ways to Make the Wyoming Resolution a Reality." While some of the ways are more viable than others, the panelists advocate a positive-attitude, incremental approach: "Find one thing you can do, do it, then find another" (Wyche-Smith and Rose 319). Nineteen of the ways were WPA-specific, including these two:

> 57. Make certain writing-program administrative work is recognized as both "teaching" and "service" for purposes of released-time assignments, tenure evaluation, and departmental benefits. (See the "Statement" and the "Report of the Modern Language Association's Commission on Writing and Literature" [*Profession 88*: 70-76].)
>
> 75. Set aside one day a week or some kind of regular work time, however brief, for your own scholarly work. (Wyche-Smith 322-23)

William Irmscher approved, stating, "the changes that have occurred (over the years) are due primarily to the efforts of respected individuals on individual campuses, not to reform movements or government programs . . . . In such personal actions lies the hope for those who will continue to shape the development of composition studies in the future." Others contributed to a growing list of creative problem-solving suggestions for individual and collective action. Here is a sampling:

- Bruce Leland suggested involving instructors in collaborative authorship of texts used in the writing program. This improves morale by giving instructors real responsibility for the content of the program and can lead to collective action directed at other issues of concern to instructors.
- Kim Flachmann involves instructors in the administration of the writing program, to include serving on subcommittees, coordinating departmental exams, and authoring sections of the writing program handbook. She has also finagled a $25/hour "consultant fee" for these professional responsibilities.
- Elizabeth Nist and Suzanne Webb argued that WPAs who want to effect real change must learn more about both the budgeting process and the mindset of administrators.
- Shelley Reece urged that we follow the ten recommendations for part-timers in our own departments, that WPA consultant-evaluators apply

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those same recommendations when conducting external evaluations of other writing programs, and that part-timers be represented on the CCCC Executive Board.

Specifically, how can the "Statement" be useful in this much-needed work of improving the lot of writing instructors on our own campuses? James Slevin said that this document should "enable but not require writing faculty to press for improvements in their situation. The aim was to give them as clear and forceful a statement as possible from which to negotiate for changes at their institutions, if they chose to do so. It was to be a statement of policy, and as such was to make clear those conditions that could be taken as the rights of any faculty member." Most of the WPAs assembled in Portland agreed on the value of the CCCC's "Statement." As Susan McLeod put it, "Such documents speak with some authority to administrators." In addition, they represent an ideal for us to struggle toward. "We should take these documents not as blueprints, but as exhortations to try to do our best for our profession and for those employed in it."

7. How can the status of WPAs be enhanced so they are in a better position to effect some of these changes? The WPA is, on most campuses, the logical person to champion the kinds of changes envisioned by the CCCC's "Statement." Unfortunately, the WPA is just as likely to be a 97-pound weakling, ill-equipped to kick sand in anyone's face. Karen Vaught-Alexander described her experiences as a new WPA; Thomas Recchio and Lynn Z. Bloom identified various of the "initiation rites" to which the new WPA is traditionally subjected. The two representations gained added authority by being in such perfect accord with each other:

> Recchio and Bloom: Rite #1. Something important that you've been promised will not be ready when you arrive new on the job, like an office, a computer, a salary check . . . . Rite #2. Whatever you anticipated your duties to be, they will be expanded . . . . Rite #3. The funding for a major program you anticipated running will be curtailed drastically or wiped out entirely . . . .
>
> Vaught-Alexander: My actual job description has been in flux since last year. After MLA, I accepted a position for which I would train peer tutors, run a writing center, develop a WAC program, and teach a half-load. By April, my duties also included helping to develop the Freshman seminar program for Fall 1990. By July, I was told there was no space or funding for the writing center and tutors but that there was plenty to do, indeed. Indeed.

Recchio and Bloom went on to argue that these "rites," if taken as openings for dialogue, can lead to meaningful change--not just change in the WPA's role or status, but change in the community as a whole. Change was also a major concern of Vaught-Alexander, who found the CCCC's "Statement" an important guide both for evaluating university policy and for proposing change.

How others view composition specialists in general and WPAs in particular can be inferred from the *MLA Job Information List*, argued Joseph Janangelo. Janangelo found four categories of jobs in the *JIL*: the WPA, the generalist, those with ancillary interests, and lecturer/instructorships. In his estimate, ads for jobs in all four categories "undermine the intended professionalism of writing faculty, misrepresent our work, and have the potential to keep us further 'marginalized' in the academy." Especially interesting were ads that require grounding in a traditional literary field as well as in rhetoric and composition--"just in case all this writing stuff goes bust." Christine Hult agreed that many WPAs find themselves lacking the authority to fulfill their responsibilities, while their service goes unrewarded and their research unsupported. To address these problems, she proposed a statement of "Principles and Standards for the WPA Position," a document analogous to the CCCC's "Statement" but limited to WPAs. The statement would have two parts, the first, "Working Conditions Necessary for Quality Writing Program Administration," the second, "Guidelines for Developing WPA Job Descriptions." Others had been thinking along the same lines. Kathleen Kelly and the other participants in the 1990 WPA Workshop session had already produced a draft of a document they call "The Portland Resolution," a statement addressing the same problem.

Authors' comment: See the result of this labor in the "Guidelines for Writing Program Administrator Positions," adopted by our Executive Committee and reprinted in this issue. Our organization is fortunate to have such a useful document to guide job-development negotiations. We are all indebted to Christine Hult and the committee members who developed it, yet, we have much to learn as individuals begin to use it in practical deliberations at their institutions. For some lessons on how WPAs might acquire and use power, see Ed White's "Use It or Lose It: Power and the WPA" (*WPA* 15.1-2 [1991]: 3-12).

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8. Should WPA consultant/evaluators somehow enforce the CCCC principles and standards on their campus visits? Lynn Z. Bloom and Ben McClelland addressed this question in a session moderated by Edward M. White. Bloom urged caution, whether the issue were endorsement of the CCCC's "Statement" by the WPA or enforcement of its principles by consultant/evaluators. The "Statement" calls for comparable pay (per course) when part-time faculty have duties and credentials comparable to those of full-time faculty, but as a general rule, though, the duties and credentials of part-time and full-time faculty never are really comparable. Another problem is the "Statement's" call for no more than 10% of a department's offerings to be taught by part-time faculty. Administrators are more likely to ignore this guideline than to conform to it, simply because conforming costs money. Finally, programs relying primarily on teaching assistants are "largely exempt" from the strictures of the CCCC's "Statement," allowing these institutions to "claim moral superiority" even though relying on TAs "reinforces the *de facto* use of part-time teachers, and thus further undercut the Wyoming Conference Resolution." For these and other reasons, Bloom believed that WPA consultant/evaluators should not attempt to enforce these standards at the institutions they visit. To do so would cause their evaluations to be disregarded as unrealistic at best, and at worst hypocritical, since consultant/evaluators often come from institutions that also violate these standards.

McClelland countered with a position that favored advocacy but not enforcement, of the principles and standards in the "Statement." He encouraged WPA consultant/evaluators to work with an institution to address issues of noncompliance and to help develop a long-range plan for coming into compliance with the "Statement." McClelland argued for an ideal professional status for both literature and writing teachers in an English faculty, one that was "not so much a faculty homogeneity or even unity, but pluralism--faculty and program heterogencity without hierarchy." Realizing that this might be too much to ask in the short run, McClelland called "at least for real steps now to eliminate the severe professional inequities that exist between literary study and writing instruction." To achieve this, he called for "more public advocacy of the cause of professional standards and quality education." The panelists agreed that the "Statement" would make a useful appendix to a report.

9. What became of the second and third of the original charges contained in the Wyoming Conference Resolution? James Sledd raised this question most eloquently. Of the three charges in the Wyoming Resolution, the first called for professional standards, the second for a grievance procedure, and the third for "a procedure for acting upon a finding of noncompliance."

The CCCC's "Statement" fulfills only the first of these charges. According to Sledd, when Jim Slevin's task force recommended to the CCCC Executive Committee that the CCCC not become involved in censuring institutions, "By that one refusal to act, the two committees reduced their joint effort to more talk about exploitation . . . ." Of course, concluded Sledd, it was inevitable that Parts Two and Three be derailed: "They posed a threat to the system of exploitation without which English Departments in their present state could not exist, the system from which administrators, literati, and compositionists all profit." Slevin noted that "the CCCC Executive Committee did not fully encourage all three directives, but the Wyoming Resolution Committee has in fact kept them firmly in mind and has developed plans for implementing all three." He acknowledged that it had "taken more time that I would have liked" but that the groundwork for Parts Two and Three had been laid. He explained that in November, 1989, the CCCC Executive Committee unanimously approved three initiatives relevant to Part Two: (1) establishing a caucus "for all [CCCC] members interested in reforming the teaching of writing in accordance with CCCC guidelines" (among other things, this caucus will sponsor workshops at annual CCCC conventions, preparing individuals to promote change on their own campuses); (2) training CCCC Regional Advisors "to facilitate change at institutions other than their own," and (3) training CCCC Mediators, who "will respond to requests to meet with parties involved in negotiating better practices on particular campuses, helping to resolve conflict." With Regional Advisors and Mediators, "the mechanism for receiving grievances and responding to them" is in place. Part Three, which calls for a procedure for acting upon a finding of noncompliance (specifically, a way of censuring institutions), is sufficiently serious and sufficiently expensive to warrant caution. If we are to proceed after the fashion of the AAUP, we will need lawyers, staff, and so on: in short, money, so we can expect our CCCC dues to shoot up. Then, too, "CCCC has to determine exactly what noncompliance will mean [when] maybe half of the colleges and universities in the country currently depart from its guidelines."

Authors' comment: Notwithstanding such dramatic calls as Sledd's for immediate action against institutions in noncompliance with the "Statement," mechanisms for mediating and sanctioning are a long way off. They are both costly and time-consuming. The CCCC Committee on Professional Standards recently elaborated on its position on these procedures. In sum, before and in order for mediation to take place, the standards in question must be "incorporated into whatever governance documents operate" at a given institution. As for censure, "the sign of failure to mediate conflict," CCCC has not yet determined whether to follow the AAUP example. Nevertheless, the Committee says that CCCC needs "both

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immediate and long-term help from its membership in order to begin implementation and enforcement of the second and third provisions of the Wyoming Resolution." The help called for includes case studies of implementation, an understanding of "noncompliance" as "resistance to change," and "a graduated dues structure to raise funds to support implementation and enforcement of the standards" (CCCC Committee on Professional Standards 340-42).

10. What will happen to this statement in the face of changes in student and faculty demographics in the 1990s? Looking to the recent past, several noticed that demographic projections are just as likely to be abused (or simply wrong) as to be heeded. Jim Slevin, for example, pointed to the "systematic erosion" of faculty lines between 1972 and 1986. During that period, the percentage of English PhDs finding tenure-track jobs dwindled to 40% (from 93%), all in the name of flexibility in the face of projected declines in student enrollment; in fact, during this same period, student enrollment actually increased. Despite the "turnaround" in the job market predicted by some, Shelley Reece was skeptical about the prospects of moving, after a brief transitional period, from part-time and temporary full-time appointments to tenure-track appointments. This would run counter to the trend during the past decade. However, Lex Runciman thought this "turnaround" in the job market might "force departments to reconsider the whole matter of staffing writing courses (including class size, pay, and type of appointment), for only by doing so will they be able to attract and keep the teachers they need for writing courses each term." In other words, current demographics play into the hands of the CCCC's "Statement" rather than working counter to it.

Conclusion: The concerns of conferences past have a way of dissipating. Not so for the issues raised at WPA's conference in Portland more than two years ago. If the issue of principles and standards for postsecondary teaching of writing is not at the top of your agenda, we wonder why it isn't. If it is, we wonder how it is so? The discussion needs to continue and to be recontextualized in today's terms, in light of the continuing work of the CCCC's Committee on Professional Standards and in light of the issuance of WPA's "Guidelines for Writing Program Administrator Positions." Moreover, these issues have many local variables that push against one resolution for WPAs in various situations. As individual WPAs initiate local discussions of these documents, they can benefit from experiences such as that of Chris Anson and Greta Gaard, who describe one interesting model for implementing the reforms recommended in the "Statement" (Merrill 171-5). Furthermore, some feel that certain aspects of our work are not sufficiently addressed in the "Statement," for instance writing centers. Valerie Balester argues that the "current wording of the 'Statement' falls short of addressing the true working conditions in writing centers" and "presents an image of writing centers as supplemental to the English Department curriculum" (Merrill 167).

Perhaps we would benefit from another look at these documents and their histories at a future WPA conference.

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The Portland Resolution

Christine Hult and the Portland Resolution Committee: David Joliffe, Kathleen Kelly, Dana Mead, Charles Schuster

Background

The theme of the 1990 Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference was "Status, Standards, and Quality: The Challenge of Wyoming." Christine Hult, editor of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, presented a paper at the conference that essentially called for extending the challenge of the Wyoming Resolution--and the subsequent Conference of College Composition and Communication (CCCC's) "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing"--to WPAs. In "On Being a Writing Program Administrator," she invited WPAs to begin a dialogue toward formulation of a statement of professional standards by the WPA organization.

Such a statement would outline prerequisites for effective administration of writing programs as well as equitable treatment of WPAs. At the preconference workshop, participants were working on a similar document, which they dubbed the "Portland Resolution." A representative committee was commissioned by the WPA Executive Committee to draft a document; their combined work was presented at the 1991 summer conference and also sent to WPA members in *WPA News* to solicit comments toward revision of the document. This final version of the Portland Resolution, accepted by the Executive Committee at their 1992 CCCC meeting, is intended to help both Writing Program Administrators, and those with whom they work and to whom they report, develop quality writing programs in their institutions.

Council of Writing Program Administrators

Guidelines for Writing Program Administrator (WPA) Positions

I. Working Conditions Necessary for Quality Writing Program Administration

Many WPAs at colleges and universities, and department or division chairs at community colleges, find themselves in untenable job situations, being asked to complete unrealistic expectations with little tangible recognition or remuneration, and with few resources. The CCCC statement points out the exploitation of writing teachers at all levels, including program administrators: "The teaching, research, and service contributions of tenure-line composition faculty are often misunderstood or undervalued. At some postsecondary institutions, such faculty members are given administrative duties without the authority needed to discharge them; at others, they are asked to meet publication standards without support for the kind of research that their discipline requires." The following guidelines are intended to improve working conditions for more effective administration of writing programs:

1. Writing Job Descriptions for WPAs. Each institution is responsible for providing clear job descriptions or role statements for its WPAs (See Part II below). Such descriptions should be flexible enough for WPAs and the institution--and open to negotiation, especially when hiring a new WPA or starting a new writing program. The institution is responsible for providing a clear formula for determining "equivalence" for a WPA: What responsibilities are equivalent to teaching a full load (as determined by that institution)? What release time will be given for administration and staff development? What administrative work will be counted as "scholarship" in tenure and promotion decisions?

In addition, WPA positions should be situated within a clearly defined administrative structure so that the WPA knows to whom he or she is responsible and whom he or she supervises. A WPA should not be assigned to direct a program against her or his will or without appropriate training in rhetoric and composition and commensurate workplace expe-

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rience. If a WPA needs specialized training in any area outside the usual purview of rhetoric and composition studies, the institution must be prepared to provide for and fund that training.

2. Evaluating WPAs. The institution is responsible for setting forth informed guidelines for assessing the work of a WPA fairly and for determining how administrative work is to be compared to traditional definitions of teaching, research, and service in decisions involving salary increases, retention, promotion, and tenure. Assessment of a WPA should consider the important scholarly contribution each WPA makes by virtue of designing, developing, and implementing a writing program.

3. Job Security. WPA positions should carry sufficient stability and continuity to allow for development of sound educational programs and planning. The WPA should be a regular, full-time, tenured faculty member or a full-time administrator with a recognizable title that delineates the scope of the position (e.g., Director of Writing, Coordinator of Composition, Division or Department Chair). WPAs should have travel funds equivalent to those provided for other faculty and administrators and should receive a salary commensurate with their considerable responsibilities and workload (including summer stipends). Requirements for retention, promotion, and tenure should be clearly defined and should consider the unique administrative demands of the position.

4. Access. WPAs should have access to those individuals and units that influence their programs--English department chairs or heads, deans, the Faculty Senate, Humanities directors, budget officers, people in admissions and in the registrar's office, and those who have anything to do with hiring, class sizes, placement. WPAs should have ample opportunities and release time to work in close consultation with colleagues in related fields and departments--Writing Center Directors, freshman advisors and freshman affairs officers, basic skills or developmental writing faculty, English-as-a-Second-Language Specialists, student counseling services, committees on student issues such as retention or admissions standards.

5. Resources and Budget. WPAs should have the power to request, receive, and allocate funds sufficient for running the program. Resources include, but should not be limited to, adequate work space, supplies, clerical support, research support, travel funds, and release time. WPAs should be provided with administrative support, for example, clerical help, computer time, duplicating services, equal in quality to that available to other program directors and administrators

II. Guidelines for Developing WPA Job Descriptions

Each institution should carefully consider the role statements or job descriptions for its WPAs. Depending upon the size and scope of the writing program, the amount of administrative work expected of each WPA will vary considerably. Typically, however, WPAs have been exploited in these positions, that is, given unrealistic workload expectations with little credit for administrative work.

At large institutions with diverse programs staffed by numerous faculty or graduate assistants, several WPAs may be needed (e.g., Director and Associate Director of Writing, Writing Center Director, Basic Writing Director, Computer Writing Lab Director, Director for Writing Across the Curriculum, and so on). At smaller institutions with fewer faculty and less diverse programs, fewer writing program administrators may be needed. It is also desirable to provide advanced graduate students with administrative experience in the form of internships or assistantships to the WPAs.

The following outline suggests both the scope of preparation needed by an effective WPA and the diverse duties that WPAs at various institutions may perform. This list is illustrative of the kinds of duties WPAs typically are engaged in; it is not descriptive of an "ideal" WPA, nor do we wish to imply that each WPA should be assigned all of these duties. On the contrary, the workload of each WPA should be carefully negotiated annually with the administration in the form of a role statement or job description to which all parties can agree.

1. Preparation for a WPA should include knowledge of or experience with the following:
   - teaching composition and rhetoric
   - theories of writing and learning
   - research methods, evaluation methods, and teaching methods
   - language and literacy development
   - various MLA, NCTE, and CCCC guidelines and position statements
   - local and national developments in writing instruction
   - writing, publishing, and presenting at conferences

2. Desirable supplemental preparation may include knowledge of or experience with the following areas:

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Business

- accounting
- business administration
- grant writing
- information systems and computers
- personnel management
- records management
- public relations

Education

- curriculum design
- English as a Second Language
- testing and evaluation
- psychology of learning
- developmental or basic writing

3. As a particular institution negotiates job descriptions with each WPA, the responsibilities of the WPAs may be selected from among the following comprehensive list:

Scholarship of Administration

- remain cognizant of current developments in teaching, research, and scholarship in rhetoric, composition, and program administration

- pursue scholarship of teaching and curriculum design as part of the essential work of the WPA

Faculty Development and Other Teaching

- teaching a for-credit graduate course in the teaching of writing
- designing or teaching faculty development seminars
- training tutors
- supervising teaching assistants and writing staff
- evaluating teaching performance: observing and evaluating TAs and adjunct faculty in class; reviewing syllabuses and course policy statements; reviewing comments on student essays and grading practices
- preparing workshops and materials, conducting work shops, and conducting follow-up meetings
- Undergraduate writing, reading, language, teaching, courses, etc.

Writing Program Development

- designing curricula and course syllabi
- standardizing and monitoring course content
- serving on or chairing departmental committees on writing
- initiating or overseeing WAC programs
- developing teaching resource materials/library
- interviewing and hiring new faculty and staff
- selecting and evaluating textbooks (which may include establishing and supervising a textbook committee; maintaining a liaison with the bookstore; ensuring that orders are properly placed)

Writing Assessment, Writing Program Assessment, and Accountability

- coordinating assessment and placement of students in appropriate writing courses
- administering writing placement exams and diagnostics (this may include creating and testing an appropriate instrument, acting as second reader for instructors, notifying the Registrar and instructors of any change in placements)
- administering competency, equivalency, or challenge exams
- creating, or having access to, a database of information on enrollments, faculty and student performance
- administering student evaluations of teachers
- evaluating data on student retention, grade distribution, grade inflation, enrollment trends
- reporting to supervisors, chairs, deans, etc.
- conducting program reviews and self-studies

Registration and Scheduling

- determining numbers of sections to be offered
- evaluating enrollment trends
- staffing courses
- monitoring registration

Office Management

- supervising writing program office and secretary and staff

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- supervising maintenance of office equipment and supplies
- (managing computer lab & staff)*
- (managing writing center staff)*

(*may be separate positions)

Counseling and Advising

- arbitrating grade disputes and resolving teacher and student complaints, such as placement, plagiarism, grade appeals, scheduling problems (which may include acting as liaison with the appropriate office)
- writing letters of recommendation for graduate students, adjuncts, and tutors

Articulation

- coordinating writing courses and instruction with other academic support services (e.g., study skills center)
- coordinating with English as a Second Language programs
- coordinating with remedial/developmental programs
- coordinating with high school (AP, CLEP, concurrent enrollment) programs
- coordinating with English education programs
- revising and updating any publications of the writing program
- discussing the writing program with administrators, publishers' representatives, parents, prospective students

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Notes on Contributors

Duncan Carter, an Associate Professor of English, is Director of Writing at Portland State University and a member of WPA's Board of Consultant-Evaluators. He has written a text for advanced composition (with Harry Crosby), *The Committed Writer* (McGraw-Hill 1986), and a number of articles on literature, composition, and writing program administration. Current interests include the relationship between thinking and writing and multicultural approaches to teaching composition.

N. LaRene Despain, Associate Professor of English at the University of Hawaii, completed "Reader's Responses" while a Fulbright lecturer at the University of Ghana. Her recent textbook, *Writing: A Workshop Approach* (Mayfield, 1992), is built around texts authored not only by students at the University of Hawaii but also by students in Beijing who worked with Despain during her two years as a Fulbright lecturer at the Beijing Foreign Language Institute. Despain, who is doing studies of William Faulkner and Gertrude Stein, is active in the UHs Women Caucus and has received the UH Regents' medal for Teaching Excellence.

Karen L. Greenberg is Associate Professor of English at Hunter College of The City University of New York, where she directs the Developmental English Program and teaches courses in writing and in linguistics. She was recently selected one of the ten most Outstanding Freshman Advocates in the country. She has authored numerous essays on writing instruction and assessment and a St. Martin's textbook entitled, *Effective Writing: Choices and Conventions*, 2nd ed. She also chairs the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Research Grant Committee.

David Healy is Coordinator of the General College Reading and Writing Center at the University of Minnesota. General College is UM's open-admissions unit. As coordinator, Healy supervises a staff of undergraduate peer tutors and graduate teaching assistants and oversees the placement of classroom TAs. He also teaches freshman composition courses. Previously, Healy directed the writing center and taught composition and literature at Bethel College in St. Paul. He has published articles in *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, *The Writing Center Journal*, and *College ESL*.

Director of the University of Hawaii's writing-across-the-curriculum program, **Thomas Hilgers**, an Associate Professor of English, earned the Ph.D. in social psychology. His *Making Your Writing Program Work: A Guide*

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To Good Practices, co-authored with Joy Marsella, was published by Sage in 1992. He has previously been director of composition and assistant chair of English at the University of Hawaii. His research reports have appeared in *Written Communication* and *Research in the Teaching of English*. He has recently co-authored chapters in *Writing, Teaching, and Learning in the Disciplines* (MLA, 1992) and *Nothing Begins with N* (S. Illinois UP, 1991.)

In 1986, **Ben McClelland** was appointed Professor of English and Holder of the Ottilie Schillig Chair of English Composition at the University of Mississippi. He directs the University's comprehensive writing program. McClelland is the President of WPA and serves on its Consultant-Evaluator Board. He also served on the CCCC Committee on Professional Standards that drew up the "Statement of Principles and Standards. . . ." Among his books are *Perspectives on Research and Scholarship in Composition* (with Timothy R. Donovan), published by MLA in 1985, and *The New American Rhetoric: A Multicultural Approach* forthcoming from HarperCollins in January, 1993.

Libby Rankin directs the Composition Program at University of North Dakota, where she is an Associate Professor of Engish. She spent the last year visiting composition programs at other universities and conducting open-ended interviews with Teaching Assistants as part of another qualitative research project.

Jody Swilky has published his work in *The Yale Review, The Georgia Review , The Ohio Review, The Missouri Review, The North American Review,* and other journals. His primary interests are writing-across-the-curriculum theory and competing conceptions of literacy instruction. He has taught writing and language theory at several universities, and is presently an assistant professor of English at Drake University.

Announcements

Award Winners Announced
Council of Writing Program Administrators

The Council of Writing Program Administrators is proud to announce the winners of the 1992 WPA Research Grants:

Theresa Enos, University of Arizona, for a study of gender bias in college writing programs.

Mary Lynch Kennedy, State University of New York at Cortland, for a study of the use of writing portfolios to evaluate writing program goals and curricular objectives.

Sally Barr Reagan, University of Missouri at St. Louis, for a survey of the status of women in composition and rhetoric programs.

Laura Helms, Ball State University, for the production of a tutor training handbook in writing across the curriculum.

These proposals showed a high level of scholarly merit and originality, and the projects promise to have a significant impact on WPAs, teachers, and students.

Association of Teachers of Advanced Composition

The third annual W. Ross Winterowd Award for the most outstanding book on composition theory published in 1991 was awarded to **Susan Miller** for *Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition*. Honorable mention went to **C. Jan Swearingen** for *Rhetoric and Irony: Western Literacy and Western Lies.*

The James L. Kinneavy Award for the most outstanding essay in volume 11 of JAC was awarded to **Patricia A. Sullivan** for "Writing in the Graduate Curriculum: Literary Criticism as Composition." **Joseph Petraglia** received an honorable mention for "Interrupting the Conversation: The Constuctionist Dialogue in Composition."

The Winterowd and Kinneavy Awards include a cash prize and an attractive framed citation. These awards were generously endowed by Professor Winterowd and by Professor Kinneavy, Blumberg Centennial

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Professor at the University of Texas. Both awards were presented at the meeting of the Association of Teachers of Advanced Composition at the CCCC Convention in Cincinnati.

Conference

Conference on Composition in the 21st Century: Crisis and Change

The Council of Writing Program Administrators, the University of Connecticut, and Miami University will sponsor a conference on *Composition in the 21st Century: Crisis and Change* at the Marcum Conference Center of Miami University from Oct. 8-10, 1993. The conference is organized around three-hour sessions that encourage full audience participation and discussion.

There are seven sessions, with no more than two running concurrently, and each addresses a major question about the future of composition: 1) What is composition and why do we teach it? 2) Who should teach composition and what should they know? 3) What have we learned from the past, and how can it shape the future of composition? 4) What political and social issues will shape composition in the future? 5) Who will assess composition in the 21st Century, and how will they assess it? 6) What directions will research take, and how will research affect teaching?; and 7) What will be the relationship between writing program administration, teaching, and scholarship?

Speakers include David Bartholomae, James Berlin, Miriam Chaplin, Robert Conners, Sharon Crowley, Peter Elbow, Linda Flower, Sarah Freedman, Anne Gere, Shirley Brice Heath, Sylvia Holladay, Andrea Lunsford, Steven North, James Slevin, John Trimbur, and Edward White. Conference directors are Lynn Bloom, Donald Daiker, and Edward White.

Registration is limited to 400, so please register early. For more information, write to Don Daiker, Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056.

WPA Writing Program Administration

Membership in the Council of Writing Program Administrators

Membership in the Council of Writing Program Administrators includes a subscription to *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. The membership fee is $15 a year in the United States and $16.50 a year in other countries. *Institutional membership fee is $25.

To apply for membership, please fill out this form, and return it with a check or money order payable to the Council of Writing Program Administrators. Send the form and fee to Jeffrey Sommers, Secretary-Treasurer, WPA, Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056.

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Amount enclosed $15 $16.50 $25

*Membership in the council of Writing Program Administrators is organized by the academic year. Dues received before January 1 are credited to the previous academic year and entitle you to that year's fall/winter and spring issues of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. Dues received after January 1 are credited to the following academic year, and your subscription to *WPA* begins the subsequent fall.

Change or revision of name and address. If the name or address printed on your WPA mailing label is incorrect or has changed, please send a copy of the current printed label along with the form above, indicating the complete, corrected information, to Jeffrey Sommers, Secretary-Treasurer, WPA, Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056.